

Prayer and Incense

In the Bible



Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice! (Psalm 141:2/ESV)

And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.. (Revelation 8:2-3/ESV)

Image "Hand-Prayer-Incense", Accessed January 24, 2016,
<https://kaiserswest.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/hand-prayer-incense.jpg>.

Prayer and Incense in Scripture

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Prayer and Incense in Scripture

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When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. (Revelation 8:1-5/ESV)

Prayer as Incense

If we were to compare our prayers to a scented candle, then the aroma would fill the air for a short time. The aroma of incense, however, not only fills the air but also lingers a long time. Scripture tells us that our prayers are like incense, that they linger before God, and that they are not to be offered to false gods. They are to be offered to the Lamb, to Jesus.

Sacrificing with incense was an Old Testament practice, and is no longer a mandate for Christians because of the person and word of Jesus in atoning for our sins. Jesus fulfilled all the Divine Law by obeying it perfectly. His sacrifice of atonement for us fulfilled all the Law that His Father had given to Moses. His sacrifice fulfilled the Law by removing the need for any further sacrifice and governance of an earthly nation (Israel) and justifying us all - having His Father consider us “not guilty” for the sake of His Son. Also, His sacrifice both fulfilled the Moral Law and perpetuated it. Jesus’ work justifies all people by declaring them righteous before God and sanctifies those who, moved by the Holy Spirit, believe in Him. (We shall see more about justification and sanctification later.) We are to ask the Holy Spirit to help us obey the Moral Law moved by loving obedience to Jesus for what he did - and continues to do - for us.

The New Testament testifies to Jesus’ establishment of a new covenant with God’s people. The apostle Paul wrote that Jesus abolished the Divine Civil and Ceremonial Law. With an allusion to Jeremiah 31:31-34, the writer of Hebrews said this about the abrogation of the Old Covenant.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (Ephesians 2:13-16/ESV)

In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (Hebrews 8:13/ESV)

So what do we mean by prayer and incense in modern worship? Burning incense is still a practice in some Christian churches,¹ but we view it as a practice, which belongs to adiaphora - a Greek word² meaning issues that the Bible neither commands nor forbids.³ They are

¹ Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God: What the Bible Teaches about Prayer - A Biblical Theology of Prayer*, Accessed January 8, 2016, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/prayer/prayer.pdf>, p. 34.

² Slick, Matt. “What is adiaphora?”, *Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry*. Accessed January 9, 2016. <https://carm.org/questions-adiaphora>. Adiaphora is a Greek word [adiaphora] literally, [a] meaning not, and [diaphora] meaning different. It implies an indifference by not really being against whatever is in view. In a theological debate or discussion, it means a matter of moral indifference, or that which has neither

indifferent things that are neither good nor bad. These are neither Law nor Gospel. Adiaphora may include the formulary according to which public Christian worship is conducted and may include incense. Perhaps we see sacrifice today as pertaining to offerings such as in church - time, talent, and treasure.

Prayer as Incense Meaning

Incense was placed on the altar in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. Incense speaks of prayer (Revelation 8:3-4) and so the presence of the altar with its incense in the Tabernacle provides insight into what true prayer is. If we come to prayer without the proper understanding, our prayers will be to no avail. Therefore, we need to consider the relationship between the altar and incense because it will help us learn to pray effectively. If we pray to a god whom we created after our image, rather than we after His, we will not be praying according the Scriptures. God is looking for a people who will be incense on the altar. The book of Revelation unquestionably indicates that “incense” is symbolic of “*the prayers of the saints*”.

And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (Revelation 5:8/ESV)

And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. (Revelation 8:3-4/ESV)

The Scriptures are clear that the fragrant fumes that ascend from the incense of our prayers represent the prayers of godly people, those in covenant relationship with God. A Psalm attributed to David petitioned the Lord for his prayer to be as incense before God. The Song of Solomon proclaims that our prayerful voices are sweet to God.

Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice! (Psalm 141:2/ESV)

O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. (Song of Solomon 2:14/ESV)

When Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, was executing his office as priest, he entered into the temple to burn incense and a whole multitude of people was praying outside at the hour of incense.

Now while he [Zechariah] was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. (Luke 1:8-10/ESV)

Moses' censers were made of bronze (i.e., brass). This is a contrast with the censers of Solomon, which were of gold and silver.⁴ One gets the impression, although there are no specific

moral merit, nor which lacks moral merit (i.e., that regarded as something which is tolerable). For example, this word is used for practices which are neither explicitly condemned by scripture, nor explicitly stipulated. It is often used in connection with religious tolerance of what is sometimes called “the non-essentials.”

³ Stephen P. Mueller, Editor, *Called to Believe, Teach, and Confess* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005) pp. 72-73.

