

Answering to God, by Answering God
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Eternal and Everlasting God:

We are thankful for the “hoped-for dreams” You send us daily. We often have to look back at yesterday to see Your faithful and loving answers. Thank You, God, because those answers enable us to view this world in the brilliant sunshine of Your Son, Jesus Christ, the light of the world. With the grace and mercy that comes with forgiveness, we are able to approach the decisions we face with courage and clarity that only You can give. Because those answers to our struggles are made with the guidance of Your Spirit’s good judgment. Help us use the wisdom of Your good judgment to overcome our bad judgment that stands in the way of hoped for dreams.

We pray that we will discover that good judgment daily as we walk along Galilee’s path. We are thankful that we have Your Son to lead us – “where He leads” us, we will follow on a journey that brings us tomorrow, where hope springs eternal. In Jesus name, we pray.

Psalms 114 (GNT) – ¹ When the people of Israel left Egypt, when Jacob's descendants left that foreign land,

² Judah became the Lord's holy people, Israel became his own possession.

³ The Red Sea looked and ran away; the Jordan River stopped flowing.

⁴ The mountains skipped like goats; the hills jumped around like lambs.

⁵ What happened, Sea, to make you run away? And you, O Jordan, why did you stop flowing?

⁶ You mountains, why did you skip like goats? You hills, why did you jump around like lambs?

⁷ Tremble, earth, at the Lord's coming, at the presence of the God of Jacob,

⁸ who changes rocks into pools of water and solid cliffs into flowing springs.

Earth, you tremble at the coming of the Lord. This reminds me of a Friday when the earth began to tremble. It was a time of darkness for the world and humanity, ⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land (Matthew 27:45, GNT).” Matthew 27:51-53 (GNT) tells us about a trembling earth at the foot of the Cross, ⁵¹ Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” We call it Good Friday, because that terrible scene was the beginning of our salvation. The African-America Spiritual, “Were You there when they crucified my Lord?” begins with the Good Friday scene:

1. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

When I sing this hymn on Good Friday, it causes me to tremble, as I am sure it does for Christians. It brings the reality home of the echoes still ringing in our ears of “crucify him, crucify him.” But on Holy Week, the story goes from awful to the awesome glory of the angel’s light shining into an empty tomb.

4. Were you there when God raised him from the tomb?
Were you there when God raised him from the tomb?
Oh sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when God raised him from the tomb?

I was in the Fairbanks, Alaska, earthquake on the 21st of June in 1967. I have felt the earth tremble and I saw the massive damage of a shifting earth and the flood to downtown Fairbanks. I have seen reports that it was a 6.7 to 7.5 magnitude earthquake. You can go on the internet and see pictures of the destruction. It caused damage and brought fear to the people. It was awful. But this Psalm is not about the adjective awful that describes nouns as terrible or repulsive. It’s about being so filled with awe at the coming of the Lord. It’s about a range of human emotions from fear to awesome and from dread to excitement. The irony of who we are spiritually is best explained by reminding ourselves that we were created in “the image of God.” Yes, we were created in God’s image, but we are not God and we have a difficult

time managing our emotions. Being “filled with awe” happens when we are flooded with a mixture of human emotions all at one time, that range from happy to sad and from love to hate. It comes to a point in our lives when we realize the Lord is coming to ask for our help to bring in the “Kingdom of Heaven.” We can become terrified and relieved at the same time. When the Lord arrives into the reality of who we are and where we are, then we are filled with awe. It takes time, in the heights and depths of our own personal spiritual atmosphere, to sort out and translate why the Lord comes for us.

I was nowhere when the Lord came for me. It was a time when there was a lot of turmoil. The Vietnam War made our nation divided. You were judged if you went to war, because those who protested could point to deferments or Canada. You were judged if you didn’t serve your country in the military, because it was every American citizen’s duty to serve. OPEC plotted a shortage of oil causing long gasoline lines, the creep to uncontrollable inflation began and finally ended in the early 80’s, while unemployment began to rise. I will always remember being scared to answer the Lord. Like Moses at the burning bush, my response was to question God’s wisdom for calling me. I refused to answer God for six months. It was fear, lack of self-confidence and feeling unworthy to be one of God’s servants. The irony to my inner-struggles is that it is those inner-struggles that hold us back. I now believe that inner-struggle is a common denominator that holds most of us back from answering God. My lack of confidence in the faith that God had given me kept me from answering to God with my willingness to serve when God called. The reality we create for ourselves in our future to come is about whether or not we are answering to God, by answering God. Finally, I made a commitment to answer God’s call to ministry.

