

Is God Good - The Apparent Violence of God

By Adrian Ebens

Young Civic Hall, Feb 29, 2020

Good evening everyone

Those of you who don't know me, my name is Adrian Ebens and I have worked in the I've worked largely in the IT industry as a young person systems analysis and design that sort of thing. And then I moved into ministry, I felt a calling to serve my community and I was working in a church environment for a number of years and while I was in the church environment, I came across a number of disturbing situations on a domestic level, dealing with domestic violence, conflict dealing with young women being inappropriately dealt with by males within the congregation and this began to trouble me. I began to look for answers as to why was these things happening.

Ten years ago, I moved into writing and speaking and I've traveled to many countries speaking on things to do with family, and self worth from a Christian perspective, and I talked to many people around the world, I take every opportunity to ask people, what they think, what they are feeling and about what's going on in society. I've been on a 16th the journey, trying to answer some questions for myself, about life, society and about God.

Some of my journey is over on the table over there. Lots of books over there, you might get books freely available. And you are welcome to all I'll explain some of those books a bit later, just some of my journey explaining some things for myself. And I'll just share one story for why I was on this journey. We had a young lady when I was working as a youth minister at a church and we were running some youth meetings. And she stayed over at our place one night. And in the middle of the night, we heard this screaming, she was having a

nightmare. She was remembering when she was violated by some individual. And I just remember that process and the horror of that event. And it really started me thinking about things and what I really wanted to do and the difference that I wanted to make and trying to understand why a man would do that to a young woman. and that's been part of my journey.

Most of us here would be familiar with a recent story that just took place not far from where I live in camp Hill in Brisbane. A story of Hannah Clark and this story is very raw for many of us. I remember taking in the footage and taking in the story and was just overwhelmed.

If you haven't heard the story, Hannah Clark had three beautiful children and she had found her relationship with a husband, Ron Baxter to become unworkable. So she left her husband and to give more details as to why that took place. Well, basically, Mr. Baxter, was demanding marital favors every day and if she didn't provide she would be punished in some form or another, emotionally, with money, with whatever, so after ten years of that experience, she couldn't deal with that anymore and because he never hit her. she didn't think she was being subjected to domestic violence, although she was being manipulated, controlled through money and through all these things. So there was domestic violence of a different nature that was taking place for her. She had left and the night before this event took place that changed their lives forever, she spoke to her former husband and he was quite emotional. He was quite disturbed. The next morning we all awoke to the news of a car that was set alight Mr. Baxter has taken some petrol and while he intercepted his wife and children, he poured petrol all over them and set them alight and burn them to death. he then took his own life, and the whole nation is just still in shock, how do we process this? How does the individual come to the point where he would douse his children in petrol and burn them alive? The shock to the senses is so great. I mean, I just wept when I thought about these children, and this woman this couple had run a fitness center. They're both very fit individuals. Even though Hannah had burns 96% of her body before she died, she made sure that the paramedics and the people around

knew exactly what had happened and what have taken place. That says a lot about her courage as a woman to be placed in that situation. And the nation is examining its soul. Why did these things happen? Why did these things take place? And what's interesting for me as I studied these things as I follow the statistics on this in Australia. One woman every week, is killed by a partner, former partner, or family member..

Every week, one woman died in Australia. That's a lot isn't it? That is completely unacceptable. The question is, what do we do about it? And of course, the government responses we need more resources, we need more money to throw at it. We need to fix the problem. This is the question.

We have a disease that is taking over our society to do with worthlessness and emptiness that is eating us out and now we're up to one woman a week or more in 2018, it was 63. So it's a little bit more this year, we've had ten already and we are only at the end of February. Now, if we want to put this in perspective 50 to 60 women a year is a horrendous statistic. But if you go to Africa, it's not 50 women a year. It's 50 women a day and that that's a statistic that just defies it just takes exponential into a level I can't even comprehend. From 50 a year to 50 a day, in Africa. That's the entire continent of Africa where women have been treated in this manner. If you go to Asia, it's the same 50 women a day, between those two regions in Asia and Africa, those two continents or areas that 100 women every day dying through domestic violence, of some description or another. across the entire world. The World health organization tells us and I read this from a BBC report, that it's 137 women every day that die through domestic violence. This is a disease that is going to destroy our civilization.

