

The
Character
of God
in All
of Life's
Experiences



Wood Chips

An Illustrated Poetry Collection

ROBERT H. FLORES



The background of the entire page is a detailed, high-contrast black and white image of wood grain, showing concentric growth rings and a textured surface. A white, cloud-like shape cuts across the middle of the image, creating a space for a central text box. The text box is a decorative frame with a curved top and bottom and straight sides, containing the title text and four ornate corner flourishes.

AT THE
MEETING TABLE

All of God
is represented in Jesus
All of mankind
likewise
is represented in Jesus

Fully God
Fully man

The full representative of each party
an ambassador to the other
Without Jesus
there wouldn't have been a meeting place
to even "talk out our differences"

He was the One that made that meeting happen
He set it up

Other times and places didn't work
Mankind needed to meet with God
but didn't want to
God wanted to meet with man
but didn't have to

Ignorance on one side
grace on the other

Two completely different entities
not just in bodily and spiritual make up
but in morality and in love

At the core
these two entities were as different as could be
Two parties coming to meet
equity
justice
mercy
all of it
was on the table

Mankind needed mercy and was incapacitated

to offer God even a scrap for it
God wanted to lavish mercy on mankind
but had to lavish His justice first

How would God meet with man without destroying Him?
For man to get within a trillion miles of God
would be deadly

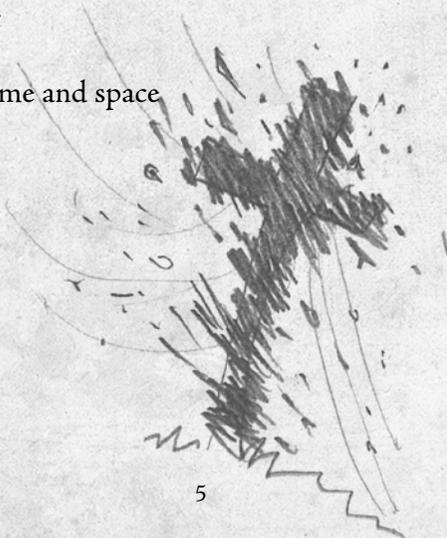
God's holiness isn't to be trifled with
It destroys all sin
regardless of creed, color or culture

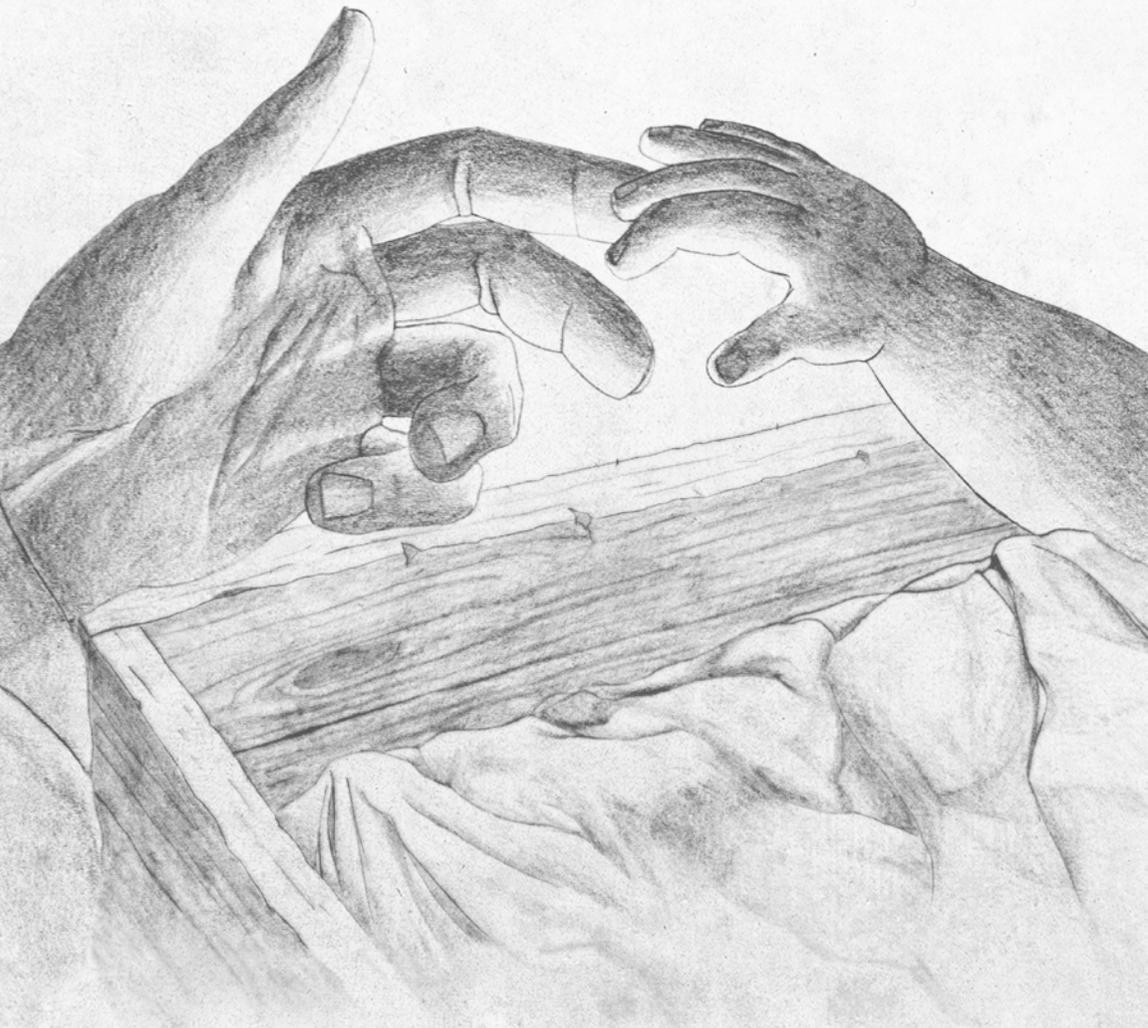
It cares nothing for one's family tree or career
It seeks out and destroys all opposing forces
Every man and woman was in danger of this judgment
so much so that they didn't even realize it
How was mankind's sordid sin history to be dealt with?

