

## Broken Timbers and Falling Bricks

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Genesis 17:1

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One day God was looking down at Earth and saw all of the rascally behavior going on. So He called one of His angels and sent the angel to Earth for a time. When he returned, he told God, "Yes, it is bad on Earth; 95% are misbehaving and only 5% are not." God thought for a moment and said, "Maybe I had better send down a second angel to get another opinion." So God called another angel and sent him to Earth for a time. When the angel returned, he went to God and said, "Yes, it's true. The Earth is in decline; 95% are misbehaving, but 5% are being good." God was not pleased. So He decided to e-mail the 5% that were good, because he wanted to encourage them, and give them a little something to help them keep going. Do you know what the e-mail said? Okay, I was just wondering, because I didn't get one either.

Many people really believe that God is like a big Santa who just happens to live in Heaven. He's making a list and checking it twice. He's gonna find out who is naughty or nice. So you had better watch out! I have encountered many people who are convinced that they are so beyond the love of God that the moment they would step through the doors of a church, the roof would cave in. When calamity strikes, and as they stand amidst the broken timbers and fallen bricks, they draw the conclusion that God has punished them because they've been naughty. They are the 95% that have been misbehaving and everyone else in the church is part of the 5% that have been good (Apparently, they've never been around me during a Youth Group Bible study).

When a person like this confides in me (when the whole idea of God watching them gives them the "Heebie Geebee's), well, rascal that I am, I tell them that it is actually quite true. There is no place to hide from God. **"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence"**,<sup>1</sup> writes King David in Psalm 139. Now I know it's not a popular thought, this whole idea of God watching all that we do and all that we say. It's probably not the most effective evangelistic tool either.

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<sup>1</sup>*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (Ps 139:7). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

Can you imagine walking up to unchurched Harry & Sally and saying, “God’s watching you! As a matter of fact several angels are on a stake out in front of your house right now”! But unfortunately, that’s not a lie. Harry & Sally are being watched by God, I’m being watched by God, and you are being watched by God. And He does notice if you’ve been naughty or nice.

I really don’t think we teach this enough now days. I think most Christian teaching focuses on getting us to live the best life we possibly can, with the idea that somewhere in the distance is God, and we are on a constant journey to draw near to Him. But, the truth is that God is far closer than most of us realize. In fact, God wants us to be aware that He is near and that He is watching us closely.

Look what God says to Abraham one day. In Genesis 17, He says **“I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless.”**<sup>2</sup> (Genesis 17:1b) God says “I am *El Shaddai*”, the first time in the Bible He uses this name to describe Himself. His command to Abraham is to walk before Him with integrity. Like Abraham, we would probably be thinking, “O great!. Now I have to march before God with Him back there watching my every step.” Think about it! Nothing we do will ever be hidden from Him. He will notice when we stumble and fall. He will notice when we wander off the path. But Abraham understood something about God that perhaps you do not.

How does the thought of God watching you closely make you feel? If you are a Christian, how do you feel about the idea that God commands us to walk before Him with integrity and completeness? Well I suppose your feelings would be based upon your understanding of God’s heart. Most people probably think that God watches them closely so He can see them fail, and then move them to the naughty list. But they would be wrong. According to Isaiah chapter nine, God declares **“For a child is born to us, a son is given to us”** (Isaiah 9:6). Out of God’s deep love for us, He will provide a Son who will be our redemption. Even Jesus proclaims <sup>16</sup>**“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”**<sup>3</sup> (John 3:16)

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<sup>2</sup>*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* 1995 (Ge 17:1). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

<sup>3</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation.* Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

I think most people don't fully understand the demonstration of God's love in the Child that was born for us; the Son who was given for us. Because of the immensity of His love for us, He sent Jesus to earth as the gift which says, "I will do for you what you cannot do for yourselves". And this was not a promise that God made, but a covenant. A covenant which says that even when we fail, He will remain faithful ("If we are unfaithful, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny who He is." <sup>4</sup> 2 Timothy 2:13). God is a God of a covenant, not a promise.

You can be sure that God is watching you, but it is through eyes bathed in love. Had God been a God of wrath, He never would have sent Jesus to be our redeemer. He would have left us to stumble and fall on our own. Yes, God is watching us, His eyes focused upon you and me. And yes, God is very close to you today. But I want you to realize that in His heart is a deep and passionate love for you, even for those who are part of the 95% that have misbehaved. Especially for those of us who misbehave. It is for us that the Son was given. He was born so that we need not die.

When I think about walking before God, instead of feeling His eyes of judgment upon me, I know now that He is watching me with love and compassion. I know that by walking before Him, I will not be abandoned and He will never leave me behind. By walking before Him, He will see when I grow weary and faint. And by walking before God, He will see when I start to wander off the path. I see this side of God because I know that His love for us was demonstrated fully in the gift of a Son whose birth we celebrate this season.

May the words of the Apostle Paul remind us of the depth of God's love as He watches us closely each and every day. <sup>38</sup> "And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. <sup>39</sup> No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord." <sup>5</sup> (Romans 8:38-39)

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<sup>4</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>5</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers