



2 Cor. 5:18

# Open Face

*One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up all others. Christ our Righteousness*

No. 143

MARCH 2024

## Corporate Identity and Sin

*David Clayton*



According to the Oxford Dictionary, identity is who or what a person or thing is. It has to do with who you are and I suppose depending on the context there may be several different answers to the question of, ‘what is your identity?’ Generally, when we talk about a person's identity, what we look at is the nationality of the person, the age of the person, the country where the person lives, maybe the race of the person. But what we are really after, is that we want to have an understanding of the person that enables us to relate to him in an appropriate way.

There is craziness going on in the world right now where men are identifying as women, and women are identifying as men, some are even identifying as cats and other animals. This word, “identity” has become a major talking point because of that kind of craziness, but in this article we want to look at it in a more rational way.

Let us say for example I had a twin brother, my identity would be different from his, but what makes my identity

different? Usually when we encounter twins, we start trying to find out how we can distinguish between them. Sometimes it's just that there are inflections in the voice, sometimes one has a little mark somewhere, and after you get to know them very well you begin to pick up quite easily who is who, because the resemblance is not perfect, the only place you have perfect resemblance is in God and His son, and then that again this is resemblance in character, it's not necessarily in outward appearance.

So identity really refers to the distinguishing characteristics, how one person can be recognized differently from another. However, in the definition given by Wikipedia another element is added. Identity is also said to refer to, “the qualities, the beliefs, the personality traits, appearance and/or expressions that characterize a person *or a group*.” As an example of this we could consider the group called, “transgender:” Among the confused people who are emphasizing identity today, are some who identify themselves as transgenders, they put themselves in a certain category and identify themselves as such.

In this article we are specifically focusing on this kind of group identity which we refer to as, **corporate identity**. According to the Oxford dictionary, “**corporate**” means that it is, “shared by a whole group.” So corporate identity means simply, an identity which is shared by a group. Some of us are male, some are female, we are not corporate in that sense. Some of us are Americans,

some are Jamaicans, or other nationalities, we're not corporate in that sense. Some of us are one race, some of us are another race, we are not corporate in that sense, but in terms of our believing in certain doctrines and worshipping the one God who has a Son, we have a corporate identity.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary adds another important element in defining this word, “**corporate**.” It says it involves the element of being “endowed by law with the rights and the liabilities of an individual.” What does this phrase mean? It means that whatever right one has, everybody has the same right and whatever shortcomings or disadvantages one has, everybody has those disadvantages. I can understand this because I am a Jamaican and when the government borrows money from the IMF and the whole country begins to suffer, I also suffer under that liability.

In Hebrews 7:9, we find an example where the Bible teaches this reality of corporate identity. The passage is focusing on the question of which was greater, was it the Levitical priesthood or was it the priesthood of Jesus Christ? In this verse, Paul says,

*And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in*

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Open Face  
Manchester, Jamaica W.I.

March 2024

Open Face is dedicated to the promotion and the restoration of apostolic Christianity. In particular to the restoration of those truths which have been cast down to the ground and trampled underfoot by the papacy, and adopted by her daughters.

Our purpose is to motivate our readers to commit themselves wholly to the task of personal preparation for the coming of the Lord, and to the taking of the final warning message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

Open Face is published bi-monthly, and is sent free of cost to all who desire to receive it.

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### *Abraham. (Heb 7:9)*

Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec and so did Levi, the person who was ordained of God to receive tithes of the Israelites. The fact that the Israelites paid tithes to Levi indicates that Levi held a special place in God's plans, but Paul states that Levi himself paid tithes to Melchisedec, suggesting that Melchisedec was greater than Levi. But when did Levi pay tithes to Melchisedec? When Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, Levi was not even a thought in Abraham's mind, it was many years before Levi's birth and in fact, at that time even Levi's father Jacob had not yet been born. Levi only existed in the genes of Abraham, not yet a person, but yet Paul says that Levi paid tithes when Abraham paid tithes. Why does he make such a statement? It is because he's operating on this principle of corporate identity. Even though Levi was not yet born, Paul is saying that Levi was a part of Abraham's existence, and so whatever Abraham did, Levi did it also because he and Abraham shared the same corporate identity.

As simple a matter as this might seem, it is vital to understanding what true Christianity is about. A group of people are

endowed with rights and the liabilities which apply to everybody else in the group. Here is another example from the Bible. In Genesis 18:26 we read,

*And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. (Gen 18:26)*

Can we see the concept of corporate blessings? Everybody in Sodom was going to be saved, the wicked, the abominable, all the gays and the LG-BT people in Sodom were going to be spared, on what basis? If God found fifty righteous persons in the city. There we see the concept of corporate identity. If there had been enough righteous people in that city, God would have identified the **entire** city as a place that was qualified to be spared, the blessing of one person or of a few people would have fallen upon hundreds, maybe thousands of people, because that's the way corporate identity works, the blessing of one falls upon the others.

That is why if I want my family to be blessed, it will help if I myself commit myself to God. In Jamaica they have a little phrase that says, "wha' drop off a head, drop pon shoulder." Which means, if it falls from your head, it will land on your shoulder, and it's in keeping with the idea of corporate blessings; what blesses one person falls upon those who are in association with that person.

