


# THE OTHER SIDE

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**T**he dream had haunted him as a child, so vivid and lifelike. In it his mother was like a woman from the pictures he'd seen of the thirties, during the bad times of the depression. She was thin, her beauty dried out by the sun, her long straight hair pulled back into a simple ponytail. Their house was on a field of dry brown earth, and everything was straightforward, no-nonsense hard work. He liked that in his dream. But the part of the dream that disturbed him was when his mother asked him the question.

# THE Wall



"Can you see it, child?" Mother asked, gently touching the hair on his head.

"See what?" the child asked in return, reaching up to take her large hand in his small one.

"That shadow out on the horizon," she replied, her words catching in her throat just a little bit.

The child looked there with wide eyes and said slowly, "No, no, I don't see anything out there."

His mother looked at him, shaking her head, "I don't know why I told you about it just now. I guess I was thinking about it. Everybody does from time to time. Oh, you'll see it all right, when you get older. It's there, son. It's there."

He had never heard her talk this way before. "What is it?" he asked, wondering what was making his voice quiver.

She gave him a quick glance and answered, "Nobody knows, and that's the problem. But it is out there; I can see it much better now than when I was younger. It's like a cloud on the horizon that never lifts. It makes me nervous."

"Mommy, it makes me afraid," the boy said.

"Yes, it does that to me sometimes, too," she said quickly.

"You mean, it doesn't all the time?" He asked.

"No, of course not. That would be no way to live, now would it, afraid of something you don't know."

He would always wake up after that, troubled because he always wondered if she had told him the truth then. How could you not be afraid? From that time on, something began to burrow in him, like an earthworm, always working, always turning up new soil. The dream came back to him at the oddest times and by the time he was a teenager he had almost grown used to it. Then another

dream came, and immediately he knew it was different.

In it he was a youth, grown tall, with the hard muscles of hard work. He had walked out on the porch of their house, the golden fields a striking contrast to the brown, barren ones he had seen as a child. He found himself looking intently at the horizon. His father watched him suddenly grip the rails tightly, watched him flinch, and then steady himself. Not knowing his father was there, he said aloud, "I have seen it myself." That smudge of darkness on the horizon caused him to remember his mother's words, "You'll see it when you get older." He stood a little straighter and looked again into the distance.

He noticed his father then, who smiled and said softly, "I once looked at the shadow that way."

"Well, really, it's nothing much, is it?" he asked, the quivering voice of the little boy now deeper and fuller. The pained look on his father's face reminded him of something. As his father paused, the son remembered what it was. It was the day his father had walked into the kitchen to tell his mother what had happened at the swimming hole. It was the last day his little brother's bright smile had shone in their family.

"No, I am afraid it is something," his father said finally, firmly — just like then. "It's quite large to me now, it fills the space between earth and sky with darkness."

"Really? Then how come I can't see it?" The son questioned. "You know my eyes are better than yours."

Was it compassion or sadness that made his father's quick glance so unbearable? Yet he regretted even more having to hear his father's response, "Be glad you don't live with it everyday like I do. You will soon enough. Just imagine what the old folks

see. No wonder they are bent over their canes.

The son looked again at the horizon and turned away, sensing that same stirring inside of him he didn't like, that same gnawing. He shoved it aside, and he shoved his father's words aside, and soon he pushed the door open and walked out, and he kept on walking.

He awoke in a sweat, assuring himself it was just a dream. As he sat there he began to wonder what was the dream and what was the reality. He remembered how it used to be in his family when guests came to their house for supper. His mother was such a good cook and such a soft touch. She'd only had to look at him that certain way when there wasn't enough dessert, and he would say, just as natural as can be, "Ah, no thanks, I'm full." It had made him so happy to be in on his mother's little secret of not having enough, and in on her little struggles at the guests his father brought home without any notice. He'd been so surprised to hear other families weren't like this.

But now his family was like most everybody else's — they knew that from watching television — which his mother had tried to keep out of the house. Now none of the children denied themselves of anything and his mother didn't really enjoy showing hospitality anymore. It was like something, or maybe someone, had died in their family. He began to wonder how long it would be until he would walk out that door, like in his dream, and keep on walking. At times like those, he didn't sleep easily. Still, life went on, going somewhere. Eventually, the dream came true, and on top of it another dream came.

He was driving out of the city to the home he'd left behind long ago. Oh, he and his parents had stayed in touch; he certainly wasn't the first boy to leave the

farm, but things had never been the same. Again, he could never quite tell just what was going on in his parents, so great were the walls that went up between them when he walked out the door. Only polite words were tossed up and over it, and just as nicely returned, like a game of volleyball no one was serious about. It wasn't this way with only his parents by any means. Still, the looming wall on the horizon made him want to find out what they thought, made him want to touch something that was lasting, something besides that wall. It abided there, both ominous and uncaring, the most menacing combination of traits he had ever found. It seemed they had been right about that, whatever it was.

Strange how some pretended to know what it was, while others sang songs about it. Perhaps they were trying to drive away the fear. He was sure they felt it — he did. How could anyone know what was beyond it, since no one who had gone there had ever come back, he mused silently to himself. Some things you can't escape, he thought.

He never forgot the look on that girl's face when he walked away from her in the morning. Instinctively he looked from her to the horizon, wondering whether he would see it clearer, sharper, closer. Funny, though, it wasn't like that. There were times he wished it was. It just got a little clearer the older he got and he wanted to tear it down, blow it apart, do something to defy it, but there it sat patiently. It just sat there on the horizon, waiting.

