

Kevin, I told Mamie as I was headed home that there are only three people in this world that I love more than you—only Cathy, Emily, and Seán hold a higher place in my heart than you.

I have told Cathy that the first time my heart broke was when in Fort Bragg I was sent to first grade while you were sent to kindergarden. I wanted so badly to go with you to kindergarden, to be with you—my best friend, my brother. I love Tom, Brian, Mary Ann, Barbara, Sheila, and Tim but you are my closest, best brother and the person I have known longest on this earth. We shared so much, did so much while we were growing up. I love you so very much and as then so now the thought of being separated from you once again scares and saddens me deeply. We will be separated by the death of one of us—hopefully not so soon as either of our conditions portends. But more importantly and infinitely more seriously there is the very real possibility that even in the inevitable death of both of us we shall spend eternity separately.

I don't say this as a matter of defending a particular position but rather I am convinced to the depths of my soul of the truth of the matter.

You spoke of your belief that the Bible had no central theme or message. You likened the parts to the writings of tribes—the Torah being the writings of the tribe of the Jews and the New Testament to that of the Christians—each writing to put forth the case of their separate tribal concerns. You didn't say it but I could see that you were talking about the tribe of Moses and the tribe of Jesus—Yeshua, as you rightly pronounced his name as his mother did.

But, the message of Scripture is unified; there is a main, central theme tracing its way from Genesis to Revelation—crossing tribal boundaries as you might say.

The relationship between God and man begins in Genesis 1.26 when Moses wrote that “God said, ‘let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him.’” So, you are right, we are children of God as human beings as we are created in his image.

But, as you know, the man Adam, by his free will as a man (no other creature has free will) disobeyed God and God sent him out of his presence. There was a separation between God and the creature that he created to be like him and to have fellowship with him.

The rest of the Torah is the account of God reaching back to man in order to restore that fellowship. Abraham was the man who, as James (2.23) wrote, “believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness; and he was called the friend of God.” God had promised Abraham that he would have descendants more numerous than the stars and by him all the families of the earth would bless themselves. This is far beyond a tribal promise—this is universal.

A great deal of the Torah is God using the tabernacle/temple sacrificial system to remind them of how deadly serious was the separation between God and man. It began in Genesis 3 when God replaced the wholly inadequate plant covering Adam and Eve had made for themselves with the skin of an animal God killed to cover their sin. Plant life was insufficient—blood needed to be shed. This is the essence of the animal sacrificial system—animal sacrifice to temporarily cover the sins of men. Remember also that the animals had to be pure and unspoiled. This all points to the ultimate and final sacrifice that God himself would provide to once and all cover man’s sin. That sacrifice restores the fellowship that was broken by the sin of disobedience committed in Eden and which has since pretty much shown itself to be part of the DNA of mankind ever since.

It is a matter of justice. In a truly just system offenses and violations cannot be just passed over, set aside, forgotten. That is not justice. A price has to be paid against the debt of the offence. Justice is a matter of free will. Without free will there cannot be an offense. If there is in fact an offense then for there to be justice truly there needs to be a debt paid by someone. The debt is owed by someone. The debt is owed by us to God. Our guilt is such that we owe more of a debt than we could pay.

The love of God is such that he, like he did in Gen. 3 and in Gen 22 (Abraham & Isaac), provided the price, provided the sacrifice, provided the lamb that was to be slain for us. That is why Yeshua is ultimately the Lamb of God. He is the Lamb of the sin sacrifice that God himself provided in our stead.

Yeshua is God’s provided Lamb as our sin sacrifice in the thread that runs through the whole of Scripture—the writings of both tribes!

And like Abraham who believed God (faith), and those who spread the Passover lamb’s blood on their doorposts in Egypt as a matter of faith in God’s promise through Moses that the angel of death would pass them by, and like those bitten by the serpents in the desert in Numbers 21 (notice the snake sin connection) who only had to look at the

serpent (sin) hanging on the pole and believe in the promise of salvation, so now Abraham's promised son, the Passover lamb, and sin dealt with being raised up on a pole, is all gathered in one event at Calvary where God's provision for our debt of sin is given in the greatest love to satisfy true justice. Without a person's acceptance of that provision they are outside of God's mercy and subject to his condemnation of their own free will. Someone once commented that those who wanted nothing to do with God here on earth will have their wish for eternity.

Everyone knows John 3.16—"for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that all who believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Everyone knows that part. But they invariably fail to read 3.18. "He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because they did not believe in the name of the only son of God." Their debt rests on them and they can't do enough to pay it of their own accord.

That reiterates the justice of God. God forgives but only if there is repentance and faith—only if there is an acknowledgement of the need and an acceptance of the provision.

And that acceptance is found in faith, in belief. Sounds simple, sounds lite, but we are talking genuine, down to the core of our being kind of belief and faith. Faith that drives our actions. James talked about it in great detail. So did John in his first epistle. Jesus explains it clearly in Matthew 7 and in 25. The whole first 5 chapters of Isaiah is all about genuine faith and understanding of God's love and commandments. I could go on and on about the rest of Scripture that makes this point emphatically.

Love God, love your neighbor. Jesus said that the whole of the Torah and the Prophets hung on these two commandments. It is through faith in Jesus's sacrifice on the cross that our fellowship with God is restored. Jesus is the fruit of life hanging from the tree in the garden that gives eternal life. It is first seen in Genesis 2 and followed up at Calvary (the mid point of eternity). All we have to do, as hard as it is, is to genuinely, in faith, reach up and take of the fruit of the tree of life to be restored to fellowship with God. And our true fellowship with each other. Shawn and Kevin—two brothers who love each other greatly and who this brother never wants to be separated from again.

I love you Kevin.