In 2014, I wrote “Escape to Reality.” I was exploring the idea that I had clouded up an understanding of who I was with fantasy attributes. An identity crisis can erupt when a multitude of mixed emotions caused confusion by judgment of myself and by judgment by others. I wrote the essay to explore the belief that an honest evaluation of who I really was could help me escape my personal distortions of who I was, so that I could escape to a new reality of who I can be in the future. Here is an insert from that essay:

“The Founders of the United States of America embarked on a journey of faith, hope, and love for the new community they envisioned for the future. So, when you journey through your past – search your soul for guidance that supports reality – pay attention to yesterday’s recorded history. Tomorrow’s future will become more credible. For God’s sake, make your journey an exodus from all you pray to leave behind. Make your exodus an escape from tyranny, oppression, and intolerance. As you forge ahead, searching for your new valley – escape to a new reality – escape to freedom, liberty, and community. For God’s sake, translate freedom, liberty, and community into faith hope, and love. Then you will discover that “justice for all” will mean God’s constant love is for who you will be, when you escape to reality – as one community under God!” The essay was followed by a poem I wrote:

Escape to Reality

Reality exists in our minds
somewhere between heaven and earth,
Pray, as our souls faithfully grope for guidance.
Shepherded past illusions searching for rare finds,
we discover perpetual hope through rebirth.
As the spirit claims love for life’s dance,
thank God, our escape to reality
annihilates false morality. gab

Romans 14:1-12 (NCV) – ¹ Accept into your group someone who is weak in faith, and do not argue about opinions. ² One person believes it is right to eat all kinds of food. But another, who is weak, believes it is right to eat only vegetables. ³ The one who knows that it is right to eat any kind of food must not reject the one who eats only vegetables. And the person who eats only vegetables must not think that the one who eats all foods is wrong, because God has accepted that person. ⁴ You cannot judge another person’s servant. The master decides if the servant is doing well or not. And the Lord’s servant will do well because the Lord helps him do well. ⁵ Some think that one day is more important than another, and others think that every day is the same. Let all be sure in their own mind. ⁶ Those who think one day is more important than other days are doing that for the Lord. And those who eat all kinds of food are doing that for the Lord,

and they give thanks to God. Others who refuse to eat some foods do that for the Lord, and they give thanks to God. ⁷ We do not live or die for ourselves. ⁸ If we live, we are living for the Lord, and if we die, we are dying for the Lord. So, living or dying, we belong to the Lord. ⁹ The reason Christ died and rose from the dead to live again was so he would be Lord over both the dead and the living. ¹⁰ So why do you judge your brothers or sisters in Christ? And why do you think you are better than they are? We will all stand before God to be judged, ¹¹ because it is written in the Scriptures: “‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘Everyone will bow before me; everyone will say that I am God.’” (Isaiah 45:23)

¹² So each of us will have to answer to God.

Romans 14 refers to a passage in Isaiah 45:23 (NCV) – “²³ I will make a promise by my own power, and my promise is true; what I say will not be changed. I promise that everyone will bow before me and will promise to follow me.” God is telling the prophet Isaiah that a promise is a promise and if the world in its entirety would pay attention to the promise, this would be a better world moving toward a Christmas promise made long ago.

In the New King James Version of Luke 2:13-14, the angels proclaimed in a hallelujah chorus:

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

In the New Century Version of Luke 2:13-14, the angels proclaimed in a hallelujah chorus:

¹³ Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel, praising God and saying:

¹⁴ “Give glory to God in heaven,
and on earth let there be peace among the people who please God.”

If everyone in the world would bow down and believe there is a God above each of us that we have to answer to; this world will begin to truly move to bring in the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. To begin with, we have to stop pronouncing judgment on others. I personally don’t want to pass on even the smallest judgment on others. However, you can use the internet to pass judgment on others in an impersonal matter. The seeds of a judgmental life can begin by bullying others – small steps first. How do we begin?