He had turned and looked at the girl, but it was hard to see who she was anymore, because something had pierced through his consciousness and blinded his eyes with tears. This is what I thought about my father when I looked back to see him standing on the porch, staring after

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**"You know, it is not as bad as your mother and I feared...There's a gate, and I will be going through it."**

**"I don't have any feelings like you do. The wall fills me with terror."**

me, hurting so bad his chest was heaving and tears were running down his permanently suntanned face. It had been such a close thing then, he knew, his heart had almost broken. He had almost turned around. But it hadn't broken — it had done something else. He looked away from her much more easily than he had looked away from his parents. These kinds of things got easier and easier, but at the same time, he found less and less of himself to give.

The sadness he knew in his dreams was a living thing to him now. He was so sad that as a teenager he had walked out the door, and had kept on walking out of everyone's life he used since then. He found himself driving from one job, or relationship to the next, looking for that wall on the horizon, knowing it must be there. Only in his dreams could he go back to the kind of closeness everybody wanted, and nobody could hold on to.

He became a man and surrounded himself with the things he thought he needed to be happy. He forgot the wall for a time, but visions of it came back to him in his times of loneliness... there it was right on the horizon, hazy,

but visible. His wife was lonely too, but he couldn't help her. His children's hearts eluded him. He tried to tell them about the wall, but they didn't believe him. He sought solace in other women, alcohol, career changes. He desperately tried to appease his emotions and conscience by pretending... what? That he didn't believe what loomed in the distance? Finally his dream turned up that old country road, and he ended up in the driveway.

The place was run down a bit, and the fields were untended. His mother came out the door alone, saying simply, "We knew you'd come, and you almost waited too long. He wants to see you. Come along."

He followed her, noting without surprise how clean and neat the inside of the house was. His father's voice was steady, but quiet. "I can see the wall now even in here." At his son's surprised look he nodded, "Yes, and you will too someday. You know, it is not as bad as your mother and I feared. There's a gate in it, and soon I'll be going through it. I am pretty sure whatever hardships are on the other side, there will be rest, too. Your mother was right, you can't live in fear

of what you don't know. You just have to be true to what you do know. Somehow you never learned that, did you, son?"

There was no defense possible against a dying old man, and the son answered, "No, I didn't. When I look at the wall I see a menacing gate, and it fills me with terror. I don't have any feelings like you do about what lies on the other side. All I have around me are walls already; I am so separated from other human beings I may as well go there now. But I fear it, and I am going to hold on as long as I can."

At last his dreaming and his waking were indistinguishable, but he knew the grief he felt when he saw the effects of the wall... the divorce, the dead child-soldiers, the heart aches and heart attacks, the mental illnesses, the infidelities, the teenagers taking their own life. None of it was a dream.

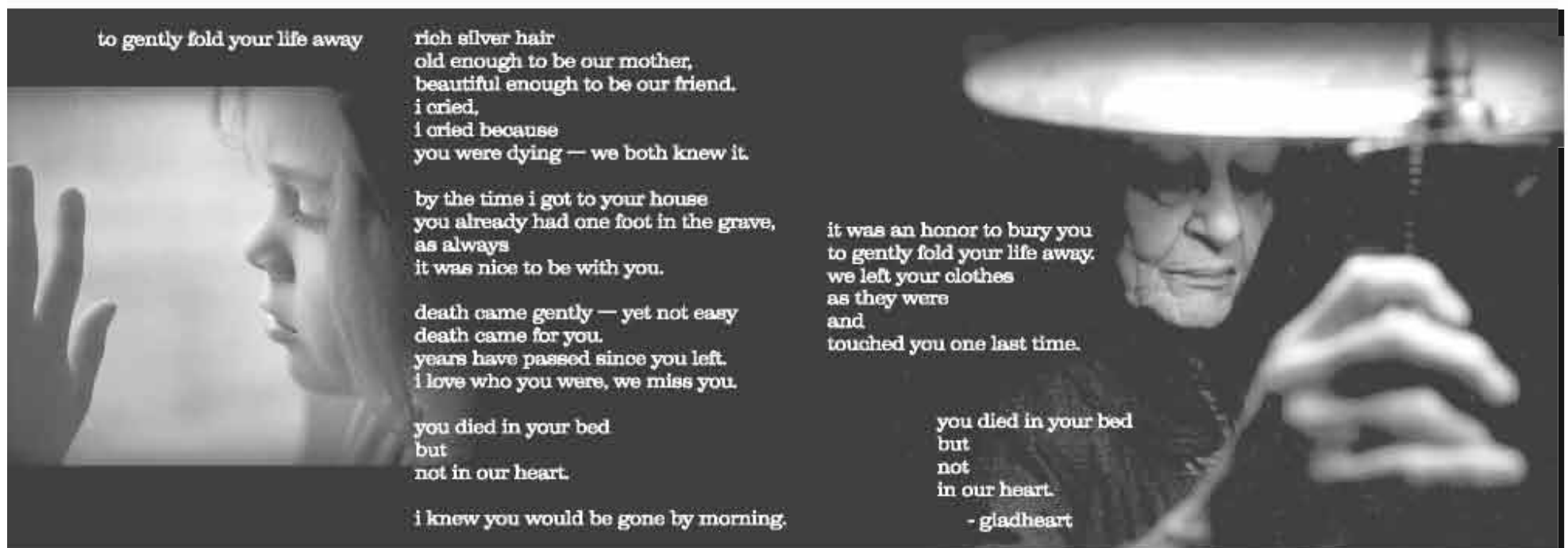
He feared what awaited him behind that impenetrable wall, and he knew he would never escape once he passed beyond it. Neither the good nor the bad ever came back — no matter what noble deeds or destructive chaos one accomplished in life. The way of escape had to be

now, before those cruel hands took him there. Was there a way out? Where was it? Suddenly it mattered to him, as his life seemed like it was going nowhere faster and faster. The desperate search for the gratification of his flesh and mind lost its appeal. He longed to silence his screaming conscience.