God expressed this idea here when He stated that He would have saved Sodom, not just for fifty, but if there had been ten there, for the sake of ten people a wicked city would have been saved, so we see how the impact of one person can have an effect on all the others who are around him. In Genesis 26:24 we see the same principle again at work:

*And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and*

*multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. (Gen 26:24),*

Sometimes we read these verses in the Bible and we may wonder, why does God do this? But it's God way of emphasizing the principle to make sure that we understand it: what drops off the head, falls on the shoulder, so Abraham is to be blessed, and for his sake, **because of Abraham**, his descendants, become a part of Abraham's corporation and they are blessed for Abraham's sake. The same principle is highlighted in Genesis 30:27 where we see a discussion between Laban and Jacob:

*And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake. (Gen 30:27)*

Jacob had been working with Laban for a number of years, and Laban found out that just because Jacob was there, he was being blessed. This is highlighting the point of corporate association, there was a way Jacob and Laban were associated, Jacob was Laban's nephew, but not only that, they were working together on the same project, and because of Jacob's involvement, Laban was being blessed. Let's look at one more example in Genesis 39:9.

*It came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake, and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. (Genesis 39:9)*

This statement refers to Potiphar, an Egyptian, a heathen man, a worshipper of false gods, yet he was blessed, his house was blessed, why? Because a man of God came into fellowship with him, came into association with him, and his connection with this man brought blessings into his life. That is one of the aspects, or benefits, or implications of corporate identity.

But let us take note of the fact that it works the other way also. In the book of Joshua we have the story of Achan, the Israelite man who took Babylonian

garments and a wedge of gold and hid them in his tent, contrary to the explicit commands of God.

*And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. (Josh 7:24-25)*

We probably shake our heads when we read this, and wonder, what did his sons and his daughters do? The fact is, their father's evil fell upon their heads. I'm not sure if they were in agreement with the deception, I'm not sure if they knew about it and didn't say anything, but I'm sure of something, his cows, and his donkeys, and his sheep did not know about it, yet they were stoned as well! This is not the easiest thing to understand, but it is fully based on the fact that God was teaching and emphasizing over and over this principle of corporate identity. The Old Testament was designed by God to be a teaching tool, a "schoolmaster," and when God has set up a teaching tool, everything in that lesson book is perfect, everything is in keeping with the principles of that teaching tool. If God is going to teach us about corporate identity, and corporate accountability, He will be consistent in teaching that lesson, He's not going to break the pattern. One day when we get to eternity we're going to find out whether Achan's sons and daughters will be saved, we don't know, but we can be sure that what we see in the Old Testament is not the end of the story. But what God was teaching us here with Achan and his entire household, was the concept of corporate identity.

This is why the fourth commandment says,

*. . . . I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto*

*the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; (Exod 20:5)*

Corporate identity, corporate accountability. There's a blessing in association, there's also a curse in association. Let's look at just one more example:

*Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. (1 Sam. 15:2)*

This was four hundred years after they came out of Egypt and at this time, it was many generations after those people were dead and gone, God says, "I remember what Amalek did to Israel."



Four hundred years ago my own ancestors were in Africa, and China, and India. How can I be responsible for what my ancestors did four hundred years ago? But we can see the principle being taught; although it is four hundred years later, yet the descendants are still the same people, they share the same corporate identity and corporate accountability. The lesson is being taught here clearly in the Bible. We can see that this concept of corporate identity and corporate accountability is a clear Biblical teaching.

In actual fact, even in our system of law today, there is a legal acknowledgement of this principle of corporate identity with its associated accountability. Legal accountability is the underlying principle that entitles us to an inheritance. This is why when a person dies,

his children get what belongs to him by law. This principle of corporate accountability exists not just in the Bible, but it is also present in our society.

Why is it that if the police catch you in a car where everybody has drugs, even though you had nothing to do with it you end up in jail too? It's because you are implicated by your association, that's why they say, "birds of a feather flock together", that's why they say, "a man is known by the company that he keeps." There is a legal implication that is based on common sense, it's the idea that if you mingle with a certain set of people it usually is because you think alike and you have things in common. So the law will make that association and will put you in a place where it assumes that you are guilty. This is what is involved when we consider the whole aspect of corporate identity.

There are some people who will deny that such a thing exists, they say it is unfair and unreasonable. How could God identify us with what is bad, or with people who are bad, just because we have some kind of connection? But as we have seen it's not only God who operates in this way, it's a principle of identity which exists where human beings exist and there is a logical reason for identifying people in this way. It is important to remember that you are going to be benefited or cursed based on your associations, your corporate identity will bless you, or will hurt you, and maybe even do both.

So what are some other real, justifiable reasons why a person may be implicated by belonging to a group? We saw that there is a legal implication, but look at some other reasons, first of all, genetic identity; I know that genetically I belong to the tribe of Clayton. It's interesting that my children have made a little WhatsApp group which they have labeled, "The Tribe of David." They did this because they believe that they have a common identity, and that identity is their genetics. They all belong to the same genetic identity, and so they have formed themselves into a group. They

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# No Eternal Hellfire



Recently I watched an interview on a Christian Youtube channel where a former Christian who had become an atheist was expressing his reasons for rejecting belief in God. This atheist, who seemed to be a sincere person kept pointing to one thing as his reason and it was the doctrine of eternal torment in hell. The conversation was very cordial and carried out in a good spirit, but I could not help thinking as I watched this conversation that the atheist was making far more sense than the Christian.