Heart-felt prayer to heaven from where we are, is always the best place to start, because we will never finish with victory – if we don’t begin the race.

Hope springs eternal, it never stops going,
like putting tomorrow into perpetual motion.
You plan a moment hoping for the slightest joy.
Surprise – hope comes in unexpected moments –
It comes like the ripples in a lake – you throw
a stumbling stone, which disappears like yesterday,
sinking out of sight below the waterline.
Yet, the circle of waves begins to expand
beyond your wildest, hoped for dreams.
You smile, as you intentionally look in your mirror,
because you planned that moment in prayer. gab

Let go of a “God of Judgment” and live with a “God of Love.”

When I was young, it was almost impossible to let in a spiritual atmosphere that was polluted by a human attitude that God was a God of Judgment. That atmosphere was prevalent in the “Bible Belt” of the South. The Christmas Story was a story about God saving us from all the bad things we’ve done. But as people told the story, they forgot to emphasize how God was doing the saving. The saving is not about good or bad works, or even about good or bad people. The story is about saving us with love. The Story is about how God sent Jesus so that we could be saved by Christ’s loving arms

showing us a new way to live. That is what step-after-step on the Galilee path is all about, as the path proceeds on its way to the foot of the Cross. It is a transformation in our lives from living and serving a God of Judgment to living and serving a God of Love. What happens in our lives and in our world, when we start living and loving our lives as Jesus taught us?

Small steps first.

Paul writes to the Romans that the first step is to stop judging each other on even the smallest things. Most of us have gotten over judging someone else for the food they eat or don't eat. Vegetarian, vegan or not, do we really want that to cause a disruption in world peace? Stop and think for a moment, is what food we eat, fried or baked chicken, a good enough reason to throw stones at someone? Remember, Stephen was stoned by the church for feeding and caring for the widows and children. I'm sure Paul remembers as he writes this letter to the Roman Church, how feeding and caring for the widows and children was judged worthy of stoning. One way I take a first small step every single day is with my prayer that focuses on me and what I can do to make myself and my world happier:

Lord, help me make today a better day than yesterday.

Secondly, when you pray, make sure you are following the second piece of advice that Paul gave to the Roman Church. In verses 5 and 6, Paul writes, "⁵ Some think that one day is more important than another, and others think that every day is the same. Let all be sure in their own mind. ⁶ Those who think one day is more important than other days are doing that for the Lord." I have learned that believing that simple piece of advice by Paul can make a world of difference in your life and help bring more peace to the world around you. Exactly what does Paul mean? My interpretation of Paul's advice is that if I strive to make today a better day than yesterday – well, then I will have more happiness to share and sharing happiness with others is Good News to God.

The third step on Galilee's Path is to simply "belong to the Lord."

As Paul writes in verses 7 through 9, "⁷ We do not live or die for ourselves. ⁸ If we live, we are living for the Lord, and if we die, we are dying for the Lord. So, living or dying, we belong to the Lord. ⁹ The reason Christ died and rose from the dead to live again was so he would be Lord over both the dead and the living. Belonging to the Lord is about living now and forever, and as we learned from the Resurrection, death doesn't stop the Lord. The irony to the confession that I belong to the Lord, actually is not a statement of ownership, but a proclamation of being set free from ownership. What do you think the consequences are for belonging to the Lord? It means you will stand before God on Judgment Day. We have God's promise that Judgment Day will be the new best beginning of eternal life – As Judge of the quick and the dead ... As Jesus, Lord of all, saves with life's bread!

A Great Event at Journey's End
A walk on desolate paths by Galilee's sea ...
A story creating a good news commentary ...
Accentuated by acts of tender kindness ...
Accentuated by acts of righteousness ...
Approved by the descending spirit's dove ...
Approved by heaven's guidance from above ...
Accounts of healing society's alienated ...
Accounts of empowering the disenfranchised ...
An atmosphere of evil, crucified our friend ...
An empty tomb, now sacred at journey's end ...
Amazing grace fills our souls with innocence ...
Amazing glory for history's future deliverance ...
A precious gift from God, paradise sent ...
A precious promise for forgiveness,
a great event.
As Judge of the quick and the dead ...
As Jesus, Lord of all, saves with life's bread! gab

So, answer to God, by answering God – that's good judgment that last eternally.