So, what is a dream, life or death? Will people be thankful when they are dead, after all the things they have said and done? Or will they be full of remorse?

The life we live is just one chapter, the shortest one of our existence. Deep down, the knowledge lies securely in everyone's conscience, what death will be like for them. It is no secret at all. Yet, there is a way out.

There was a man who overcame the wall for us. He went to the same place everybody else goes, and endured what they deserved, not what He deserved. He overcame death. He is waiting to deliver you from ever having to go there in the first place. We want you to give what one day you won't be able to give — your life, your love, and all that you are. He is worthy. He will make you truly grateful. 🙏



to gently fold your life away

rich silver hair  
old enough to be our mother,  
beautiful enough to be our friend.  
i cried,  
i cried because  
you were dying — we both knew it.

by the time i got to your house  
you already had one foot in the grave,  
as always  
it was nice to be with you.

death came gently — yet not easy  
death came for you.  
years have passed since you left.  
i love who you were, we miss you.

you died in your bed  
but  
not in our heart.

i knew you would be gone by morning.

it was an honor to bury you  
to gently fold your life away.  
we left your clothes  
as they were  
and  
touched you one last time.

you died in your bed  
but  
not  
in our heart.

- gladheart

It's odd how little we think of death, since it is a reality that we all must face. Benjamin Franklin wrote about the relentlessness of death in the following poem:

# Death is a Fisherman

*Death is a fisherman, the world we see  
His fish-pond is, and we the fishes be;  
His net some general sickness; howe'er he  
Is not so kind as other fishers be;  
For if they take one of the smaller fry,  
They throw him in again, he shall not die:  
But death is sure to kill all he can get,  
And all is fish with him that comes to net.*

—Benjamin Franklin

Several years after he wrote this poem, his own four-year-old child died to smallpox.



One never forgets his first encounter with the death of a loved one. Some children are spared the education until their youth. Others learn tragedy early in life, even losing both father and mother to the inevitable. Though each one of us starts our lives without a thought of life's end, the first loss of a loved one teaches us a stark lesson of human frailty.

My grandfather died when I was 19. Never before had I faced such finality. I would never see him again in this life. Unspoken questions echoed in my mind with no answers. Where was he now? What happens after this life? What do I believe?

As I have grown older, thoughts about death are not so rare. The frailty of life is more evident. A truck could strike my child today and it could all be over. My body doesn't jump as high or run as fast as it did 15 years ago, and it's not hard to see

what's happening. Most people have a normal fear of dying.

But it is not just dying that causes fear, but what lies beyond. Most of us have experienced pain, and although it is not pleasant, it is known to us. We do not fear what we know and understand. We fear the unknown. What happens to our soul when we die? When our body is put in the cold earth, is that the end?

Through the centuries, most cultures and religions have held a common thread of belief in a life after this one. And there are other similarities, such as a sense of justice being done. How a person lived this life determines how he will fare in the next life. Is this just primal superstition? Ancient myths? Or is there something in the heart of man, something beyond the capabilities of modern science to explain?

Hinduism says that a person is reincarnated after death, beginning another earthly life in the physical realm. The events of this

life are consequences of choices and actions made in a previous life. Buddhism is similar, though without any gods involved. Good actions and bad actions produce "seeds" in the mind which come to fruition either in this life or in a subsequent rebirth. Like the cycles of springtime and harvest, what a man sows he will reap.

Many people have claimed to have had a near-death experience. Even across different cultures, researchers have found similar features to these stories. Many have a sense of peace and unconditional love and a sense of being outside their body. Those who live to tell of their experience often describe seeing a tunnel with a light ahead or above. They feel drawn toward the light, often communicating with the light. Many experience a review of the events of their life. Some have a distressing experience, with a foreboding sense of dread. Those who have returned to life go on to live differently: with a greater appreciation for

life, greater compassion for others, and a heightened sense of purpose and self-understanding. Some people are sure these things are real; others say they are just chemicals in the brain.

If we are to know anything about what happens after a person dies, science cannot help us. Scientific experiments must be repeatable and controllable. Cell phones and video cameras don't work on the other side. No, science cannot tell us anything. But there are other ways to know about what lies beyond this life.

## Paid Out

Consider the ancient verse: "The wages of sin is death."<sup>1</sup> During our life, all of our wrongdoings and hurtful ways earn us a punishment – our just rewards, you could say. Whatever justice was not satisfied in this life will be paid out then, just like wages paid at the end of the week.

This death is not the physical event of dying. If it were so,

then we would always expect a horrible death for the wicked, and painless deaths for the kind-hearted. But reality does not line up with this, often dispensing great suffering to the most compassionate, and a humane death to the worst murderers. No, the wages are not paid in the process of dying, but in what lies beyond — *Death*.

The story of Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 tells us some about this place of death. Lazarus was a poor man who trusted God, did good deeds, and begged for money by the gate of a rich man. The rich man hardened his heart against the poor and enjoyed the comforts of his life with annoyed indifference to the needy. Both died and went to a place of waiting — one to a place of comfort and the other to a place of suffering.