Christians like to point to the love of God, they often emphasize that he's a loving, merciful, kind and gracious person. However, I have never been able to find one reasonable explanation as to why a God of love and mercy should create a place like hell where people are to be tortured for all eternity. According to those who believe in this doctrine of hell, hell is a place of eternal, never-ending torment created by God, for punishing immortal sinners. It consists of unquenchable flames and undying worms. This Christian interviewer tried his best to justify this belief, but as I said, the reasoning of the atheist made far more sense and in fact, according to him, even if God existed he would not want to serve a person who is capable of torturing people like that forever.

This Christian-turned-atheist, is not the only person who has had this experience. The doctrine of eternal torment

in a never ending hell is a very widespread teaching in the Christian world and is one of the doctrines which has done more to create unbelievers than any other doctrine. I just did a casual search on the Internet and found these comments from three popular Christian sources:

**Billy Graham** said: "Not only can there be a hell of our own making on Earth, but there is a hell in the future, to which everyone who rejects Christ is going."

**Andrew Farley**: "Because God loves them – he has given them what they want (referring to eternal hellfire)"

**Biblword**: "Hell is a place where people face God's anger for their sin. God is angry because He loves passionately: you can't have love without anger."

## JONATHAN EDWARDS' SERMON

Jonathan Edwards was an American preacher who lived during the 18<sup>th</sup> century (1703–1758). Perhaps he has preached one of the most famous sermons on the topic of eternal punishment in hell. Even though this sermon was preached 300 years ago it is still a pretty good expression of what is believed by those who hold to this doctrine. Here are a couple of excerpts from that sermon:

*"The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked. His wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire. He is of purer eyes than to bear you in his sight; you are ten thousand times as abominable in his eyes as the most hateful, venomous serpent is in ours."*

*"It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite, horrible*

*misery. When you look forward, you shall see along forever a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your soul. And you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages in wrestling with this Almighty, merciless vengeance. And then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a dot to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite."*

As we can see the great problem with this doctrine of eternal, burning hell, is the great confusion it creates concerning the character of God. Christians will say, "God is love," because of course the Bible says so. But at the same time they believe that God is a being whose love is of such a nature that it justifies tormenting a person in a fire which he deliberately keeps burning for ever, and ever, and ever. It is impossible to reconcile these two ideas. If a human being were to keep a person alive for a day, torturing him by burning with fire, such a person would be described as a monster! Nobody could ever describe such a person as being a loving person, nobody would ever try to make the claim that this behavior was a demonstration of love. Yet this is what people try to do when they apply the same kind of behavior to God! People may say, "God is love," but for people who consider the issue carefully, the God who behaves like this cannot be a God of love.

In his sermon Jonathan Edwards never tried to portray God as a God of love. Notice the phrases that he used: "His wrath towards you burns like fire," "you are ten thousand times as abominable in his eyes as the most hateful, venomous serpent is in ours," "There

will be no end to this exquisite, horrible misery,” “you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages in wrestling with this Almighty, merciless vengeance.” There is no hint in these words of love, mercy or grace. Jonathan Edwards did not try to rationalize or to justify the doctrine to try to make it harmonize with the love of God, he simply presented it in its bare naked form and I think it is fair to say that here, we have a true picture of what the doctrine of eternal hell really implies about God. He is a being who is capable of violent, vindictive hatred; unrelenting vengefulness. He has the power to vent his anger on people and he will do it! Such a God is not a person to be loved but rather he is a being to be feared and avoided!

Yet it cannot be denied that there are passages in the Bible which may be interpreted in such a way as to lead to the conclusion that there is such a place as an eternal burning hell. This reinforces the fact that we need to understand the way the Bible is written and to carefully examine every teaching that we embrace – especially if it is something which creates the impression that God is not really a loving person. There are many verses which emphasize God’s love, kindness and mercy. I always think it foolish when people present an illogical or irrational idea concerning God and then try to justify it by saying, “God’s way of understanding things is different from our human way of understanding things.” It makes no sense to say that God’s concept of love is different than our concept. God is trying to communicate with human beings and therefore when he says something to us we have to understand it in terms of our ability to understand things in our human sphere.

*He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (1John 4:8)*

*Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Ezek 33:11)*

*And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. (Luke 9:54-55)*

These verses do not speak directly to the doctrine of eternal torment, but they emphasize God’s mind, God’s attitude, God’s character. Note especially the last passage from Luke chapter 9; when James and John desired to take vengeance on the Samaritans because they would not receive Jesus, Jesus rebuked them for their vengeful spirit and told them that they were not aware of the kind of spirit that was driving them. He made it clear that their attitude did not come from God. How could the son of God rebuke people for having a vengeful spirit, for desiring to burn people with fire if he himself and his father, God, possessed the same kind of spirit? When we study the Bible we should seek to understand principles as the first and most important element of our learning. Once we understand the principles then we are much better able to understand isolated statements and doctrines. Everything else must harmonize with those principles. This is why when we understand that God is love we have to take another look at the doctrine of eternal burning hell. Those passages and verses which seemed to speak of God roasting people forever are clearly being misunderstood and need to be carefully re-examined.