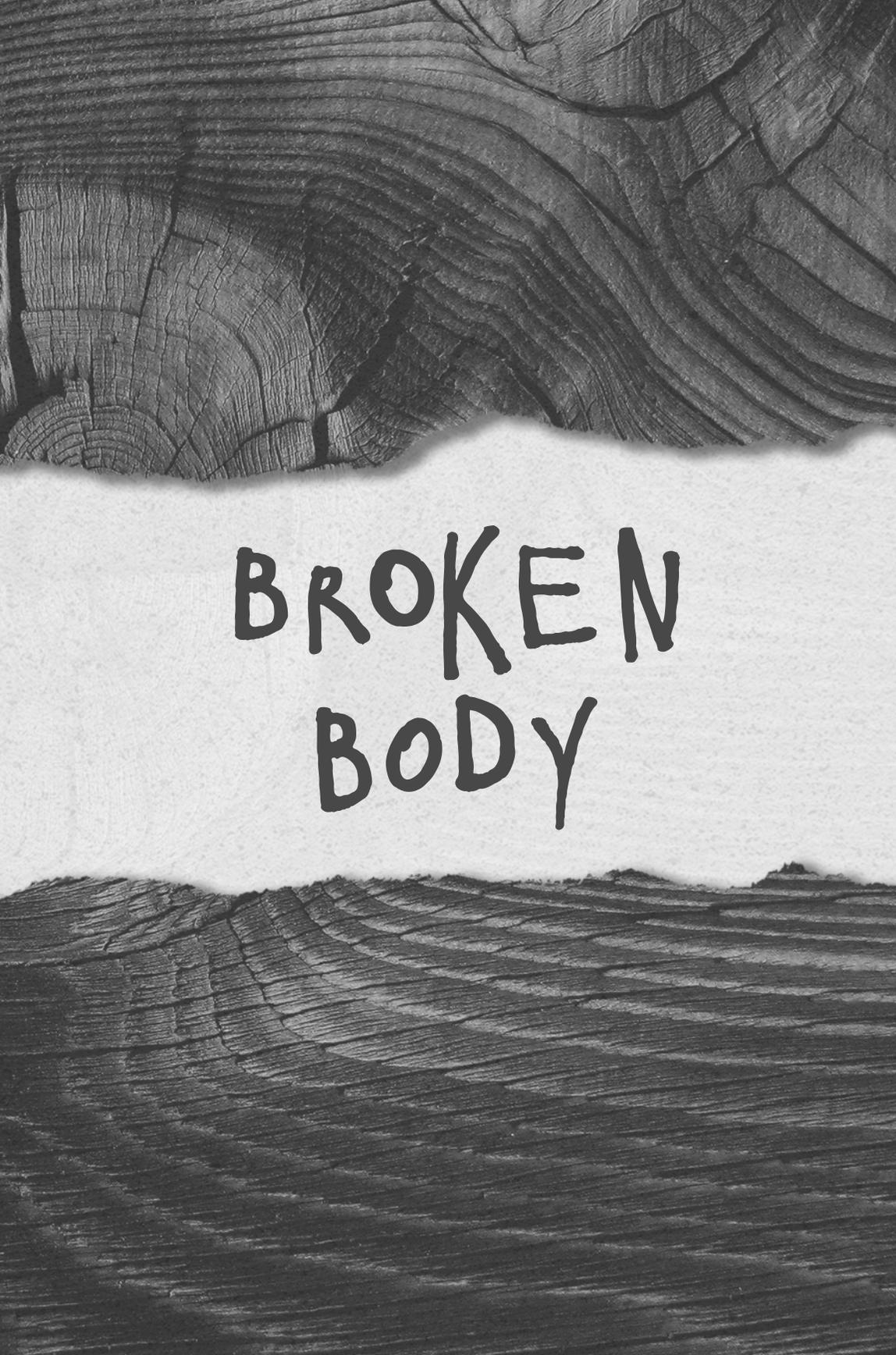
Jesus

He would live and fellowship with man
He would break into nature and reveal God Himself
He would live among us and teach us
and then
He would be killed by us
all according to His plan
A perfect sacrifice for an imperfect "Party B"

The contract was signed with His own blood
His atonement was set
the deal was made
eternally fixed for all time and space







**BROKEN
BODY**

Broken body
a lifetime of pain
unimaginable evil inside and out
guilt and shame for past mistakes
needing a Savior and finding none
searching for meaning
sleeping through the pain
nightmares are nicer than reality
verbal and emotional abuse
shredding my spirit
no value within me
discarded like a piece of garbage
no one wanted me
abandoned
forsaken
brushes with death
is this what life is about?
does anybody hear my cries?

help me, Lord!

somehow rescued
past is washed away in an ocean of tears
my Helper and Friend
He loves me despite my past
He saved me not because I was perfect
but because He was
I didn't earn salvation
He just wanted to show His strength
in the deepest, darkest hell
picking up the fragments of my heart
not the path I would have chosen
but that path was ordered by the Lord
He was with me in every bloodied step
a spirit born again



LESS

Silence forever
never a noise to be heard
absence of any living being
or any *thing*
for that matter

The thought of no God
terrifies me
it would be the loss of everything,
our world,
our lives
would have no origin story

that should be no surprise
because
by His fiat command we have everything
if we had no God
nothing would exist
but
no one would be around to care
it
whatever *it* would be
would be
completely and utterly
without form and void
The *Nothing*

no order or chaos
no love or life
no air or heartbeats
a heat-death
on the spiritual and molecular level

it's hard to imagine
a universe
filled to the brim
with *nothing*
everything we have ever known
has been given to us by Him
we are paupers
we would have nothing if it weren't for God