To try and understand particularly between a married couple, the vows that a couple make, to love and to cherish one another till death do you part not in the way that we envisage that the death would come from one partner killing another partner. It is something that is inconceivable and yet it is increasing, and it is growing.

These are the statistics that motivate me that drive me because I want to change or want a different outcome for my community and for the world. People say well, what can you do about it as an individual? What can we do better? It reminds me of the story of a man walking with his son and a whole lot of starfish were washed up on the beach, they' were all dying slowly and the father; just one by one throwing the starfish back into the ocean to save them and the son said you're wasting your time, look at them all. You're never going to save them all, It doesn't make any difference. He picked up another one, he said I just made a difference with this one. What can we do to bring about change, and I've given this a lot of thought in terms of what are the issues that have led us to such a toxic environment.

I remember when I did some advertising on Facebook, about 50 of women in Australia are dying, or one woman a week is dying every week, and they were individuals coming on and say, That's rubbish. That's nonsense. What you're saying is absolute foolishness and now, other people are coming out and saying the same thing, but what I was saying but then you compare that to Africa and Asia and you cannot comprehend but the thing that we have to grapple with, when we think about these types of issues, many people decide, well, it doesn't affect me, but the problem is, is that our culture here in Australia is starting to show signs of massive culture clash and the area in which we see this clash manifesting itself, most clearly is in the story of Israel Folau.

Israel Folau the footballer, which stands for evangelical Christianity have some [inaudible] quotes the Bible in when he is asked what will happen to homosexuals and he read quotes from Scripture and for quoting from Scripture, as he understands the Bible, he is stripped of his \$4 million contract and is banned from playing rugby league or union in Australia, anywhere anytime. This caused, of course a tremendous uproar and we see the Australian Christian lobby within 48 hours raise \$2 million to fight Israel Folau legal case, Australia is divided.

We remember on the vote for gay marriage within Australia, the postal vote. There was five or 6 million people that voted for gay marriage, but there was 4.7 million that voted against it. And for the people on the gay side of this question, they felt that the postal vote was a bad idea because it revealed that a significant proportion of our community does not support gay marriage, a sizable and the question is, what are the values do we do we place these things upon? And you listen to some of the discussions about Christians and the values that they hold and the things that they believe, and they will quote from Scripture and I remember just seeing a snippet of the soundbite of Mr. Cosh, when he's quoting and when he is challenging someone from a Christian persuasion saying, we don't believe everything concerning this book (The Bible),. I mean, it says in here that if a man rapes a woman, that he should marry her, and if he doesn't marry her and look after her, this is absurd, and this is written in the Bible and there are other crazy things that are written in this book. This is why many Australians and many people around the world are beginning to question the validity of the Bible. We're not beginning to question many of well past the validity of Scripture.

There are other individuals such as Richard Dawkins says that the God of the Bible is the most genocidal tyrannical infancitidal megalomaniac ever to be conceived, interesting view of God and yet at the same time, as Richard Dawkins is looking at the future of civilization, he has admitted recently that the underpinnings of our western society has been based on Judeo Christian values.and we need to tread carefully before these Judeo Christian values, lest we enter into utter chaos. And what is some of the utter chaos that we're beginning to see well, issues in transgender, issues in how we dress how we identify ourselves. Do you identify as a male or do you identify as a female or do you identify something else!? And so civilizations definitely headed for a clash, which could even lead to civil war in terms of the values that we're going to hold to, and what we're going to do. So, ultimately all of us will become involved in this question as where is Australia going to go? Are we going to keep progressing to the left? Going the left direction and just everything open,

everything free or is there a need to put some restraint, some discipline, some order?. Those of us that have been raised I was, I was born in the 60s. and that was before we had computers and cell phones, I still remember life before cell phones. I remember life before computers. and there's a very romantic element to my memory of these things. Life see to be a little bit slower than it is today, but life has changed dramatically in terms of how we address these issues, and how we approach these things.

Coming back to the issue of Richard Dawkins and the way that many people within our society, I listened to gentlemen like. Mr. Peter Fitzsimmons and his column and he's railing against Christianity and railing against Christian values. And these people, they evangelize us with their God and His response to this and gay young people are taking their lives in drugs because of this horrible idea of the Christian religion. Now, what's interesting is that if you draw some parallels, and I just want us to think about this Is that Ron Baxter burnt his wife and his children to death Why? Because his wife did not do what he wanted her to do. The difficulty we face is that when you read the Scriptures, that the God of the Bible is taught by most Christians is , if you do not do what he wants you to do, he will burn you to death. Isn't that what most people understand in Christianity?