⁴ Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1999) p. 220. For Moses' censers see Exodus 27:3. For Solomon's censers of gold see 1 Kings 7:50; 2 Chronicles 27:3. For Solomon's censers of silver see 2 Kings 25:15.

scriptural references or commentaries to support this, that there may be an image of perfection in some of the censers of Solomon and Heaven and being of gold. Perhaps there is a type of the empire under Solomon and God's cosmic empire, which we shall someday experience.

The incense of our prayer is important. It is apparent that God is interested in us if we are interested in what interests Him. Think of the people whom we have met of whom we think most highly. Chances are they showed interest in us. So it may also be with God. Likewise, we cannot expect Jesus' interest in interceding for us if we do not pray, and pray with our spirits, and be persistent in prayer. Nor can we expect that any of our prayers should gain acceptance, and bring in an answer of peace, except by the mediation of Christ, who ever lives, interceding for us. *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."* (Matthew 7:21/ESV).

In a general sense, even the prayers of the saints might be typified and represented in the daily burning of incense, which was used in the sanctuary. We read: *... and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.* (Revelation 8:4/ESV) That incense is distinguished from the prayers of the saints (i.e., *"the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints"*) to emphasize that it is in the hand of Jesus alone, to give virtue and efficacy to the prayers. The golden altar of incense in the sanctuary and burning the incense continually every morning and evening was a type of Jesus. By His mediation and intercession He gave efficacy to the continual prayers of all believers.⁵ We may see a fourfold resemblance between prayer and incense:

Incense was beaten and pounded before it was used. Similarly, acceptable prayer proceeds from *"a broken and contrite heart"* (Psalm 51:17).

Incense was useless until fire was put under it, and that taken from the altar. Similarly, that prayer of any virtue or efficacy must be kindled by the fire from above - the Holy Spirit of God - which we have from our altar, Christ Jesus.

Incense naturally ascended upwards towards heaven, as all offerings are called "ascensions," "risings up" in Hebrew. It is the design of prayer, to ascend unto the throne of God: *"I will direct unto thee, and will look up"* that is, pray (Psalm 5:3).

Incense yielded a sweet savor, which was one of its purposes in Temple services, where there was so much burning of flesh and blood. Similarly, prayer yields a sweet savor to God - a savor of rest in which He is well pleased.⁶

Incense Mandated by God in the Old Testament

There are many instances of God instructing His people about incense as part of sacrifice and worship. The altar of incense (Exodus 30:1-10) is a type of Jesus in that the daily burning of the incense represents His continuous intercession for us before the throne of God - as our intercessor whose prayers never stop ascending to God on our behalf. The Lord told Moses to make an altar of incense and gave its specifications, which included gold overlay on everything.

⁵ John Owen, "Hebrews 9", *Exposition of Hebrews*, Accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/joc/view.cgi?bk=57&ch=9&vs=3&search=51:17#51:17>.

⁶ John Owen, "Hebrews 9", *Exposition of Hebrews*, Accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/joc/view.cgi?bk=57&ch=9&vs=3&search=51:17#51:17>.

“You shall make an altar on which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. A cubit shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth. It shall be square, and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and around its sides and its horns. And you shall make a molding of gold around it. And you shall make two golden rings for it. Under its molding on two opposite sides of it you shall make them, and they shall be holders for poles with which to carry it. You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. And you shall put it in front of the veil that is above the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is above the testimony, where I will meet with you. And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the Lord throughout your generations. You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the Lord.” (Exodus 30:1-10/ESV)

The Lord told Moses the specifications for the anointing oil for anointing all the Tabernacle’s artifacts and for the incense.

“And you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil. With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense” ... The Lord said to Moses, “Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part), and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy. You shall beat some of it very small, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you. It shall be most holy for you. And the incense that you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves. It shall be for you holy to the Lord. Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from his people.” (Exodus 30:25-27, 34-38/ESV)

Moses related God’s instructions about contributions to the congregation, and the leaders responded. That response can be a lesson for us Christians regarding our response in time, talent, and treasure to God’s call to love Him and one another as he first loved us (John 3:34).

Moses said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “This is the thing that the Lord has commanded. Take from among you a contribution to the Lord. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the Lord’s contribution: gold, silver, and bronze ... oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense” ... And the leaders brought onyx stones and stones to be set, for the ephod and for the breastpiece, and spices and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense. (Exodus 35:4-5, 8, 27-28/ESV)

The Lord told Moses the specifications for the vessels on the table and for the altar of incense.

And he made the vessels of pure gold that were to be on the table, its plates and dishes for incense, and its bowls and flagons with which to pour drink offerings. ... He made the altar of incense of acacia wood. Its length was a cubit, and its breadth was a cubit. It was square, and two cubits was its height. Its horns were of one piece with it. He overlaid it with pure gold, its top and around its sides and its horns. And he made a molding of gold around it, and made two rings of gold on it under its molding, on two opposite sides of it, as holders for the poles with which to carry it. And he made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold. He made the holy anointing oil also, and the pure fragrant incense, blended as by the perfumer. (Exodus 37:6, 25-29/ESV)

Moses wrote of the completion of the work on the Tabernacle.

Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished, and the people of Israel did according to all that the Lord had commanded Moses; so they did. ... the golden altar, the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the entrance of the tent ... (Exodus 39:32, 38/ESV)

The Lord instructed Moses about placing objects in the Tabernacle, and Moses complied.

And you shall put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. ... He put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the veil, and burned fragrant incense on it, as the Lord had commanded Moses. (Exodus 40:5, 26-27/ESV)

The Lord instructed Moses about the use of incense in conjunction with sacrifices.

“When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. And he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord. ... If you offer a grain offering of firstfruits to the Lord, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears, roasted with fire, crushed new grain. And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering. And the priest shall burn as its memorial portion some of the crushed grain and some of the oil with all of its frankincense; it is a food offering to the Lord.” (Leviticus 2:1-2, 14-16/ESV)

“And this is the law of the grain offering. The sons of Aaron shall offer it before the Lord in front of the altar. And one shall take from it a handful of the fine flour of the grain offering and its oil and all the frankincense that is on the grain offering and burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a pleasing aroma to the Lord.” (Leviticus 6:14-15/ESV)

The Lord instructed Moses not to put incense on sin offerings. Apparently incense was to be used for sacrifices that praised and thanked God rather than for those that requested atonement for sin. The high priest, asking for atonement for himself, made the sin offering first and then offered incense inside the veil at the altar of incense. The high priest's incense may have been to overcome the smell of the sin sacrifice just as Jesus' atonement for us overcomes the “smell” of our sin God. Perhaps we may also wonder whether or not the proscription against using incense on a sin offering typified the contrast between Jesus' healing ministry (e.g., Mark 6:13), God's anointing His Son (Luke 4:18; c.f., Isaiah 61:1-2) and us (Hebrews 1:9; 1 John 2:27) on the one hand, with the Holy Spirit and the brutality of Jesus' atonement for our sins on the other hand.

“If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity; or if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean wild animal or a carcass of unclean livestock or a carcass of unclean swarming things, and it is hidden from him and he has become unclean, and he realizes his guilt; or if he touches human uncleanness, of whatever sort the uncleanness may be with which one becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and realizes his guilt; or if anyone utters with his lips a rash oath to do evil or to do good, any sort of rash oath that people swear, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and he realizes his guilt in any of these; when he realizes his guilt in any of these and confesses the sin he has committed ... But if he cannot afford two turtledoves or two pigeons, then he shall bring as his offering for the sin that he has committed a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it and shall put no frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering.” (Leviticus 5:1-5, 11-12/ESV)

“Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall kill the bull as a sin offering for himself. And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and he shall bring it inside the veil and put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is over the testimony, so that he does not die.” (Leviticus 16:11-13/ESV)

The Lord instructed Moses about the use of incense in conjunction with sacrifice and a sin offering for the high priest on the Day of Atonement. In Moses final blessing, he addressed the responsibilities of the Levites.

“They shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar.” (Deuteronomy 33:10/ESV)

The chronicler, in describing the descendants of Levi, made mention of Aaron’s line.

But Aaron and his sons made offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense for all the work of the Most Holy Place, and to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. (1 Chronicles 6:49/ESV)

The chronicler, in describing the genealogy of the returnees from Babylon, made mention of the Levites.

Others of them were appointed over the furniture and over all the holy utensils, also over the fine flour, the wine, the oil, the incense, and the spices. (1 Chronicles 9:29/ESV)

King Rehoboam rebuked the rebels for setting up their own priesthood - not that of Aaron - and he spoke of the superiority of the Lord’s treatment of Judah.

“But as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him. We have priests ministering to the Lord who are sons of Aaron, and Levites for their service. They offer to the Lord every morning and every evening burnt offerings and incense of sweet spices, set out the showbread on the table of pure gold, and care for the golden lampstand that its lamps may burn every evening. For we keep the charge of the Lord our God, but you have forsaken him.” (2 Chronicles 13:10-11/ESV)

King Uzziah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but he made mistakes.

But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the Lord who were men of valor, and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, “It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord God.” Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord, by the altar of incense. (2 Chronicles 26:16-19/ESV)

The Lord complained through Malachi of polluted offerings.