the atheist would be right
except there wouldn't be any atheists
physics and laws wouldn't exist

neither would design or function
light or darkness
planets or people
no applause
no laughter of life
no warmth of the sun
nothing beautiful or ugly
no sparkles on the ocean water
no scent of flowers or weeds
no heaven or hell to worry about
no holiness or unrighteousness
emptiness would engulf all creation
except
there would be no creation to engulf
in the absence of a Creator
emptiness would rule over *all*

indeed
the loss of a Creator means the loss of
who we are
what we are
what we enjoy
it's difficult to imagine
an existence of nothing
because all we have ever known
is something
what does nothing look like?
it looks like the absence of *God*
His handiwork
His grace
His creativity
all the joys of life
overflowing

but
all of that
would be gone
flat-lined
for eternity
there would be no life
but death wouldn't reign, either
as things need to be *alive*
to feel the sting of *death*

The words of this poem wouldn't even exist
language and letters
and words and thoughts
not even the *hope* of their existence
nullified
erased

a desolate desolation
a purposeless, meaningless abyss
a cold, barren landscape without the landscape
a blank canvas never to be painted on
an empty glass never to be filled
no prologue *or* epilogue
not even a stage

vacancy in all directions
not a drop to be heard
the abortion of all good things
the all-encompassing emptiness
could never be breached
the thought of living, breathing creatures
like chirping birds
or men and women
would be but a cruel joke
to be told by no one
to an audience of nothing

for God *not* to live is a horrific thought
for He is the Source of all
He makes the impossible possible
take away His Grand Idea
or the Grand Idea *Maker*
and we are left with less than nothing
God's throne would be an empty seat
never to be sat upon
for only He can divide the nothing from the something
only He can create life
there is only *one* job
and only *He* can fulfill its requirements