#### MISUNDERSTOOD VERSES

let us take a brief look at some of the verses which seem to teach this doctrine of eternal torment in hell. One of the most famous and well-known passages is the parable told by Jesus, which tells of the beggar who died and went to Abraham’s bosom, and the rich man who died and went to hell.

*And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar*

*off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (Luke 16:22-23)*

This parable is clearly, not a true story. First of all it says that the beggar was carried into Abraham’s bosom; is this where good people go when they die? Do they go to sit in Abraham’s bosom? Of course not, this is clearly not to be taken literally! Secondly it says that from his place in Abraham’s bosom he was able to hold a conversation with those who were being tormented in hell fire. This would mean that heaven and hell are very close together, and that people in both places are able to speak with one another! This is a parable, not a factual story. When we hear a parable what we should consider is the meaning or the point of the parable, the story is not necessarily true. For example when you hear the story of the Tortoise and the hare who went for a race, we are not foolish enough to think that it really happened! We look for the point being made in the story, we don’t take the details seriously.

In this story of the rich man and the beggar, Jesus was making the point that if a person would not receive the teachings of the Scriptures, then he would not believe even if somebody comes back to him from the dead. This is the point we take away from the parable, Jesus was not teaching a doctrine of what happens to people when they die.

#### FIRE AND BRIMSTONE TORMENT

*And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Rev 20:10)*

*The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: (Rev 14:10)*

These two verses seem to speak very clearly of a place described as, “the

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# Corporate Identity

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are so closely connected in that group that any problem that comes upon one, it comes upon all, and any benefit that comes upon one, it comes upon all. All this is based on the genetic identity, and what does that do? Not only does it give a similar nature (they resemble each other), but they behave alike, and think alike in several ways, so that gives them a genetic identity, and so you could almost safely say, if one of you is guilty the other one is guilty too.

A few years ago, somebody broke into our campsite. It's way out in the bush, and we had some guys working there for a while. One of them was a thief, and after the work was finished, he came back with some of his friends with a truck, and he stole the solar system, a lawn mower, and several other items. Brother Howard was able to do some detective work, and he discovered who had done it. The police were able to arrest this person, but while Howard was doing his investigation, he encountered somebody who knew the guilty person well, and this person said, "look here, if this guy is involved then he has a friend named M----- and you can just go and arrest him as well because it is certain that he is also involved because they both work very closely together."

The police went to the home of that friend, and they found equipment from the campsite at his home. The police had no reason to be suspicious of him, but just because he was friends with the known thief they went for him and found clear evidence that he was also involved in the robbery. The point I'm making is that birds of a feather flock together, and when you share the same genetic identity that corporate behavior is even more pronounced. You not only have similar habits and like to be around each other, but you also have inborn tendencies to behave the same way.

Then there is cultural identity which causes people to have a similar mentality. The behavior of the people of India,

is different from the behavior of the Africans, and even in Africa, the people in South Africa behave differently from the people in Kenya. It's the same thing in America, you go to America, and the people in New York are very different from the people in California, very different from the people in Texas, but at the same time there is a common American mentality, there are some things they talk about a lot that you don't hear other people talking about.

We see all of this brought out in the Bible in 2 Corinthians 5:17

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2Cor 5:17)*

What is this talking about? it's talking about spiritual genetics. You are in Christ, you have been born again, you have become a new creature. I was born a Clayton, that's my genetics, but if it were possible for me to be born again physically, I could change my identity.

Many years ago there was a man who became friends with my father and became quite attached to him. After some time he told my father that he had finally discovered why they were such good friends: there was an affinity between them, because in a previous life, he had been a Roman centurion, and my father had been a Jewish rabbi. According to him, the both of them had been good friends two thousand years ago, and that was the reason why they had become friends again now, in another life. Of course this was absolute rubbish, but it presents a concept which highlights what being born again physically might look like if such a thing were possible. The illustration might help us to conceptualize it. The Bible teaches us that there is a way to receive a new identity, it presents the idea of becoming a new creature, of being born again but this is by receiving new spiritual DNA in our present life. By this means, old things pass away and all things become new.

In this experience, this new identity that is received is a corporate identity. It is corporate because the life which

is received is the same life that every born again Christian receives; it is the life of Christ. We all partake of that same one life and so we have that same identity as Christ-ians. As we saw earlier, corporate identity brings both benefits and liabilities. For example, there are many benefits to being a citizen of the USA, this is why people from all over the world make great sacrifices and even risk their lives in some cases in order to have the privilege of living there. However, there are disadvantages that go along with the benefits. For example the system of taxation in the USA is far more strictly enforced than in many other countries and many American lives in fear of hearing from the IRS or being visited by somebody from the tax department.