In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, "Father Abraham, have pity on

<sup>1</sup> Romans 6:23



me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.”

But Abraham replied, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.”

Death is a place of torment. It is a region where departed souls go when the body dies. Its residents suffer “torment” and are “in agony in this fire.” Although death lasts long, it is not eternal.

When a person dies, the physical body, the material part of him, is buried in the ground and decays. But the immaterial part goes to death. This is the soul — the unseen part of a person. The soul is the mind and thoughts, the emotions and habits, and the will and determination. It forms our character, and it is eternal. In death, our soul receives the wages of our life’s work.

## All Will Go to Death

Many people just assume that when a person dies, he either goes to heaven or hell immediately,

but this belief is simply neither possible nor true. He goes to a place of waiting, receiving either comfort or torment based on his life’s deeds. This thought might be disturbing, especially if you have recently lost a loved one and expected him or her to be somewhere else. But we can be comforted that everyone will receive exactly what he or she deserves. It helps us to know this, so that we can live our lives now accordingly.

*It is appointed for a man to die once, and afterwards the judgment. (Hebrews 9:27)*

The truth is that we are all destined to go to death. Every one of us will go there when we die. We will receive the wages due to us while we wait for the final judgment.

There is only one way that a person can escape death.

The way out of death was made by a man named Yahshua. By hearing and understanding what He did, you can escape the death sentence that awaits every man. There was a man who lived in such a way that He merited no

punishment in death. His life was one of selfless concern for others and overcoming every enticement to do wrong.

This man was put to death in a most painful and torturous way for a crime He did not commit. But He voluntarily received the execution because of what it would accomplish. It put Him in a place where He could take our place in death.

Yahshua went and experienced death for us. During the three days and three nights that He was there, He experienced great agony. This agony was not what He Himself deserved as wages for His life, but they were the sum-total of wages of the sins of the whole world. He felt the damage of vented rage left unmended, the broken promises, the lustful fantasies, the proud thoughts, and the uncaring laziness — everything necessary to balance the scales of justice. Over six billion people now live on this planet, and maybe another six billion have lived here before. When He had received the full amount to be paid in the first death, there was still more to pay.

Yahshua also went and experienced the second death. He paid for the sins of the whole world. Since there were some people who deserved the second death in the lake of fire, Yahshua’s soul went there to pay the full amount. The combined penalties of society’s murderers, greedy bankers, unfaithful husbands, rebellious wives, pedophiles, thieves, dishonest salesmen, charlatan preachers, manipulative politicians, and every other kind of evil, both the high-class and the base, were placed upon Yahshua in rapid-fire, unrelenting succession.

Finally, it was over. The full penalty had been paid. Yahshua had taken the place of every person; He was a substitute of full value. His resurrection from the dead proved that the full amount had been paid. Unlike the other souls waiting there, nothing could hold Him in death. He was set free from death.

*But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep*

*its hold on him. (Acts 2:24)*  
*Because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. (Acts 2:27, quoting Psalm 16:10)*

*Seeing what was ahead [David, writing Psalms], spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. (Acts 2:31)*

Yahshua was successful in paying the debt that we all owed. He paid it by taking our place in death. If you can understand this, you can be saved from death. For if you understand it, you will find out what it means to live for Him, since He died for you.

Since He gave everything for us, even His own life, how could we hold back anything from Him — our possessions, our family, even our own lives? The proper response to this good news is to give up everything to follow Him. This is what it means to be His disciple. ☪

~ Tim



For hundreds of years, Christian thought has been confused concerning death for at least two reasons. First, death as a place of waiting for judgment was eclipsed by the Catholic tradition of Purgatory. Souls in Purgatory were also waiting, but could be freed from their suffering through the good deeds, prayers, and gifts of the living on their behalf. At the time of the Reformation, a monk named Tetzel raised much money for the Church by selling indulgences (certificates cancelling the debt of sin and freeing souls from Purgatory). This practice roused the indignation of Martin Luther, and the Reformation rejected the idea of Purgatory, and with it the notion of a place of waiting for judgment.

Secondly, during the translation of the King James Bible, the Greek and Hebrew words for several different places were all translated as the word *hell*. The original languages of the Bible uses the words *Sheol* (Hebrew)

and *Hades* (Greek) for the place called *death*, the temporary place of departed souls when they die. In contrast, the word *Gehenna* referred to the lake of fire, a place of eternal punishment in fire and brimstone. In the King James Bible, however, these words are all translated as *hell*. This adds confusion, like naming two of your children the same name.

The following verses all refer to hell as the place or region of death, or the grave.

*For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [Sheol], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. (Ps 16:10)*

Sheol is a Hebrew word, the language Psalms was written in.

*Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [Hades], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. (Acts 2:27)*

The same verse of Psalm 16:10 is quoted in the book of Acts, which was written in Greek. They used

the Greek word *Hades* to identify the same place as the Hebrew word *Sheol*.

*And in hell [Hades], he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham far off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (Luke 16:23)*

However, the following verse and others like it refer to hell as the place of eternal punishment:


*...it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell [Gehenna]. (Matthew 5:29)*

One final verse that makes it clear that *Hades* and *Sheol* refer to a different place than the lake of fire is:

*“And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.” (Rev 20:14)*

This shows conclusively that the temporary place of torment (*Hades*) is thrown into the permanent place of punishment (*Gehenna*, or the lake of fire). ☪



The background of the entire page is a photograph of a sunlit field. In the foreground, there is a field of tall, dry grass and small orange flowers. In the middle ground, there are several trees with green and yellowing leaves, suggesting autumn. The sun is shining from the upper right, creating a warm, golden glow and long shadows across the field and trees.