Is there a difference between Ron Baxter and the God of the Bible? Well, of course, we can look at all the other things in terms of the cross, in terms of the salvation and the plan all the things that God went to and the length of time and patience that God has manifested. But at the end of the day, we are left with this question. Will God burn to death those who disagree with him and refuse to follow exactly what he says? It's a challenging question.

The question that I think about and it brings us to our title, is God, really good? When Christ came to this earth, He said, There is none good, but one that is God but is God good? This is the question. As a younger person. I was raised in a religious community, I was raised in an environment where the Bible was taught and I had the understanding that I was part of God's faithful people. So

when the Bible spoke to those who are wicked, and those who are evil, those who would be destroyed, those things didn't bother me because I was not these people. I was part of the righteous. I was part of those who would be saved. So I didn't think about what it would be like to feel the other side of the equation of those who are evil and wicked or lived a bad life. Yes, Jesus will forgive. Yes God will forgive, this is what Christianity teaches doesn't matter your past. It doesn't matter what you've done if you come to Christ, you will be saved and this reminds me of a picture that someone sent to me and it's Jesus knocking at the door you know, Revelation 3:20: Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door I'll come unto him and sup with him and him with me. but on this meme, it says from someone who is a little bit disgruntled with Christianity. Jesus is knocking and the person says

Who is it? and says it's Jesus. What do you want? I want to save you. Save me from what? From what I'm going to do to you if you don't open this door!

Is there an element of truth in this for mainstream Christianity, that if we do not open the door of our heart, if we do not give ourselves Jesus Christ, he's going to come in a flame with on a steam and flame and burn everything! that's how we understand it and this is troubling to me. It's troubling in terms of how we understand things. The other

question that I have is there is a biblical principle that says in the book of Corinthians, by beholding, you become changed a simple way of wording that is monkey see. monkey do. If you've been raised in an environment and you're worshipping a God that destroys those and burns to death, those who do not do what he wants, is it conceivable that men and women might be tempted to do the same things? Because of what they understand that God does. Is there a connection? Is it possible?

These are the questions that I ask. Having we raised our society changed tremendously within the last 50 years as to where we were 50 years ago and where we are now in terms of our culture and our understanding. So, how do

we deal with some of these things if we take a look at the Bible, we looked at the book of Revelation. Most people are concerned about the Old Testament. When I talked to people, I was in the United States. and we're talking this lady and she says, You know, I don't have a problem with Jesus Christ. He's a really cool guy. He's merciful and gracious and kind and I really like him. But I really have a problem with this guy in the Old Testament. Like, he's really grumpy. You do the wrong thing he's going to burn you, filet you, you know, like that's why I'm not really interested in Christianity and. I get that type of response all the time, all the time from people that were Christian, or were open to Christianity that were drawn to Jesus Christ. and then when they read the Bible and read the Old Testament They're like I don't know about this This is a bit rough.

The question that I'm raising is have we read the Old Testament correctly? My understanding of English, my understanding of how the Bible is written, I agree with you I read the Old Testament, there's some things in there that are really frightening. What about when the earth opens up and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram go down to the pit and swallowed up? Like this pretty frightening stuff, isn't it? Isn't that enough to motivate you? And here's the problem that we face. If you would dare to question this then what are the chances that if God is like this, and you would questioned that you yourself would end up being burned and destroyed? So don't question!?

Don't ask questions. I'm not talking about asking sarcastic questions where you want to reject any notion of God but real questions like I've asked. Father, are you really like this? Is this what you are like? Genuine questions. Do you really burn your children to death? Is that what you're like? I really want to know because now that I have my own children, the love, I feel for my children, the yearning that I feel for them. Could I ever bring myself to the point where I could burn them to death because they transgressed me? Could you do that? I couldn't do it. Impossible. Am I better than God? Well, God has to run the universe so it's different. Is it different?

But how can we become changed if the God that we worship has an element of violence in his character. and this is what I was taught being raised that God was fair, he was kind, he was loving, he was patient. But if it got to the point where enough shenanigans going on, he would end it. And he would use violence and there was an element in which I thought, yes, I agree with this. We need to in order to have a civilized society. We can't have people just running around doing all the wrong things and murdering and killing and raping. It has to be stopped. So it made perfect sense to me. Yes, of course. As I thought about it, as I continue to talk to people in question and wonder, thinking, Am I understanding this the right way? Am I understanding what is actually going on? Let's read Revelation chapter 14.

Revelation chapter 14 verse nine, I remember as a young person reading this text, and I started to tremble, as I thought about it.

Rev 14:9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 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: When I read that passage, reading it without reading anything else. That makes me a little bit afraid.

Now, if you are a completely righteous person, if you're completely holy man, you've never done anything wrong, then maybe you won't be bothered by verse like this. But if you've done wrong things, and you've said wrong things, and you've offended people, and you know that you've been hypocritical at times, and you've done things that you ought not to do, verses like, this might cause you a bit of difficulty. What if I didn't make it? This is where I come from, it is another part of when I was a young minister, and I would go and visit all the people in the 70s and 80s. And they would say to me, I don't know whether I'm going to make it I hope, I hope I make it I know, I've done things and I said, but Jesus forgives you. And it's okay. Like, he's washing all that away. But still,

there's trauma in their mind this worry and this fear. What if they hadn't done enough? But salvation is a free gift. And I would struggle with these. Why are all these older people struggling and fearing about their salvation?

And as I think about it, it's really quite simple. I think the story of a young man who's pursuing a young lady, he brings the flowers and they dine together. He gives us a wedding proposal. And he says to her, Know, I will give you everything, I'll take care of you, . I look after you and. I will make sure that everything is just perfect for you.. There's only one condition is that you must obey me If you don't, and at that moment it pulls in a revolver and pointed at her. and says if you don't, I'll blow your head off. Do you think that would be a good marriage relationship?

That's ridiculous. What woman would feel secure in a relationship like that? If she would dare enter into that kind of relationship. Wouldn't she live in constant fear? Have I done enough? Is it good enough did I cooked his food well enough, have I done this? Have I done enough to please him so that he doesn't blow my head off with his revolver?

But this is what I have found is the experience of most Christians. Have I done enough? Will God still burn me? Am I going to burn in the flames of hell? I know because I've had those thoughts .and many people have confessed to me not as a point of confession, but just out of their own internal turmoil. I don't know if I'm going to make it and the great trauma, the great tragedy for us is that how he would dare to question because of what seems to be so obviously written in Scripture. If you question it, then you are going to die because it's blasphemy and so we find ourselves in a situation where Christianity is not much of a different situation to living in North Korea.

Everyone in North Korea loves Kim Jong Un don't they? See them they're all praising, isn't he a wonderful person. but why doing this? Because they don't want to die. That's why they're doing it.

[audience speaking] Now those who suffer three or four generations of propaganda, which is interesting because we are suffering, possibly third generation [inaudible] taught in our schools. and it's the propaganda sequence is the first generation rebels against it, the second generation sees what happens to their parents who rebelled and they finally got on with it. and the third generation doesn't know any different and the fourth generation just believe that it's amazing. [end audience] It is amazing, isn't it?

I have to tell you a story that radically transformed my life and that's why I go back to 16 years ago. It was after the birth of my first son. He was about four years of age at the time and by that stage, we been started to spend a lot of time together and developing a much closer relationship, because he's starting to speak and you're interacting with each other. We played together and I was walking on a particular day. I was thinking about the birth of my son, my first son. and, as I, as I thought about that, with great joy, I was reminded of a prayer that I pray when my son was born. And for those of us that have had children, that moment, that moment, when my wife, hands to me my son, and for the first time I look into the eyes to my son, think there's nothing more beautiful.

This is my beloved son, the bond. sense that this is my child, my sense of joy, my sense of responsibility, a sense of I want to do everything for this child and want this child to live and have every advantage possible and I want to commit myself to this, but I pray this prayer. Father, don't let anything come between me and my son. and I just want him to know me for who I am it's all I want.

Nothing to come between me and him. And I just want him to know me. The reason I pray that prayer is because I knew what type of person I was as a teenager, and as a young person and how I rebelled against my father, how I resisted him, and that there was every possibility that my son would do the same thing to me.

And so I've been praying that prayer I prayed, knowing my history and the fact that my son is stamped with my own nature. And the possibility is very high.