God is irreplaceable
Thank God there is God
without His existence
there would only be
the blackness of darkness forever

GOD'S
UNWAVERING
GRACE



How does God's grace blow me away
over and over and over again?
It's not like the dark trials ever end
there's always a new torture to endure
a new cross to bear
a new hellish experience to be thrown into
but through it all
when I had lost all control
and all my hope had dissipated
God's grace got me through
and breathed new life into me

Completely helpless and hopeless
Our difficulties increased
We fought just to see daylight
Just to witness
More troubles on the horizon
Gasping for air
when would this nightmare ever end?
Struggles and tears consumed our hours
Chaos and fears filled our hearts
These were the days
we thought we'd never get through
Like a storm on the shore
Anguish pounded on our souls
With nowhere else to turn
All we could do was fall to our knees
and look up

One day, *ex nihilo*
A glimmer of light
A single piece fell into place
Then another
and another
Like a gentle sprinkle from heaven
solutions presented themselves
answers were like a cup of cool water
we could see faint resolutions coming into focus
Resolutions that we so desperately needed
The trials were still here
But He was beginning

slowly
to reveal His mighty hand
Grace within the chaos

Now we look behind us
at the smoldering ruins
joyful that the ordeal has ended
With thankful hearts
and peace in our souls
We are happy to be on this side
God walked us through it
He never left us alone or abandoned us
His faithfulness is beyond words
His grace has no ending
It cannot be stopped
No circumstances can redirect it
or hinder it
or dismiss it
All the forces of evil
cannot impede it in any way
His grace is not frustrated by any of life's circumstances
He pushes forward and reveals His grace at will
even in the darkest of dungeons
His is a grace that is powerful and loving
His is a grace that is unwavering and doesn't flinch
It reaches down to undeserved sinners like you and me
A God this grace-giving should not be reckoned with

Once again, by fiat command
The sun is shining on our faces
He has granted us a renewed joy
We are unworthy to have such a gift as this
He has destroyed all facts and figures
He defies man's statistics and logic
The face of grace
Right here in my arms
looking back at me
all things working together for good
to them that love God

How does His grace work?

It's not like our circumstances should have ended because
we are good, moral people
or because we go to church
or give to charity
it's not that God "owes us one"
it's not even because everything just "works its way out in the end"
Here is the reason that we can get through our trials:

Jesus

Only Him

Only His strength

Only His power

It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed
because his compassions fail not
His grace on the undeserved
His mercy on the unmerciful
His love on the unloveable
Freely given
and freely received
not just in everyday circumstances
but in the circumstances that we thought
we would never see a solution to

It's an exciting read—this novel that God is writing
sometimes it's a horror story
sometimes it's a love story
It's unknown how the course of our lives will end
We don't even know what chapter we're in
but we know the Immutable Author
and we know that the lines He is writing right now
will be for the betterment of us
and the showcase for His glory
for all eternity



**JUSTICE
IS COMING**

Justice

Irrevocably defiant
It will seek out and deliver
for every man, woman and child
Not too severe
or too lenient
It will be perfectly applied
and executed

Justice

It's what we want for others
but not for ourselves
No one ever begs God,
"Give me justice for my sins!"

Why?

Because justice from God
is a horrific thought for sinners
Being held accountable for my actions
is a detestable proposition

Nevertheless

sin deserves justice
It deserves punishment
No one will squirm away on that Day
No one is going to hide in the back row
No one is going to *not* show up
It's not a jury summons that can be ignored

God's justice is inevitable
resolute
definitive
and it needs to be released

His patience and lovingkindness
has kept it from us for so long
But make no mistake
It is coming
Sin just can't be allowed to run free
It needs to be reigned in
caught

and destroyed

Sin liberated only leads to death
As opposed to what some may believe,
God didn't create this world just to destroy it
He created this world with life
extravagant life
overflowing with measure
We destroyed this world with our sin
it is our fault
our collective effort
that this world is messed up

But
God has a remedy for this sin-laden world
Justice
It will bring this world back under submission to God
Sin's heyday is coming to an end
its jurisdiction has been revoked
the sun is rising on justice
a final justice
that will end all other justices
all other judgments will pale in comparison
to the Day of Judgment