**H**e faced certain death. He not only sensed judgment — He stood before the judge and was condemned. The dreadful sentence of death had been rendered.

He bore a heavy weight of grief as He left the court.

His was not a private execution before the eyes of a few required witnesses. He walked before His countrymen, disfigured by the brutal treatment of His guards. Strong men paled at the sight of Him and women wept. Step by awful step He walked to where His life would finally be wrenched from His battered body.

Many men had walked that grim path before. The guilt they bore sealed their eternal destiny. Stumbling and collapsing from exhaustion, He finally reached the place of execution. In a few agonizing hours the public spectacle came to an end. Those who were there heard Him cry

# LIBERATOR

*A person facing certain death has no doubt about the reality of judgment. He knows at that instant where his life is taking him; he is no longer able to ignore the voice of his conscience.*



out about being forsaken by God. He surely was.

There before the eyes of heaven and earth His life ended. The weight of guilt thrust His righteous soul down into the pit of death. Yet He didn't bear His own guilt — He bore ours. He willingly took upon Himself the anguish that our sins deserved. In all His suffering He uttered no complaint and felt no bitterness.

His death was the greatest act of love ever demonstrated. His innocent blood covered every unjust and filthy act that we have ever done — all the things we continued to do against our conscience.

He spent three days and three nights in death, and that was enough to pay for the sin of us all. The pain He went through was enough. Even in death there was not one bit of distrust or resistance to His Father's will for Him. That's why the full anguish of death was able to reach the very core of His being in such a short time. It more than equaled the suffering which the hard-hearted will resist eternally as they continue to reason away their guilty consciences.

When He had done all He was sent to do, His Father raised Him from the dead. Because of His innocence it was impossible for death to hold Him.

In His death He

purchased the earth and all its inhabitants. In His resurrection He became King to all who would follow Him. His name — *Yahshua* — means He is mighty and powerful to save. That same power that raised Him from the dead enables His disciples to love one another the same way He loved us. It actually breaks down the barriers that alienate human beings from one another.

It produces a life of love and unity — the evidence that God loves mankind and sacrificed His Son to set us free.

He is our Liberator. Anyone who is willing to do His will can come to Him and be set free from death. God, in His great mercy and lovingkindness towards man, provided a way that even the unjust and filthy could find forgiveness and change their eternal destiny. 🙏



# VOIDING THE CONTRACT WITH DEATH

**T**HOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, A PROPHET SPOKE of a day when God would break man's contract with death.<sup>1</sup> Apart from that promise, all men remain under the sentence of death. Everyone feels it and fears it, even though many people deny it. Soon enough, the reality that their time on this planet will end, just like everyone else's, reaches their soul. No one has ever broken his appointment with death.<sup>2</sup> The nature of this contract can only be described as "iron-clad."

Contracts are promises made between two or more parties that the law will enforce. Three things legally establish a contract:

- A promise or offer made by one party;
- Acceptance of it by the other;
- Adequate compensation given by one to the other.

It's very simple, really. "I will give you this if you do that."

The compensation ("I will give you this") must be at least of comparable value to the goods provided or the service done ("if you do that"). Or at least the values must fairly *seem* that way to the parties entering the contract.

We've all entered contracts in one form or another, from renting an apartment to buying a car. They safeguard our interests and give us legal grounds to stand on in case there is a breach of contract. But what compensation is so great that anyone would make a contract resulting in his *death*? What lure or what consideration could be so great that one would die for it? Of course, the first time this happened, the offer wasn't presented that way. And it still isn't. Wouldn't it take the world's greatest salesman to get someone to sign a

contract which promised his death?

## The Contract with Death

The first contract with death was made at the dawn of mankind's existence, in Genesis 3. Just look at what was promised to Eve ("I will give you this") if she would only do what she was told ("if you do that"). All she had to do was eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If she did, she was promised three things:

- Her eyes would be opened;
- She would become like God;
- She would know good and evil.

To sweeten the deal, she was even told she would not die. It was true that her husband, Adam, had told her that she *would* die if she ate from that tree. But, what was death, anyway? She'd never seen it. She yielded to the persuasive voice of the Serpent, disobeying the voice of her husband. All these things, she thought, would now be hers.

Immediately she knew something was wrong. She'd been lied to, that was clear, but what could she say? She hadn't listened to her husband. What could she do now? She brought the contract to Adam and then, what could he do? Watch her be expelled from the Garden and die? He signed on the dotted line, just as she had, disobeying God as well by eating the

fruit after her. They were in it together now.

Immediately the accusations and justifications started flying as fear took its grip on their souls. So it was that the great and terrible history of mankind began, having as its foundation the same fear that Adam and Eve first experienced that day — the fear of death.<sup>3</sup>

How each man and woman responded to that fear would determine his or her eternal destiny. Would they do what was right, or listen to that other voice (which is so sensitive to our evil desires and comes so quickly to us), as Adam and Eve did? No longer could Satan tell them, "You won't die," for that deception was now exposed.

Everyone dies, and then what? That is where the evil one has directed his lies since the Garden — and many have listened to him. Deep into men's souls he whispers, "There will be no consequences

if you gratify that desire, hurt that person, steal that thing, tell that lie... There's no judgment awaiting you after this life. There's only one life and one death, and after that... nothing. Go ahead and do whatever feels good. Everything is ultimately meaningless, anyway."