“For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised.” (Malachi 1:11-12/ESV)

Incense continued to be an important part of worship in the first century. Luke told the story of events leading to the birth of John the Baptist. According to the narrative, the priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. To be so, they must have been prayerful people. Certainly Zechariah, being a priest, prayed in the temple. When he entered the temple to burn incense he was surrounded by prayer - a multitude of the people were praying outside. But, when Zechariah was compassing the altar, the incense could not be accepted without prayer any more than a pea without the pod. It is not enough for us to be where God is worshipped if our hearts do not join in in all parts of the worship. No matter how pertinent, judicious, and lively a prayer is, if we are not praying as in conversation with God, it is useless muttering. All the

prayers we offer up to God are acceptable and successful only in virtue of the incense of Jesus' intercession in the temple of God in heaven. The use of incense in the temple service seems to point to Revelation.

Now while he [Zechariah, future father of John the Baptist] was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. (Luke 1:8-11/ESV)

Paul characterized the faithfulness of Christians as a pleasant aroma to God.

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing ... (2 Corinthians 2:14-15/ESV)

Paul characterized the faithfulness of Christians as a pleasant aroma to God.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Ephesians 5:1-2/ESV)

Abuse of Incense Punished by God

There is no biblical indication that the prayers of those who resist the will of God go up as a sweet fragrance to Him. See the passages of Scripture relating to this below. The Lord told Moses the specifications for the anointing oil for anointing all the Tabernacle's artifacts and for the incense (Exodus 30:25-27, 34-38). He also warned of offering any other kind of incense and punished those who did.

"You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the Lord." (Exodus 30:9/ESV)

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord has said, 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace. (Leviticus 10:1-3/ESV)

God rejected the priest Eli and his entire household for abuses of the sacrifices and incense.

And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, "Thus the Lord has said, 'Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh? Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel. Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?'" (1 Samuel 2:27-29/ESC)

We see that God's judgment of Nadab and Abihu gave a lesson in and set a precedent for the many priests who would eventually serve in His holy dwelling whether Tabernacle or Temple. We learn again that God knows our hearts, faith, and attitudes toward Him. He teaches us now that we cannot offer ourselves, time, goods, and money to Him pridefully that we are somehow good people with whom He should be pleased. God tells us what He wants from us - our hearts,

devotion, adoration, worship, and praise. He wants us to believe in our salvation by the works of His Son Jesus.

Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. ... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ... The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Psalm 51:6, 10, 17/ESV)

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18/ESV)

All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. "He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations ..." (Isaiah 66:2-4/ESV)

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Romans 3:28/ESV)

God is serious when it comes to His honor and glory. He will meet willful disobedience on our part with discipline out of His great love for us. If we continue in our disobedience, then God will be harsher with us - even turning His back on us - to make us acknowledge our sin, repent, and ask forgiveness.

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:7-11/ESV)

For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:29-32/ESV)

"... therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim. As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you." (Jeremiah 7:14-16/ESV)

"It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds." (Jeremiah 26:3/ESV)

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Brighton, Louis A.	Dr. Louis A. Brighton is professor emeritus, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO. He received his doctorate at Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO in 1999). He was Associate pastor, Luther-Tyndale Memorial Church and Holy Trinity Church, London, England (1952-54); pastor, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, London, England (1954-58); professor, ELCE Seminary, Cambridge, England (1957); pastor, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Decatur, Ill. (1958-68); pastor, St. John's Lutheran Church, Lexington, Ky. (1968-74); assistant professor (1974-79), associate professor (1979-1992), and professor of exegetical theology (1992-1998), Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO.
Constable, Thomas L. Th.D.	Thomas L. Constable, Th.D. is the founder of Dallas Seminary's Field Education department (1970) and the Center for Biblical Studies (1973), both of which he directed

	<p>for many years before assuming other responsibilities. Today Dr. Constable maintains an active academic, pulpit supply, and conference-speaking ministry around the world. He has ministered in nearly three dozen countries and written commentaries on every book of the Bible. Dr. Constable also founded a church, pastored it for twelve years, and has served as one of its elders for over thirty years.</p>
Owen, John	<p>John Owen (1616-1683) was an English Nonconformist church leader, theologian, and academic administrator at the University of Oxford. He was educated at Queen’s College, Oxford, where he studied classics and theology and was ordained. Because of the “high-church” innovations introduced by Archbishop William Laud, he left the university to be a chaplain to the family of a noble lord. His first parish was at Fordham in Essex, to which he went while the nation was involved in civil war. He became convinced that the Congregational way was the scriptural form of church government. In his next charge, the parish of Coggeshall. in Essex, he acted both as the pastor of a gathered church and as the minister of the parish. This was possible because the parliament, at war with the king, had removed bishops. In practice, this meant that the parishes could go their own way in worship and organization. He was briefly a member of parliament for the University, sitting in the First Protectorate Parliament of 1654 to 1655.</p>
Slick, Matt	<p>Matt Slick is President and Founder of the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry. He earned his Masters of Divinity from Westminster Theological Seminary, in Escondido, CA, in 1991. He is ordained. He started CARM in October of 1995 to respond to the many false teachings of the cults on the Internet.</p>

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