Justice is the hope we have that will set the world free
Justice is the cure to the dark hearts of man
the cure for all injustices is on the horizon
the pandemic is ending
the hammer has arrived

Thank God
because justice will smash all sin inside
and outside man
I hope you will survive that Day
so we can praise God's fairness
grace
and *justice*
for all eternity



The image features a black and white wood grain background. A horizontal white band runs across the middle, containing a black decorative shape with a scalloped border. Inside this shape, the text "little SINS" is written in white. "little" is in a lowercase, italicized serif font, and "SINS" is in a bold, uppercase, italicized serif font.

little
SINS

It's a dangerous thing to keep on sinning
Because eventually you don't see any light
on either end of the tunnel
You begin to hate God for the life that "He's given you"
Sin has made you so used to its unsatisfying pleasures
that you have forgotten what it even means
to be fulfilled

Sin has taken all the joy out of your life
It has ripped the soul out of your body
and has replaced it with addictions and lusts
You are a shell of your former self
and it all started with a little sin
That sin lead to another, bigger sin
so on, and so forth, until
now
you look around
and all of life
is but a fog

You cry out to your friends for help
No answer
You scream for your family's help
but only *your* voice echoes back
You have pushed everyone away
Your wallet contains no money
You would walk home if you had one
but you don't
You aren't welcome anywhere
you are a disgrace to humanity
a living representation of sin

You blend in with the shadows
as strangers pass you by
Days, months, years—it's all the same
This is what eternity feels like
Oh, if only you could go back
those were the days that you could breathe
and enjoy God's creation
Those were the days filled with laughter and joy
Friends and family surrounded you

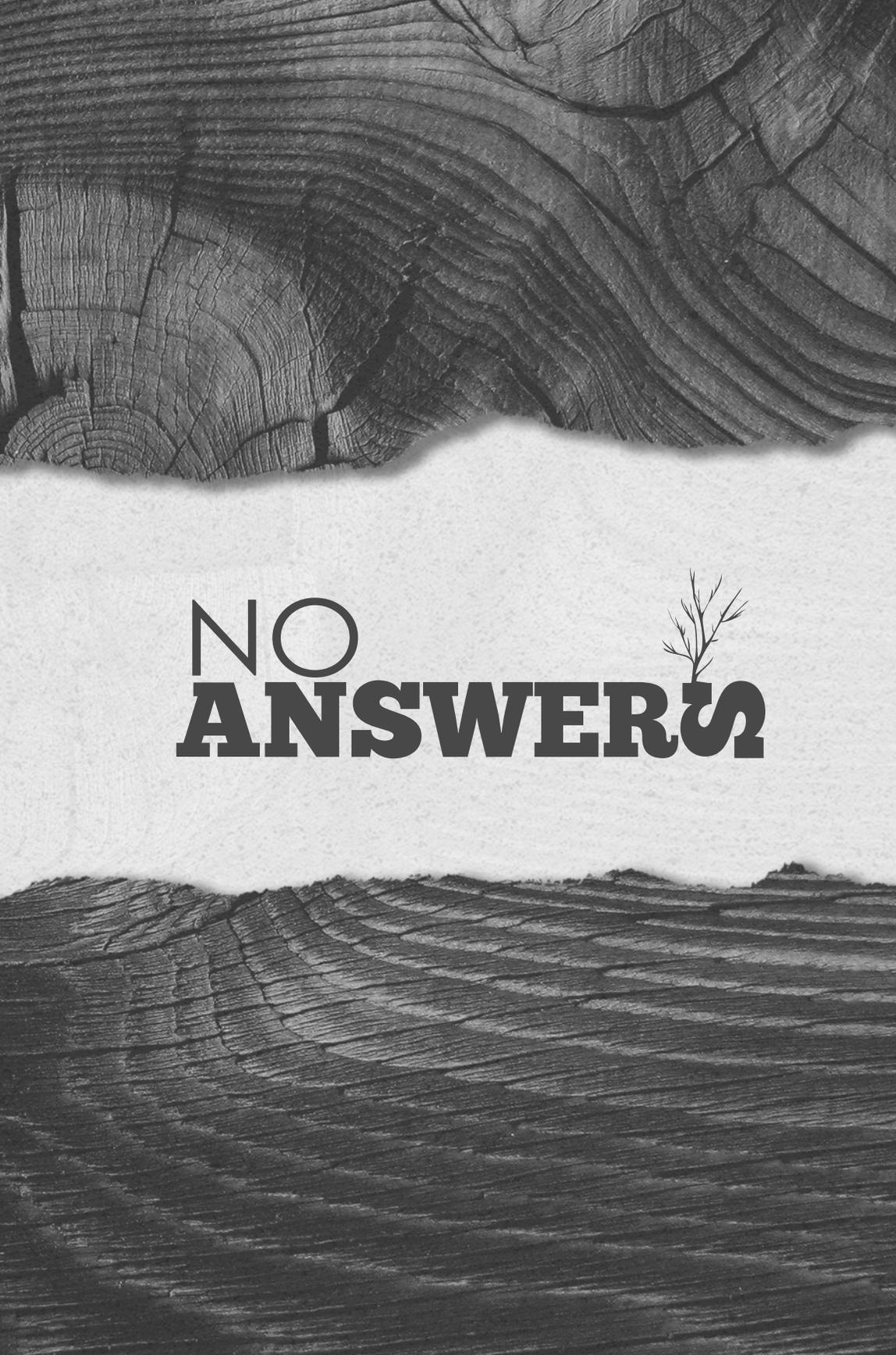
Those were the days before the vacuum of depravity
sucked you down into its depths