Those who accept such lies make themselves unworthy of eternal life. To their own private sins they add the harm they do to others that cannot be

repaired in this life. Yet there are those who don't listen to the lies of the evil one, but instead tenaciously keep listening to the voice of conscience. They hold onto the most essential aspect of their human nature — the image of God in which all men are made.<sup>4</sup>

Sadly, in their freedom, not all men retain that image. In the end, each one bears the image of the one he continually listens to — either Satan or God. They bear either image to the extent that their capacity and situation in life allows them to. And then, having arrived at their destiny, they must dwell there, with the one whose image they bear, for all eternity. God is just, showing partiality to no man,<sup>5</sup> but judging each one on the basis of his deeds.<sup>6</sup> And not only judging, but rewarding those who honor His voice within their soul (i.e., their conscience) with eternal life!

In spite of thousands of years of erroneous Christian teaching, there is *no* fixed contract with the second death, which is unending. The contract is only to the first death for wrongdoing done

<sup>4</sup> At the original creation of man; Genesis 1:28 — "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." And even after the Fall of man and the Flood man still bears the image of God; Genesis 9:6 — "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man."

<sup>5</sup> Romans 2:11 — "For there is no partiality with God."

<sup>6</sup> John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:12-13

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 28:13

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 9:27 — "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 3



by each individual.<sup>7</sup> That death ends in the rewards and punishments which Paul carefully describes in Romans 2.

*The righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to his deeds” — eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness — indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 2:5b-10)*

This struggle between good and evil is the lot of all men. It is the nature and weighty significance of this thing called *life* — these few short years we live and breathe. This struggle continues all of a man’s days, without letting up, until each person sets his character in one direction or the other — towards good or towards evil. Each man crystallizes his character by his “patient continuance in doing good” — or evil. This happens over the course of a lifetime as his thoughts express themselves in his words, his words take concrete form in his actions, and his actions shape and then set his character. The final result is fixed, unalterable, and utterly personal. Each person determines his final, ultimate destiny by his choices in this life. There is no unfairness with God or partiality towards any. All men have a conscience they can obey or dismiss, but each course has an unalterable destiny.

That is, unless they are presented with the most amazing offer any man has ever faced since the Garden — the nullification of the contract with Satan, into which they have been born. That contract inevitably results in their death, for the wages of sin is death.<sup>8</sup> Remember, dying is a process, but death is a condition, a place where one receives his wages. The Savior of mankind spoke very clearly of this

place in the Gospel According to Luke. He spoke of the just desserts of a good and a bad man in Luke 16:19-31. The rich man’s words from the grave are the stark reality of those who disregard their conscience for the comforts and pleasures of this life:

*In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side... And he said, “Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house — for I have five brothers — that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.” (Luke 16:23,27,28)*

It was the torments of conscience, the gnawing accusations against himself and his self-centered conduct in life that he could not by any means silence in death. They burned him like a fire. While in death, Lazarus did not experience the same torments as the rich man. He waited in hope, a son of Israel, for the Savior’s death to set him free with Abraham. He had the same hope as all do in death who lived “doing good, seeking for glory, honor, and immortality.”<sup>9</sup> They were able to pay for their own sins in death (for all have sinned). Then, at the last judgment, God will reward them with eternal life according to Paul’s gospel, and the Savior’s, too.

*For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all. (Romans 2:13-16)*

*Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good,*

<sup>9</sup> Romans 2:7

*to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (John 5:28-29)*

There was one man who was not born into this contract, nor did he ever sign up, although the “recruiter” came persistently to Him to do so. And what an enlistment bonus He was offered!

*Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” (Matthew 4:8-9)*

By the purity of His life this man was able to be something for us that we could never find in ourselves or anyone else. He was able to be our ransom, paying the full price necessary to redeem us from the power of sin and death. By so doing, He broke the contract with Satan forever for all those who would believe in Him. Just as in Jerusalem when the gospel was proclaimed at Pentecost, all those who believe in Him live together and share all things in common.<sup>10</sup> Neither the gospel nor its fruit has ever changed.

## Renewing the Contract

You might wonder how it is that we, the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve, came to be party to the contract with death. We were not present with our parents in the Garden of Eden. We did not personally make that first contract with Satan, the old deceiver, and bring death upon the human race. Adam made it for us, but we were “in Adam’s loins,”<sup>11</sup> so to speak, when he signed up. Yet soon enough, we added our signature in the very same way, by ignoring the same voice inside us — our conscience.<sup>12</sup> It is the voice of God within each man or woman, steadily warning us not to do what we know is wrong and approving us when we do what is right.

To go against that voice within us just one time is to personally renew the contract Adam and Eve made. Each time we go against our conscience, it not only makes us guilty, but gives freer and freer reign to all of our evil inclinations.

<sup>10</sup> Acts 2:42 — “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common.”

<sup>11</sup> Hebrews 7:9-10 gives the principle which 1 Corinthians 15:22 applies: “For as in Adam, all die...”

<sup>12</sup> Romans 5:12

Although all men sin, not all men give into the great pressure to sin in greater and greater ways. To resist that pressure is a great thing, of which the Creator takes special note. But to annul the contract we have made with Satan can only be done in two ways.

If we are not presented with either of these ways, then our deeds in this life, which are recorded in the “books” of our conscience,<sup>13</sup> follow us to the judgment. There, on the basis of our persistence in doing what is right or wrong, we will be rewarded with the second life or the second death. But what if we came face to face with the opportunity to nullify this terrible contract?