And as I prayed that prayer, as I was recalling that prayer four years later, thinking about my son in my mind, I heard very clearly in my mind, I heard very clear these words. Adrian, that's how I feel about you. That was a transformational moment for me personally. I have read about God is love. I've studied the gospel for many years, the gift of his only begotten Son. But now God was able to speak to me in a very tangible, very real way through the birth of my own son, through the love that I felt for him. I believe that God showed me how he felt about me not just with words, not just with theology, but with reality. This is how I feel about you. And at that moment, I confess that some strange things started happening inside of me. I began to rehearse all the reasons why, could it be possible with the God who made the heavens and the earth would take the time to stop and speak to me a sinner and say, Adrian, I love you so much that I don't want anything to come between you and me and I just want you to know who I am.

Is it possible that He would want to speak to me like this, and what actually desire relationship with me like this. And I wrestled in my mind and I began to resurface all reasons why it was not possible for someone like that to want to be so close to me. And I think I experienced a little bit what Peter experienced when he said to Christ, Depart from me, for I'm an evil man, I'm a wicked man. I felt this, I felt this in myself. It's not possible for you to love me like this. And I was shocked at my own reactions because like, I've been teaching other people the love of God for a long time, but now it was becoming a reality. And in the end, I decided to believe God. When God says, I don't want anything to come between you and me, and I want you to know me, I chose to believe. It took me a lot more than I thought, I didn't think would be that hard. My father really does love me. And this, this is what creates has created a difficulty over the last 16 years. If God really loved me that much, he gave so much from me. If He has invested so much to save me, then what is my value to Him? What is your value to God? If He's invested all the resources of heaven to save you? How valuable are you to God? The question then is if God has invested all this to save you, and to do all this for you, how can this same God who is invested all this value into you turn around and say to you If you didn't do it

the way I wanted, sorry, I'm gonna throw you on the scrapping of history and burn you to death. That doesn't make any sense

Would you throw anything away that was highly valuable to you? Would you throw out the rubbish dump and burn it? If it was still worth everything to you? Would you burn it? Would you destroy it? This is the question that I begin to ask and question about, in my understanding, early on in this journey, to understand who God is. I read in the book of Isaiah, chapter 55. God says there My thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not my ways, For as the heavens are higher than the earth So my thoughts higher than your thoughts and my way, my ways than your ways and

I begin to wonder if I really understood the Bible correctly, do I really understand? I thought about the story in the flood, it says in Genesis chapter six and verse seven, I will destroy the Earth. It seems very obvious to me that God drown the whole world in the flood. And I begin to think, if you do the math, if you do the calculation, how many people within a certain time frame up within 1600 years because the flood happened about 1600 years after the creation of the earth, how many people would there exist? Will they be a minimum of 30 million people probably more like 100 million people. Did God take 100 million of his children and drown them to death, personally?

These are questions that need answers. Like when I talk about these things, and I go into the detail of these things, some people become uncomfortable. "And so you're trying to make God out to be a monster by presenting him in this light." What I'm doing is presenting the evidence. When we get down to the nitty gritty of water, and overwhelming. Did God hold his children under the water and waiting for suffocation to take over the last gasp and their last breath? Did he hold them under the water while they were doing this? Did He made the rocks come in and crush the skulls of those who had transgressed against him? When we start to speak about God in this way, it becomes very uncomfortable. but I have to ask these questions. Because I believe that God came to me and said, I don't want anything to come between you and me. And

I just want you to know me.

And the thing that gives me the courage to pursue this is one verse in the Bible that Jesus spoke to Philip. In John chapter 14 I'd like to look at. John chapter 14. verse 9, Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Jesus said to Philip You've been with me for three years. And what you've seen in me, is exactly what my Father is like.

If you've seen me, you've seen the Father when I look at the life of Jesus Christ, I don't see him killing anybody. Read in the New Testament anywhere, where Jesus picked up a sword and hack someone to death, did he do this? Did he burn anyone to death, did he called fire down from heaven and burn people up? Did he call for the rocks in the mountains to fall on the Pharisees to destroy them. Did he do this?. He didn't do this.

I began to wonder if Jesus is the revelation of God. And he says in John chapter 17,

let's have a look John chapter 17. verse four, it says there I glorify you on earth, what does it mean to glorify? The Book of Exodus, Moses says, to God, show me your glory. And he says, To him, the Lord the Lord God merciful, gracious long suffering, abounding goodness and truth. He shows him his character so to glorify is to show character. So Jesus says, I have reveal your character Father on the earth. and there's many, many other statements in Scripture that speak about this. Look at verse six in the same chapter."I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me" I manifested your name. What he told them that his father's name was Jehovah?. Is that what he did? What does it mean He manifested his name. Name also means character. names were given in the old testament to represent character." I have manifested your character to the men you have given me" This is what Christ is saying.

