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It is not a question of whether we will worship God, as much as when. Will we live the easy or the hard way? We can choose to serve God and be blessed or live in chaos and despair. **Deuteronomy 4:6-8** delineates the value of people and nations following God's rules for life. Obedience to God creates righteousness necessary for God's continued presence with us. **Psalms 22:3** speaks of the God, inhabiting our praises, being holy. His rules and laws may conflict with our fleshly desires, but having God live within us seems a fair trade for denying ourselves a bit.

The wisest man alive spoke in **Proverbs, Chapter 9** about fear of God being the beginning of wisdom. He knew disobedience brought with it terrible consequences. **Chapter 26 of Leviticus** lists some of these. The fear of God kept the first born of Israel alive on the first Passover. The Egyptians had to see what their slaves were doing. They could have put blood on their doors, had they believed in the power of God, before He demonstrated it terribly. **Exodus 12:29-30** speaks of a horrible night when every first born male child and animal died in unprotected homes. In the next chapter, Israel was told to dedicate their first born sons to the service of God. Moses had a choice. He could give God what God claimed was already His and still enjoy it, or have God take it completely away. We still have that choice.

What else already belongs to God? For starters, according to **Ecclesiastes 12:7**, our spirits came from Him. We think we will choose whether our spirits will be in submission to the Holy Spirit. We decide to give or withhold worship from God almighty, believing we control our relationship with Him. For a brief while, we do. Some choose, like David in **Psalms 100:2-4**, to worship God while we live. Others decline to submit, refusing obedience to His laws regarding righteousness. Somewhere we got the idea those rules create a lesser, rather than a better life. But they were given by the Creator for a richer, fuller existence. They make it possible for God, who will not dwell with evil, to actually live within and bless us. Serving God now with gladness makes it possible to serve God later and forever with gladness.

In **1 Peter 2:17** is a concise set of rules for abundant life. It reads, "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king." Note the admonition to fear God. We deal with Jesus and grace while living. When dead, we will be judged by the book by Jehovah. Those who refuse to submit to God while alive will submit later. This is a promise in **Romans 14:11-12**. As said, it is just a question of when and whether it will be the hard or easy way.

The first people of God, his Israeli bride, chose to do it the hard way. Their rebellion, despite God's miraculous provision for them, is chronicled in **Nehemiah 9:13-16**. We read of God's judgment against them in **Ezekiel 20:13** where He poured His fury out on them for despising His judgments and polluting His Sabbaths.

Why was God so hard on Israel? **Hebrews 12:6** informs us, "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." Why is He so hard on us? The same reason. He does not want us to perish, cut off from His presence. If we die lost, His sacrifice was for nothing and His blood was spilled in vain. He takes no more pleasure in punishing us than we do our own children. **Ezekiel 18: 20-32** lets us know He would rather we live righteous, so He can dwell with us blessing our temporal and eternal lives. **1 Chronicles 22:13** promises us prosperity when we live and obey God's way.

Why do we make the same mistakes and find ourselves punished again and again? Leaving the place in our lives where we are being punished is not the same as staying away from that pain. The deck is stacked against us.

Our flesh does not desire the things of God, but the pleasures and desires of flesh. If we feed it far more than our spirits, the best fed dog in the fight usually wins. Once we begin to sin, I think God probably just leaves. To avoid that, it helps to feed the spirit, and avoid feeding temptations. They are not from God or enjoyable to Him.

God tells us when He forgives, He forgets. Do not expect the same thing from those we have hurt and disappointed. That will take at least as much time as we spent hurting and disappointing them. All we can do is apologize, promise only to try to do better, then wait out the necessary time to restore trust.

Not everyone will be happy if we become blessed, successful, and happy. Some will not like the change in status quo, especially when previously they were superior to us and had a good reason to look down on us. When they do not share our happiness, do not respond to evil with evil. Win by lifestyle, while avoiding being set up to fail.

If we go back and hang with the same crowd we got into trouble with the first time, we will get in trouble with them again. Just to put that in perspective, consider the “friends” who will offer to party or get high with us when we have finally stopped paying for our mistakes. How many wrote or visited or helped while we were in trouble? Even God recognized in Genesis that loneliness was hard to bear. We all need friends, but we can choose carefully who they will be, where we will live, and what activities we will be involved in.

Once the system has us, it sets us up to return. Our continued failure is a tremendous source of income to everyone in the system besides us. The game destroys lives, but everyone else prospers. Funny how few survive the parole process and wind up violated. Either parole officers are very poor at their supposed rehabilitation role or they are very good at another role. If possible and bearable, refuse parole and flatten sentences. If we take parole, follow orders implicitly. Then place ourselves under a big God’s authority and let Him deal with the system trying to consume us.

Watch for baited hooks. Satan has had a very long time to perfect the lures he uses. He is a good fisherman too.

To live well, honor all men (show respect to everyone), love the brotherhood (become best friends with men of God), fear God, and honor the King (the law of the land). In all these, we can pay now or assuredly, we will pay later.