## Annuling the Contract

Annuling or nullifying a contract counteracts it completely. It makes it void or of no effect. Being presented with the opportunity to annul one’s contract with death is a rare and wonderful event. In fact, meeting the terms of this annulment results in an epic transfer from one sphere of authority to another. And all the more ominous and chilling is the reality that regardless of whether its terms are received or rejected, an eternal transfer takes place. Spiritually, one is never the same again.

## The First Way

The first way to void the contract with death is by wholehearted belief in the Savior, Yahshua, who died for us:

*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. (Jn 5:24)*

Yet, the possibility of deception is so great in this life, and the spiritual enemy of mankind, a master of deceit, is so persuasive, especially in matters of religion, that there must be a way to *know*, for certain, that one’s contract with death has been broken. Paul the Apostle warned the Corinthians that some of them may have “believed” in vain.<sup>14</sup> And the gospels record a number of instances where men

<sup>13</sup> Revelation 20:12

<sup>14</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 — “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain.”

<sup>7</sup> Romans 5:12 — “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

<sup>8</sup> Romans 6:23 — “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”



claimed to believe in Messiah, but He did not believe in them.<sup>15</sup> The evidence that can be verified, both by oneself and others, that one's contract with death has been broken, is found in 1 John:

*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:14-16)*

Those who love their brothers in the way 1 John 3 speaks of, and who keep the commandments of Messiah, are the ones who truly believe in Him. Those who do not love their brothers abide in death and so *prove* themselves still worthy of the death sentence. In this case, the Apostle John says their hatred is equivalent to murder — and no murderer has eternal life. But those who love their brothers in the wholehearted fashion seen in Acts 2 and 4 are the ones who can have legitimate confidence that their first death sentence has been annulled.

There, in the Community of the Redeemed, they can have the hope of coming into complete obedience to Messiah's words, which is the only confidence anyone can have of never tasting death:

*Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he*

<sup>15</sup> In John 2:23-24, the words translated *believed* and *entrust* are one and the same word in Greek (*pisteuo*, #4100). "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many *believed* in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not *entrust* Himself to them, because He knew all men." See also John 8:30-44.

*shall never see death. (Jn 8:51)*

This is the *only* exception in which the seal of death over a man or woman has been broken. An exception is a case in which a law or rule no longer applies. Therefore the conviction is annulled and the sentence is taken away. And keeping His word is only possible for those who are *compelled* by the love of Messiah in all they do. They no longer live for themselves, but only for Messiah.

*For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (2 Cor 5:14-15)*

This kind of man or woman is free to serve Messiah where He is, which after His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, is *in* the community of believers on earth. There, all those who hate their life in this world can join together to follow and serve Him.

*He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. (John 12:25-26)*

## Redemption — the Price Paid to Break the Contract

Apart from the belief that surrenders all to Messiah, the case against every man is "iron-clad." This belief leads one to willingly obey His word, including giving

up all one's own possessions,<sup>16</sup> something which is only possible in true community.

Otherwise, the sentence, upon conviction, is the first death, no matter how well a man has lived his life. And there he abides, in death, until the resurrection, to be judged worthy of life or condemnation.

*Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (John 5:28-29)*

*Ironclad* means unbreakable by the individual, overwhelming in the quality of evidence to be presented against him. The only acceptable way to void that terrible contract is to make a covenant with the Redeemer. Yahshua's death in our place satisfies the demand of justice that we must die for our own sins. The one who pays that price redeems those, and *only* those, who make a covenant with Him. Their half of the covenant is to no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. To *redeem* is to re-purchase, free from captivity, retrieve, regain, and rescue. It is to void the contract with death, which we voluntarily entered into by our own sin, by voluntarily believing, trusting, and obeying the One who saved us.

To *redeem* is to recover what was otherwise beyond retrieval and make greater than before. In the New Testament the word *redeem* never refers to the recovery

<sup>16</sup> When the greater king is coming to take over, the lesser king has only two alternatives: ask for terms of peace or face defeat in a hopeless war. Messiah's "terms of peace" are spelled out in Luke 14:33 (as well as Matthew 10:37-38; Mark 10:29-30; and Luke 14:26-27) — the complete surrender of any source of security other than Him.

of isolated individuals, but is always used in the context of the corporate redemption of a *people* for God's own possession.

## The Compact with Messiah

A covenant with Messiah is a compact, entered into with others in full agreement of the terms, like the signers of the *Mayflower Compact*.<sup>17</sup> Just as those first Pilgrims did, believers join together, pledging their obedience to the good commands of their Savior. The terms of salvation are to give up one's life and all one has, does, and is, in order to deliberately follow the Son. Those who believe do this because they have been redeemed, and so are zealous for good deeds:

*Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. (Titus 2:14)*

Their contract with sin and death was thus broken by Messiah giving himself as a ransom for their lives, paying the price by suffering in death for them. Thus, believers may be said to be purchased, bought at a great price, and therefore are slaves to the One who bought them.

<sup>17</sup> In the late Fall of 1620, off the inhospitable shores of Cape Cod, the "saints and strangers" onboard the *Mayflower* signed the Compact, whose essence is found in the words, "solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by Virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience." This compact, and the shared suffering of that first winter, bound the men and women of New Plymouth together.

Those who do not act like His slaves, obeying His words and honoring Him in all they do, simply prove that they were not included in the purchase price. Their name is not on the deed of those purchased by the blood of the Lamb. They have not become part of the compact, the willing agreement between two or more parties, made by connecting or combining the two together.

In Messiah, the men and women in each community were closely and firmly united together. Paul defined this compact for the believers in Ephesus by reminding them of their lives before they believed.

