

AN OFFER WE CAN'T REFUSE
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Two dying thieves once responded to a dying Savior. One chose to repent, to change for the reward of a better life. The other thief scorned Christ's offer of Paradise, preferring to die lost rather than admit he had made mistakes and needed to change. Skip ahead to the present. Some of us, who have paid over and over for our mistakes, eventually seek relief from our foolishness. We decide enough is enough; there must be a better life. We accept Christ's offer of forgiveness, repent, and join God in paradise. Most refuse to admit we have made mistakes, we continue to do things our way, and would rather die than alter our lives. Things haven't changed much

The best offer we will ever receive is the same one offered the thieves. In its simplest form, it is, "If you will be my people, I will be your God." In **Leviticus 26:12**, God said, "I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." This contractual agreement was expanded into the Law to instruct the then heathen Israelites how to be God's people. The Law was necessarily harsh because they had no clue; they had to have rules to live by. In its simplest form, the Law was summed up in **Exodus 20:7-17**, otherwise known to us as the Ten Commandments. It is interesting to read them in the full text in which they were recorded, rather than our abbreviated versions. These Ten Commandments were broken down into hundreds of separate laws, given to the people by their pastor Moses.

Jesus came to exchange laws on stone for laws written internally in our hearts. He never came to do away with the intent of Law. His people must still be holy in order for Him to be our God and for us to be in His presence. He commanded in **1 Peter 1:16**, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Jesus summarized the intent of all of Moses' Law in two great commandments. These are given in **Mark 12:28-31**. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with our entire mind, and with all our strength. We are also to love our neighbor as our self. There were no other commandments as great as these. Following these equates to following all the Law. Complete commitment to pleasing God makes following rules easy. It is hard to live for God easy, but easy to live for God hard.

What do we get in return for following those laws once His Spirit engraves them on our hearts? Those who serve God are exalted and lifted up among men. They receive honor, praise, and a good name according to **Deuteronomy 26:19**. God also intercedes on behalf of His people. **Romans 12:19** promises His vengeance on our enemies if we allow Him that role. **Genesis 12:3** promises blessings to those who bless us and curses to those who curse us. No wonder **Hebrews 13:6** gives us the right to say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." We get a spouse, a friend, and a father. These promises are given in **2 Corinthians 11:2** promising God as an eternal spouse, **Proverbs 18:24**, **John 15:13-14**, and **Hebrews 13:5**, where we are promised a friend who sticks closer than a brother and never leaves us, and **Romans 8:15-16** and **Matthew 7:11**, where we are promised God as our Father. We are adopted by Him and become the children of God. It is nice to be able to say, "My Daddy is bigger than yours," and always be right. Did I mention that this Father likes giving really nice gifts to His children? Read **Matthew 7:11**.

When we take God's offer, we also get a partner when we need help carrying our burdens. David said in **Psalms 46:1** that God was his "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." A wonderful promise is given in **Matthew 11:28-30**. Don't misunderstand the offer. God is not asking us to bear His burdens, but to let Him team up with us pulling ours. As with any yoke, it is the strongest mule on the team who does most of the work.

We also get a better life in this world, a life with blessings. We get a provider for our needs. **Matthew 6:30-33** promises He will take better care of us than the grass of the field, which He clothes in splendor, even though it will die and be burned. He knows we need food, drink, shelter, and clothing. If we place our priorities on seeking after the things of God and righteousness, God promises to take care of all the other "things." David testified in **Psalms 37:25**, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." In **Isaiah 44:3**, we are promised satisfaction for both our physical and spiritual thirst, not measured in drops, but in floods. **Luke 6:38** promises if we give to our neighbor (remember that commandment?), it will be given back to us in "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." Our level of generosity will be used to determine how liberal others will be with us.

Miracles also come with the deal, if they are in the will of God and we are as well. Jesus said in **John 15:7**, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Likewise in **Matthew 7:7**, He promised, ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” The biggest miracles are the marvelous lives we receive now and eternally. If we allow God to dwell in us, according to **Galatians 5:22-23**, we subsequently get in this life; love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance as personality traits. We also receive a better life for all of eternity, spent in God’s presence. Jesus promised us in **John 14:2-3**, a mansion, a place He is preparing for us, so we can live with Him forever.

Those blessings are what Jesus offers. The only other offer on the table is that of the thief in **John 10:10**, who gives us the option to either be ripped off, killed, or destroyed. It amazes me so many actually choose not to take God’s deal. Is pride really worth throwing away so much? Unfortunately, I was wrong in one aspect. Since God gave us free will, we can refuse His offer. What a pity so many do.