The benefits you receive and the disadvantages which you experience are in some cases very dependent on which country you belong to. So, we may obtain identity by being born, we obtain our nature by the DNA we inherit from our family line and we obtain citizenship based on the country where we are born, this is what determines our national identity. All of these concepts may be applied to our identity as Christians.

Now the last thing I want to look at is choice. One of the accusations that people have brought against our teachings, is that what we are doing is taking away the element of choice from the Christian experience. As we focus on the significance of corporate identity, we are saying that what is important is the question of which kingdom a person belongs to, which family he belongs to, which nation he belongs to, and that this is the thing which determines whether a person is blessed or cursed. Those who object say that this takes away the element of choice, they say that it is not fair that somebody else should make decisions, and you end up being disadvantaged by it just because you belong to his family. They say it's not fair, and so they believe that all that matters is our personal choice, ours alone. We make individual choices and based on



our choices we are either blessed, or we are cursed, on account of these personal choices we are either saved, or we are lost.

Many of us like myself, believed this for most of our lives, but there was need of a more careful examination of the Bible to gain a proper understanding of the place of choice in the whole formula; choice is involved, yes, but we have to understand what choice. We are free to choose, but free to choose how, and free to choose what? that's the important question.

First of all, let us understand this; Satan has dominion over those who are a part of his kingdom. This is legally fair and right. Remember that there are two divisions to the universe, there is the part where God is the governing authority and there is a part where He is not accepted as such. He is not the governing authority in Satan's kingdom, and he does not have jurisdiction over those who are in that kingdom, Satan has a legal right to them. So what can we understand from this? Our rights depend on where we are, not who we are, but where we are.

I know somebody who renounced his U.S citizenship and stated that he was no longer governed by the laws of the USA. So he was driving down the road without a license, and with a hand-made license plate on his car when the police stopped him. He told them, "I am a citizen of the world, I'm not subject to your laws." The police took him down to the jail just the same because he was driving in the USA. Your rights depend on where you are, if you are in America, the rights that you have depend on the laws of America, if you are in Jamaica, the same thing applies. When you belong to a group, you don't go to the group and impose your individuality there, you live by the rules and principles of the group that you are in, that is what membership imposes on you. This is an important point to remember.

Legal rights don't depend on our personal ideas, we can choose our kingdom, this is where choice comes in, we can choose our kingdom, but we can't

choose our rights. If we are in kingdom A, we're entitled to certain privileges and rights in that kingdom, if we are in Kingdom B, we will live by the principles of that kingdom, can we see why this is so important? It reveals and it manifests an understanding of the way of salvation which is contrary to the thinking which has been imposed on us since the days when we were children.

People in the USA are faced with the choice of either Democrats or Republicans. Each time that elections come around they have the liberty of making a choice for one or the other. At that time they have the freedom of choice, but once the government has been voted in, their power to choose is ended, now they have to live with the consequences of that choice. From that point it's a case of, whatever you get you take. You can't vote for the democrats and then decide that you want to live by the principles of the Republicans or vice versa. No, when you have voted Republican or Democrat, you take what you get, your choice at the beginning determines all the other choices which are made. Those are made for you, on your behalf by the government you chose, the only option you had was to choose which government you wanted, not how that government operates.

This principle applies to the way of salvation and the conflict that is taking place in the universe, we can cast our vote, we can choose our sides, but we don't determine what happens in those kingdoms, once you are in the Kingdom of Light, your privileges are automatic, your liabilities are automatic, you know you're going to be attacked by the devil automatically, you know he's going to slander you and say bad things and try to destroy you, that goes along with the kingdom.

You know also that if you choose to remain in Satan's kingdom, you can prosper in this world, you can go along on an easy ride, but you know that you're going to become more and more evil, and at the end you're going to end up in eternal death. You don't get the

right to choose what happens, you know if you're in God's kingdom, your life is going to become more and more holy, if you are in the other kingdom, you're going to become more and more evil. You don't get the right to choose what happens in each kingdom, you just get the right to choose your kingdom.

When we understand this, we won't try so much to improve ourselves, we will try to make the right choice, because when you have made the right choice, the improvement will follow naturally, automatically. We will inherit the benefits which exist in that kingdom of Christ.

So remember, this is how sin exists, there are the two places, you get to choose your kingdom. In one kingdom God is all, and God is in all, this is the kingdom all of us have theoretically chosen, if we have really chosen this Kingdom, if we have really committed ourselves to our God and to our Savior, this is our truth, God is all, and God is in all. On the other side, in the other kingdom, God is feared and God is avoided. You don't have a choice about how the kingdoms operate, you can only choose to get out of one kingdom and into the other one.