The other thing that is interesting about John chapter 17. Is it says, Come back to verse four, I have glorified you on earth? I have what? What is it say? I have finished What? The work which you have given me to do. But this is the night before Jesus died on the cross. How can He say I have already finished the work which you gave me to do? Isn't he a bit premature here? Wasn't there one more day? But he saying it on the night before, I finished the work which you have given me to do. I look at verses like this and I begin to wonder like, am I missing something here or am I not understanding? It is true the next day when he hung up on the cross, He said, It is finished but the night before he made a qualification I have finished the work which you gave me to do. And he says in another place in the New Testament, when the men came to take Jesus away, He says this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Interesting, whose work was it to take Jesus hanging upon a cross and kill him? was this God's desire? Because this is another question that I get asked from people who are not Christian. "Explain this to me. God apparently is angry because we have sinned. He's so angry in fact that he needs to kill someone. So rather than killing us, He takes His own Son, butchers Him in the most horrendous manner and then He's happy and that's supposed to make me love Him"

Do you have a problem with this? Well, you can't have a problem with it because if you do, He will burn you to death. So don't ask questions. Just do and follow and don't ask questions but a lot of people do ask questions. And Christians say to non Christians, to atheists and worldly people who are raising these questions. You shouldn't question God! Who are you to question God? You'll burn in hell for that. But if I can asked legitimate questions based on the very word that Jesus himself has spoken, then we have a problem. We have a problem. I just want to reconcile what the Bible says. Jesus says, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father, that I'm saying, Jesus, I've seen the things your Father has done in the Old Testament. How can you be telling the truth? I believe He's telling the truth, but I'm asking, how could it be? I read the story of the flood, I read Sodom and Gomorrah, I read Korah, Dathan, and

Abiram. I read these stories. I've seen a light to call fire, I didn't see it but I've read it. Fire come down from heaven and burn up those two lots of 50 men, wasn't that you God who did that?. And then you get these little snippets come to Luke chapter nine.

Now what's interesting about Luke chapter nine is that most versions of the Bible omit an important part of this verse. I would suggest it's very important. If anyone has a more modern translation of this verse, you'll find something very interesting. This is Luke chapter nine. and we read from verse 51. And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. 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? Okay, they've got backing haven't they?. Elijah did this he called fire out from heaven and burned up these men. Verse 55 but he turned and he rebuked them saying, you know not what manner of spirit you are of. The next verse is missing in most Bibles. He says these words "for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them"

Jesus didn't come to destroyv[audience] Even in the other Bibles That's a big omission, isn't it? I'm not sent to destroy men's lives, but to save them that's only one verse, what about, I think we're all familiar with John 3:16. What about verses 17 and 18. we know For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. But look at John 3:17 and 18. For God's sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world didn't He? Isn't that what Christianity teaches? That He sent His Son into the world to show you what a true person should live like and if you do not live like that, even by His grace, He will burn you to death. That's to send your Son into the world to condemn the world isn't it? Yes? Something to think about.

Now, of course, Jesus is willing to forgive, He's willing to do all these things. But the point I keep coming back to is that most people when they come to the end of their lives, if they fear that God is going to burn them to death, they don't have the face to believe to overcome the weaknesses of their character. and this is something that each of us in our own private moments when we're not either church or community or serving others or doing good things in your mind. When you get irritated when you get frustrated, when you boil over and anger, and you say and do things that you regret., are you tempted to think " gotta stop doing this?" When you indulge in temptations, either of a food nature or a moral nature and you being tempted with things that you know, you ought not to do, are you tempt to think, you know what? I'm not going to make it, I'm too evil, I'm going to burn..

I hear people say this all the time. And finally, for many people, they're like, you know what? You know what if God's like that I don't want to be there anyway. I remember the time when I read to my children in the Old Testament where it says, if a son or daughter shall strike his mother or father, he shall surely be put to death. You read that in the Bible? I remember my son stiffened, I guess I could see, you know like is that what God's like? He would stone his own children to death? It had a big effect on my son in terms of the sense of rebellion that it created within him. "Like he would do that for hitting your parents and they get stoned to death. What kind of God is that? They would do things like this. Now,

Sixty years ago, many people wouldn't dare to ask questions like this. This is the way it is, this is what Christianity teaches and It's for you to listen and obey, not ask questions. But today, we live in a society where it's a bit different. What I'm suggesting to you is that maybe we've misunderstood the Bible, and the way that we've read it. What I'd like to do tomorrow is to go through some stories. and present a different perspective that maybe we have missed something or we have misunderstood the Bible, and the way that we've read .these passages. I want to give you just one brief example tonight before we

close that how possibly we might misread the Bible. Come to Matthew chapter 15.