*At that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (Ephesians 2:12)*

For us who believe, the only possible response to His giving all for our sake, withholding nothing, is that we give all we have in like manner. Nothing else is compatible with Him. Nothing else makes us worthy of Him.<sup>18</sup> This belief in one's heart results in fellowship and communion with Him and also with all those who believe.

## The Second Way Out of the Contract

The second way out of the contract is to *reject* the good news, even as Messiah told Nicodemus:

*He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not*

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 10:37-39 — "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."



*believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)*

This causes one to avoid the first death sentence altogether — by going directly to the second death in the lake of fire, for such a one is “judged already.” There is no need for such a one to be judged according to his deeds, for he is among the “cowardly and unbelieving” — the worst class of sinners listed in the Book of Revelation:

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

This is the destiny of someone who hears and rejects the true gospel, made clear to him by a true disciple,<sup>19</sup> because he is unwilling to do the will of the Father.

So, please do not be unwilling, dear reader, but come, as we once did, to find out whether you are willing to do His will, which you can only ever know among those who are already doing it. Don't be among the cowardly who faint for fear of losing their own life, and who end up forfeiting eternal life.

*Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:24-26) 🕊️*

# I was afraid of the unknown

## THE FEAR OF DEATH COMES WITH MANY FACES.

Some people have a great fear that loved ones will die, some think that violence will befall them, some over-eat, and others have their funeral plans and burial plot all in order. For me, I closed my mind so completely to the inevitability of death that I had no fear of death. Or so I thought.

I began to see my true condition within seconds of the doctor pronouncing the dreaded word — cancer. My whole insides went into shock and the long-ignored fears came out of hiding. It looked as if there were so many nameless, formless fears all around me. I struggled to name those fears and not let them overtake me. I had been living for many years with the wonderful people that you have been reading about in this paper. They supported me completely, caring for my children when I couldn't, doing the shopping, cooking meals — community life went on and my life and my family's life didn't just fall apart because I was so ill. I was lovingly surrounded and supported. And I wasn't alone. I had someone who could understand me, night or day, whenever I wanted. Really, whenever I was afraid. So, why was I afraid?

I was afraid of the unknown. I'd felt that before when I had changed jobs or moved. I wasn't in control of what was happening to me. I was dependent on others, not independent. There were so many unfamiliar things to get used to — hospitals, doctors, and the treatment itself.

I had never faced the fact of death before and now the very real possibility of my own death stared me in the face. Maybe I had never feared death because no one had told me what it was. When the people I now live with told me about

the seriousness of death, I saw it wasn't to be taken lightly. It is a time of complete darkness. Every shameful, embarrassing, hateful thing we ever did will come back to mind over and over again with no way to block it out. We will have the choice of either denying we did each deed or owning up to the facts and feeling regret for having been that way. There is only one way out of death — remorse.

Was I ready for death? As I struggled through the hardest hours of my treatment, I saw my deepest fear — that my God didn't love me. I thought that I was such an awful sinner that He couldn't possibly love me. I had heard that our Creator holds us in His “mind” from the time we are conceived until eternity. If He forgot about us for a second we would cease to exist. In my excruciatingly intense circumstances, all I could think about was, “Does He love me? Would He forget about me for a second and I'd be gone, or would He hold onto me? Was my sin more than He could bear?”

There is only one way to know for sure whether God is real — ask Him. He never forsakes us; we forsake Him. I cried out with my whole heart for Him to save me from my circumstances, and He did. He held on tight to me because He had a purpose for my life. He's not an angry God out to get sinners. He won my heart because He didn't give up on me.

If you cry out to the One who put you in your mother's womb, He will hear you. If you want to know that He loves you, ask Him to show you. If you want His love, He will lead you to where you can receive His love.

Cry out to Him and He will answer you. He answered me. 🕊️

~ Ruhamah

<sup>19</sup> John 7:17-18  
www.twelvetribe.org



**If God lived on my street,** I'm sure the house would be big. It would have lots of rooms for all the widows and orphans who live there. It would be their home, not some institutional orphanage with bars on the windows. I'm sure the rooms would have windows to let lots of light in. The house would probably be old and fixed-up, not new and plastic.

There would be a nice white fence around the house, so that the children are safe inside. It would have a gate that is easy to open, so that guests could come in. No mean dog would bark and scare people.

Lots of people would live in God's house, I'm sure, because God doesn't want to be alone. He's not a lonely God. Nobody would cry alone in their rooms at night, or at the dinner table over a bowl of reheated canned soup. No, all the people would eat together, and some would cook, and some would clean up, but they would all be together.

They would invite everyone on my street to a special dinner. They would invite the poor couple in the small apartment, and the crippled woman, and the lame boy with the funny legs that curved inwards. And the blind man, yes, everybody knew his name, and he came all the time. There was a place for everyone at the table, but not everyone came. The important people never came, because they were too busy doing important things. They could have come, but they didn't.

God's house would be clean. God's yard would be clean. In fact, all the trash on the street would get picked up. You could tell someone cared.

God is love, and love is God. I think – if I lived where Love lived, that I could change my bad habits. I could even be honest about the bad things I had done, and then I could change. I bet everybody who lived at God's house says "I'm sorry" a lot and "I forgive you" even more.

If you wanted to come over, you'd be welcome. All the people inside would stop and talk to you. If it was getting late, God would invite you to spend the night and give you His room. He'd even let you move in to His house. And you could bring home another person, too.

It would be a place to belong, a place to be for a long time, a place where the people belong to God, and He belongs to them.

I would move in and live with Love, if God lived on my street. ✨



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