#### **WHY A CORPORATE SYSTEM?**

Why did God set up the universe to run this way? Surely, God could have made it differently! Why set up a system where, if one person does something those around him inherit it? Why did this planet Earth fall under corporate condemnation when Adam chose to sin? Maybe we cannot answer all the questions perfectly, but first of all, let us understand that the underlying issue was a system of governance. Satan criticized the government of God and proposed that he could set up a better system of government. This is the way in which he intended to "be like the most high." Satan has promoted the lie that God's system of government where God is in constant contact with his people, governing them by living inside, is a system of slavery, that there is no

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# No Eternal Hellfire

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lake of fire,” a place where people are to be tormented for ever and ever. But we should remember that these passages are to be found in the book of Revelation; above everything else, Revelation is a book that is full of symbolic language and symbolic events. When we view the events of Revelation the first thing we should consider is that what we are hearing and what we are seeing is not to be taken literally. This is very clearly true of this lake of fire. Without going into too many details let us just quickly look at what Revelation 20:4,5 tells us:

*And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev 20:14-15)*

Here we are told what the lake of fire is; it is the second death, nothing more nothing less, it is not a place of eternal torment. The description here is a figurative one, it does not refer to a literal place but it refers to the end of existence. How do we know this? We know this because it says that death and hell were also cast into the lake of fire! What is death? What is hell? Are these things that can be picked up and thrown into a fire? How do you put death into a burning lake? Everything becomes simple when we just accept what is said: **the lake of fire is simply, the second death**, and the second death is simply the end of existence! When a person or a thing is said to be in the lake of fire, all it means is that, that person or that thing has ceased to exist! The phrase, “lake of fire,” is simply a coded statement which refers to something passing into a state where it no longer exists.

## IMMORTAL WORMS?

*And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all*

*flesh. (Isa 66:24)*

*And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (Mark 9:43-44)*

Here we find again another striking example of symbolic language. What are we to make of this statement that there is a place where worms do not die and fire is not quenched? In actual fact, this imagery is drawn from a place which actually existed near to Jerusalem. This place, the valley of Hinnom, was called, “Gehenna,” and it was actually a huge garbage dump where all kinds of rubbish including dead bodies of animals was continually burning. It was a place where maggots could always be seen along with fire burning, and Jesus, and other Bible writers, sometimes used this place, Gehenna as a symbol of the final destiny of those who rejected God. Basically what was being said was that such people would end up in the garbage dump, a place reserved for things that were of no use and only fit to be destroyed, not that they would be roasted by fire and eaten by worms for ever and ever!

## PRESENTLY IN HELL

One other thing which we will look at is the question of whether or not there are people presently burning in a place called hell. The following passage written by Peter, is one which is often used to try to prove this idea.

*By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. (1Pet 3:19-20)*

This verse seems to suggest that when Jesus died, while his body was dormant in the tomb, he went into hell and preached to the spirits of dead people, specifically to those who had lived and died during the days of Noah, just before the great flood. Supposedly these people

were all in hell, suffering the pain of eternal burning. As much as the verse seems to suggest this, this interpretation has to be rejected for several reasons; first of all the Bible teaches clearly that there is no possibility of repentance after a person has died, for the dead know nothing (Eccl 9:10; Ps 146:3,4). The Bible often describes the dead as sleeping, and this is because the spirits of dead people are in a state of unconsciousness. They know nothing and cannot be communicated with, and cannot be awakened until the time of the resurrection of the dead (Job 14:12). A person’s spirit cannot function without his body, it remains dormant and asleep as long as there is no body associated with it.

What this passage in 1 Peter is really saying is that the same spirit of Christ was at work, preaching to the people who lived in the days of Noah. Of course, the spirits of those people are now in the prison house of death, unconscious and awaiting the resurrection. Jesus did not go into some realm where dead people are conscious, no, he also remained asleep in the grave until he was resurrected. But it was Jesus, by his spirit who did preach to those people, but certainly it was not while he was dead, but it was thousands of years before back in the time of Noah.

*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; (2Pet 2:4)*

So what about the fallen angels, have they been in a place of eternal torment since the time that they sinned? It says they were cast down to hell. The word here translated as, “hell,” is a Greek word, Tartarus. This word is connected to the Greek concept that there was a place called Hades which was the dwelling place of the dead. In this place there were dungeons, and the deepest dungeon was called Tartarus, also known as the Abyss.

One of the problems which New Testament believers faced was the issue of how to communicate their ideas to peo-



ple who spoke a different language. They had to find equivalent ideas in the cultures of these people and try to use these to represent what they were talking about. The Hebrews referred to the grave as, "sheol." It meant, the grave, nothing more. But when the believers were speaking about the grave, using the Greek language, of course they used the Greek word for the place of the dead, which was, Hades. The problem was that in the Greek understanding, Hades was more than simply a place where dead people were sleeping in the grave. In the Greek understanding Hades was a world full of conscious, functioning beings, the only difference being that it was a place of gloom and darkness. This is where they believed that people went when they died. So often, when the Bible translators saw the word, Hades, or in this case, "Tartarus," (which was a part of Hades), they translated the word, giving it the same emphasis and ideas which were involved in the Greek understanding, rather than the simple Hebrew truth that Hades was just a state of unconscious death, and

that Tartarus was simply a state of spiritual darkness into which all rebellious angels had fallen.

### CONTRASTING VERSES

It is very significant that the Bible also has many verses which teach that when a person dies, he simply goes to sleep, he no longer has conscious existence, and that the final destiny of those who are not saved is that they will be completely destroyed.