Matthew chapter 15, surfacing questions. And of course, the answers to many of these questions are put in some of these books or there's another book from another gentleman who excellent "Acts Of Our Gentle God" to begin to answer some of these questions that maybe we have misunderstood. Maybe we have not read, as we ought to read. And I'm coming back to this question of Hannah Clark, how she was burned to death and how such violence be perpetrated by men and women.

When the God of the Bible that has been presented to the world is essentially a God that says, I have gone to great expense to save you, if you do not comply with my conditions, I will destroy you. I not only will destroy you, I will do it violently, in the most horrendous manner possible, I will burn you alive. And is it possible that that view of God is spilling over into our society and into our culture in causing men and women to act out this violence that they see portrayed in God? That's the question I'm asking. And I'm suggesting that maybe we need to change this because if we want violence to stop in our communities, and it's quite a simple proposition, if we want to stop violence in our communities, we need to stop worshipping deities that are violent, because by beholding, you become changed. If the deity you worship is violent, you will be violent at some point, when you're pushed to whatever, because by beholding you become changed. But when I look at the person of Jesus Christ, I don't see any violence whatsoever. Rather than hating and destroying He's enemies, I see Him laying His life and being destroyed by his enemies. That's what I see the person of Jesus who loved, who said Father, forgive them, for they know what they do. That picture challenges, my previous understanding of what I thought God was like, particularly when Jesus says if you've seen we've seen the Father, so I just wanted to tie that together, and then come to Matthew 15. It's the story of the Canaanite woman. She plead with Jesus to heal her daughter. We pick it up in verse 22 it says, Behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coast and cried on him saying, Have

mercy on me O Lord thou son of David, my daughter's grievously vex with a devil. What did Jesus do next? The first half of the next verse, it says, but He answered her, not a word. How do you understand this? She's pleading, her daughter is in distress. She's troubled. She's heard of Christ. She's asking, she's pleading for help, and He doesn't even respond. How do you interpret this? Good question. We see when Jesus is silent we see immediately the disciples of Jesus respond. And then it says, he answered her not a word and the disciples was came and besought him, saying send her away? Because she cries out after us. So in the silence of Jesus, the racial intolerance of the disciples is manifested. Get rid of her. Does that mean that Jesus was racially intolerant? They assumed that He was by his silence. They made an assumption based on their own character understanding. This is important, because the way you read the Bible is based on your character. The way you understand Scripture, the way that is the Scripture is read is it reveals what is in your heart. I don't want to get more into this. But it goes on. But when Jesus does finally speak, he says in verse 24, but he answered and he said, I am not sent but the lost sheep of the house of Israel. How do you understand this? Was He confirming what the disciple just said and telling her to leave? Could you read that way? Yes, you could, couldn't you? You, as the reader determine the meaning of the words, by the context on which you understand the character of Christ in relation to your own character. What would you do in that situation? Because that's what this story is about. It's about what you would do in this situation. Any of us who's read a story or a book or watched a movie, and as a main character, we tend to place ourself in the position of the main character of the story, that's what we do. And when you're watching and reading, you're anticipating "no don't do that do this". Your thinking has to deal with the situation. So I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In the flesh. He was only sent to fleshly Israel, and He is back handing this woman. But in John chapter four it says that Jesus revealed himself as the Savior of the world and Paul says in Romans chapter two, he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; in the spirit. This woman was responding to the Spirit of Christ. And therefore she was a true Israelite and said, Jesus is speaking in a way that the