*For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. (Mal 4:1)*

*And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts. (Mal 4:3)*

The final destruction of those who are unsaved will be by a fire which will completely cover the surface of the earth

preparatory to God creating a new earth, but this fire will not last forever, the wicked will die completely and forever. No part of them will be left to suffer eternally. In that day, they will burn to ashes.

When we consider the loving and merciful character of God it is easy to come to the conclusion that the verses which speak of God roasting people forever, are symbolic or figurative, and are not to be understood literally.



### More than Ten Rules

The keeping of Ten Commandments is only a very small part of the experience of victory over sin. When a person has obeyed ten rules, is he then fit for eternity?

God wants more than some aspects of our behaviour, He wants to be Lord of all of our lives, not just ten aspects of it. Victory over sin goes much deeper than simply what we do, it is far more than the question of how we behave. What God wants of us is the entire heart, and indeed the entire life! The truth is that man's real problem lies in a self-oriented life. This is the root of all sin. The true goal is that we should die to self so completely that we have no goals, no purposes, no desires, no possessions, but that in every single aspect of our lives, we live in Christ, an extension of His body, caring only for what pleases Him. Our jobs are not ours, they are His, so are our cars, our houses, our children, our clothes etc. What does it matter how we live or even if we don't live when we are already dead and simply living Christ's life?

This is what God wants and it is ONLY when we understand the issues in this way that we can begin to understand the way of true righteousness.

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# Exercise and longevity

Lenworth Frankson



In pursuing a longer, healthier life, the age-old saying "move more, live longer" resonates deeply. The science behind exercise and its profound impact on longevity is a subject of extensive research. Much of this research truly unveils the intricate mechanisms through which physical activity contributes to a prolonged lifespan.

Studies continuously affirm that engaging in regular exercise is not merely a means to sculpt the body or enhance athletic performance; it serves as a potent medicine for longevity. The correlation between physical activity and a longer lifespan is rooted in multifaceted physiological, molecular, and psychological factors.

At the cellular level, exercise has a transforming influence. The protective caps at the end of chromosomes, called *Telomeres*, serve as markers of cellular aging. Research strongly suggests that regular physical activity may help preserve the length of these telomeres, slowing down the cellular aging process. Additionally, exercise promotes the activation of mitochondria, the cellular powerhouses responsible for generating energy. Also, improved mitochondrial function has been linked to enhancing longevity and reducing the risk of age-related diseases.

Just as important, the impact of exercise

on the different health systems in our bodies cannot be overstated. Regular physical activity reduces the risk factors associated with chronic conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and hypertension. Exercise strengthens and supports cardiovascular health by enhancing heart function, regulating blood pressure, and optimizing cholesterol levels. These collective effects substantially diminish the likelihood of developing life-threatening ailments, thereby fostering a longer, healthier lifespan.

Beyond the physiological realm, exercise exerts a profound influence on mental health and cognitive function. Studies indicate that regular physical activity stimulates the release of hormones secreted within the brain and nervous system called *endorphins*, that elevate mood and reduce stress. Furthermore, exercise promotes *neuroplasticity* (the brain's ability to form new connections and adapt), thereby enhancing cognitive function and potentially reducing the risk of neurodegenerative conditions like Alzheimer's disease.

The type, intensity, and duration of exercise play crucial roles in determining its impact on longevity. While any form of physical activity gives benefits, a combination of aerobic exercises, strength training, flexibility, and balance-enhancing activities yields comprehensive health outcomes.

Consistency is key to maximize results. This means creating and sustaining a routine that incorporates moderate to vigorous exercise for at least 150 minutes per week, in line with other physical activities so as to promote optimal health benefits. Moreover, the significance of one's lifestyle factors in conjunction with exercise cannot be overlooked. A balanced diet, sufficient sleep, stress management, and avoidance of harmful habits like smoking

combined with regular exercise is crucial to amplify the effects on longevity. Embracing an active lifestyle is not solely about adding years to your life; rather it is about enriching those years with vitality, mobility, and overall well-being. However, let us keep in mind that individual differences in genetics, health status, and environmental factors play a significant factor in the importance of personalized approaches to exercise and longevity.

From the ancient Greek Olympians to modern fitness enthusiasts, the connection between movement and vitality has been an intuitive truth. Now, science is not only now echoing this wisdom but meticulously mapping the biological pathways through which exercise unlocks the door to a longer, healthier life. The evidence is truly compelling. The evidence suggests that increased physical activity translates to a statistically significant decrease in mortality risk. A landmark published study, encompassing over 1 million participants across 168 countries, demonstrated that those engaging in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week enjoyed a 27% lower risk of premature death from all causes compared to their sedentary counterparts. This benefit extends beyond overall mortality, offering specific protection against leading life-shortening diseases like;

**Cardiovascular diseases:** An analysis published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine revealed that regular exercise, particularly aerobic activity, led to a 21% reduction in coronary heart disease risk and a 17% decrease in stroke risk.

**Diabetes:** A large-scale study in the Diabetes Care journal found that individuals maintaining a physically active lifestyle were 58% less likely to develop type 2 diabetes compared to those with minimal physical activity.

**Certain cancers:** A review published in the journal *Current Sports Medicine and Reports* suggested that regular exercise could decrease the risk of developing several common cancers, including colon, breast, and endometrial cancers, ( *a type of cancer that begins as a growth of cells in the uterus* ) by up to 30%.

Now the big question is, how does this sweat-induced science translate to extra years on the clock? The answer lies in a series of biological changes triggered by exercise.

**Cardiovascular boost:** Exercise strengthens the heart muscle, improves blood flow, and enhances oxygen delivery to cells, all vital for optimal health and longevity. A study in *Circulation Research* demonstrated that a moderate-intensity exercise program led to a 14% increase in maximum oxygen uptake, a key indicator of cardiovascular health and lifespan.

**Metabolic marvel:** Physical activity

promotes insulin sensitivity, helping regulate blood sugar and prevent diabetes. A study in the *Journal of Applied Physiology* found that regular exercise increased insulin sensitivity by up to 30%, significantly reducing the risk of metabolic diseases.

**Cellular dance:** Exercise stimulates the production of telomeres, protective caps on chromosomes that shorten with age and are linked to cellular aging. A study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* revealed that individuals engaging in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week had longer telomeres compared to their sedentary counterparts.

**Mind matters:** Exercise isn't just physical; it's a potent mood booster. It stimulates the release of endorphins, as mentioned earlier, that combat stress and depression, factors known to impact lifespan. A study in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* found that regular exercise can reduce symptoms of depression by up to 50%.

The next question we have to consider is, can there be too much? Well the "sweet spot" appears to be finding a balance between inactivity and overexertion. The studies suggest that aiming for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week, spread across several sessions is best. However, the research hints at further benefits for those engaging in double the recommended amount. But let's keep in mind that consistency is key. Even 10 minutes of daily activity can bring significant health gains. Find activities you enjoy, be it brisk walking, dancing, cycling, or swimming. Make it social, join a class, or exercise with a buddy. Every step counts, and the cumulative effect can add years to your life. If you need a little inspiration consider this: Fauja Singh ran marathons into his 100s, and Ernestine Shepherd became a fitness icon at 86. If you are alive and breathing, it's not too late to start.



## Corporate Identity

*Continued from page 7*

real freedom in such a system. Satan proposes to present a better system which will produce true freedom and happier people. It is the system where God is excluded. We can see clearly that this is what he offered to Adam and Eve.

So how could God respond? Adam and Eve were the human race, there was nobody else. They chose the government offered by Satan and in these two alone, it seemed that Satan's point had been proven. When offered freedom from God, Adam and Eve had accepted the offer. But was this really enough to prove that Satan's governing system was better? The truth is that the outstanding issues and questions which exist in the universe cannot be settled or answered by individuals, it needed groups of people, it needed a nation to

settle the questions. There are different kinds of government, democracy, dictatorship, monarchy, totalitarianism, autocracy, theocracy etc. The question is, what kind of government is best for the universe? That's the question. How do you answer the question of which government is best? You need a group of people to demonstrate your government, one person, or two people are not enough to demonstrate the principle and effectiveness of a system of government.

This is why the issue involves the entire human race and not just Adam and Eve. When Adam sinned, if God had just allowed Adam to die, or God had put Adam to death, nothing would have been settled, because one man cannot demonstrate whether a government is effective or not. This is true whether it is God's government or any other. One

person can be an exception, the success or failure of one may be just a one-off coincidence. So this is why when Adam sinned God did not just stop it there. One of the reasons was that it needed a race of people, it needed a nation of people to demonstrate the government that really works.

So when Satan challenged God's government, God had to demonstrate which government is better, so what he did was, when man fell, God allowed Satan to have access to the entire human race, that is what was needed to demonstrate a governing system, and everything depended on the race, not the individual, that's why God set up things to operate on the basis of a corporate system.

We the church are that race of people, and the principles of the controversy between God and Satan demonstrate that we are lost as a group or as a nation,



and we are saved as a group, or as a nation. The Bible says in Romans 5:12,

*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (Rom 5:12)*

The Bible says one man sinned, and the corporate consequences fell upon all men, we're a part of that family, we're a part of that nation, we're a part of that race, we suffered the liabilities that Adam brought because they fell, not only upon himself, but upon his entire race. The same truth is brought out in verses 18 and 19:

*Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of*

*life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Rom 5:18-19)*

So the reality is, you came into this world born into the nation of Adam, this was your default status, but now you have been given an option so you can choose the nation of Christ. You can choose which nation you belong to but you can't choose the rules by which your nation lives, once you belong to the nation the rules of Adam apply, or the rules of Christ apply, it depends upon which nation you choose.

“By one man's disobedience many were made sinners,” you didn't make yourself a sinner, you didn't become a sinner because you broke the law, you became a sinner because your grandparent sinned, and you were a part of that cor-

porate body, it dropped off the head, it fell upon the shoulder. “So by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” It is the same principle, it falls on the head of Christ, it dropped on His shoulder, you are the shoulder. By His obedience you are made righteous, not by your obedience, not by your works, not by your righteousness, but because it falls on His head and it drops on His shoulder, which is you.

This is the basis of Salvation, this is what this is about, the simple truth that condemnation and salvation are simply matters of inheritance, dependent upon the fathers of the two races, not upon our works.



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