reader will decide what He means. Then came she and worshipped at his feet saying, Lord help me. And this is the part that always used to trouble me, because He says, but He answered and said, it is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs. Did Jesus, just call her dog? It sounds like it doesn't it? It sounds like He calls her a dog. It sounds like He ignores her. And then He tells her, look, I'm not interested in you. you're not one of us. In fact, you are a dog. That's what it sounds like. but when we continue to read the story and can you imagine when this woman hears these words, it's not wise to take children's bread and give it to dogs. She was Canaanite woman did Canaanites like his Israelites? Israelites certainly didn't like Canaanites The conflict between them, the history, and how the Israelites had slaughtered the Canaanite. I don't think Canaanite liked Israelites, as much as Israelites didn't like them and when that word dog comes out, do you think something might have pinged in her flesh? You filthy Jew are dare you call me a dog. Could you be tempted to say that to Him? How dare you call me a dog but she doesn't. She doesn't respond this way. She does the most beautiful thing imaginable. She said truth Lord, yet even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. That's amazing faith. Jesus is testing this woman, and he's testing his disciples. But he's not testing them simply with whatever he wants to, he's testing them with the character faults in their own characters. He is reflecting back to them their own thinking, and see whether they have seen anything in him to draw them into a different framework of understanding. And then he says,

Then Jesus answered and said, Oh, Woman, why does Why does the word O exist there? What is the word O mean? It means that Jesus loved this woman. It's a sense of feeling that sense of yearning to help and save her daughter. That's what that means O woman great is your faith be it unto thee even as thou wilt, what do you think the disciples did in that moment? What, didn't you just call her a dog? Did you just tell her you only sent to Israel? And stories like this challenge our thinking, do I read the Bible correctly? Or have I misunderstood? Am I sure because when it says he's thoughts are not our thoughts, Oh that doesn't apply to me, it applies to everybody else. But

what if it does apply to us, then we have not read the Old Testament correctly. And in fact, God is like Jesus Christ. Wouldn't that be wonderful? If God was like Jesus, loving merciful. But isn't that what he told Moses that he was like? so I'm raising that story with you just to question, how are you reading the Bible correctly? Are you sure? And the reason I'm raising that is to say we have a crisis in our society. And I want to say this. 137 women every day are been killed. Violence, but that is not the most dangerous place, the most dangerous place to live in the world is in a mother's womb because this day, this very day 125,000 babies were aborted today. That's violence on a scale is unfathomable. 40 to 50 million babies a year. That's 25% of the human population being wiped out. That's double the population of Australia annihilated in the most horrendous manner. How can these things happen? How can these things take place? Do we just close our eyes and pretend it doesn't happen? 125,000 abortions today, and tomorrow will be the same and the same and does God saying to every one of those that he would wish I don't want anything to come between you and me. And I just want you to know me, is it possible that He feels the same way about every one of them as he feels about me, and what kind of suffering that he be going through to lose 125,000 his children, before they even have a chance to get out of the womb.

I want to challenge the ideas of our views of God and the violence that has been perpetrated on the earth at the present time. Tomorrow I will speak more about the effect on the earth itself from this type of violence from this type of effect.

What is it doing to the earth? How is it affecting us? And this will help us to understand some of the stories in the flood and other areas that maybe we have not understood before. If nothing else, I'm asking you to reconsider the way you've read the Bible. To think again. I've been on this journey for 16 years, trying to put the pieces together trying to make sense of it. A lot of people say to me Adrian you are absolutely blasphemously obsured. Of course, God needs to rule his kingdom and keep people, let people know God is holy. And if you come into His presence, you need to be in order or you

get fry. Really. It just means more abortions, it just means more women dying, it just means more violence because if the God of the universe is ultimately violent, then violence will never leave our universe until we can find a God that's actually like Jesus Christ.

So thank you. I invite you. This is my attempt and some other's attempt to try and look at the scripture in a different way. Test it, take it, read it, compare it with Scripture, you may come to a different conclusion. But don't write it off until you at least try. That's my appeal to everyone here. there is a growing numbers, they're starting to see wow, maybe God is different from what I thought, Maybe he's not as violent as I thought. Maybe he is like Jesus Christ.

We close in prayer.

Father, I thank you for sending your only begotten Son to complete the work that you've sent him to do that is to reveal your character. I Pray for everyone here tonight, that they may ask the questions. Are you really like Jesus when he came here to Earth? Are you really that kind, loving and merciful? Or is there an element in your character that becomes to the point where patients ends and violence begins. We're all familiar with this. We know this in our own lives. Our society is dying as a result. And we want to remember Hannah Clark and her three beautiful children that senseless killing, why they had to die? Is it related to the God that is worshipped by Christianity, Judaism and Islam, the god of fire? Help us as we think on these things in Jesus name, amen