Now you spend your days in the absence of light
The sights and smells of yesterday are but memories
You seek a reprieve from the loneliness
and find none
Freedom used to be so enamoring
What you wouldn't give for some boundaries at this point
You never realized that
sin only takes from you
and never replenishes
Sin has no tangible value
Nothing good ever comes from it
Guilt and shame are its fruits

Cry out to God
He will help you
His light will shine into your life
He will expel the darkness
and crush the idols
He will extract the cancer
from your soul
all the former tastes of these little sins
will be but bitterness
so you can once again
taste and see
the goodness of God







**NO
ANSWERS**

To be human is to not have all the answers
To be human is to question God
the One who holds all the answers
To be God is to not always give answers
To ask God questions is not sin
Only when the lust for answers
the turning of the answers into idols
does it become sin
When we don't get our answers
and then use that as the impetus
to turn our back on God
that is when
the sin of the human heart is exposed

Men want omniscience
We want answers
When we don't get our questions answered
or our god-like omniscience verified
we turn on God
Like a spoiled brat
a rabid dog
like a Judas
we turn on Him
Why?
Because we have a sense of entitlement
In our mind, we deserve to know
why the cancer
why the accident
why the unexpected death

Men desire to know
the purpose of their current pain
They want to know why the present suffering is happening
They get upset
that God doesn't live inside Aladdin's lamp
to take it all away
They can't control God
They can't put Him in a box
They can't make Him relinquish the answers
To find out
why the poverty

why the miscarriage
why the divorce

It's funny
men don't question God when everything is going good
in fact, they don't even talk to God when things are going well
it's only when bad things happen
does the tidal wave of questions
crash upon the shore of God's throne
Shall we receive good at the hand of God
and not receive evil?
and yet men still ask
why the famine
why the earthquake
why the sickness

We await His response
and receive none

So, men ignore Him
They ignore Him because He won't do what they want Him to do
He won't bow to their wishes
But, if He did
He would cease to be God
If He acted only on behalf of what men wanted
men would be the higher authority
And, that is precisely what people want
They want to control and manipulate the Almighty
How sad
How pitiful
To use God only for what He can do for us
He is God and He has no obligations
to give us any reason
as to why He does anything
He doesn't have to give us our next breath
or our beating hearts
He doesn't even have to give us one more nanosecond on this earth
What He is obligated to give us is hell
We are rebels who have fought for His throne
and lost
and we deserve to be punished for our mutiny

But, instead,
all of His wrath has fallen on Christ

And yet you still want your answers
your long, sought-after answers
why the addiction
why the abuse
why the Holocaust

Did it ever occur to you that all your answers
can be found at the foot of the cross?
Did it ever occur to you that Jesus had questions, too?
“My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?”
Did it ever occur to you that your quest for answers
your quest for omniscience
is simply your quest for God?

God is our Father and He loves us
and most of the time
He withholds the answers from us
like a child
our finite minds cannot comprehend His answers
but if we seek His face
and follow His path
we will find that it leads to Calvary
but
the questions won't end there
for, in fact, Calvary itself is puzzling
New questions are asked there:
Why did Christ have to be crushed rather than me?
How powerful was Christ's blood to wash away all my sins?
Why did God love me so much?
Why did I deserve His grace and so many others are going to hell?
What can I ever do to repay Christ for what He has done for me?

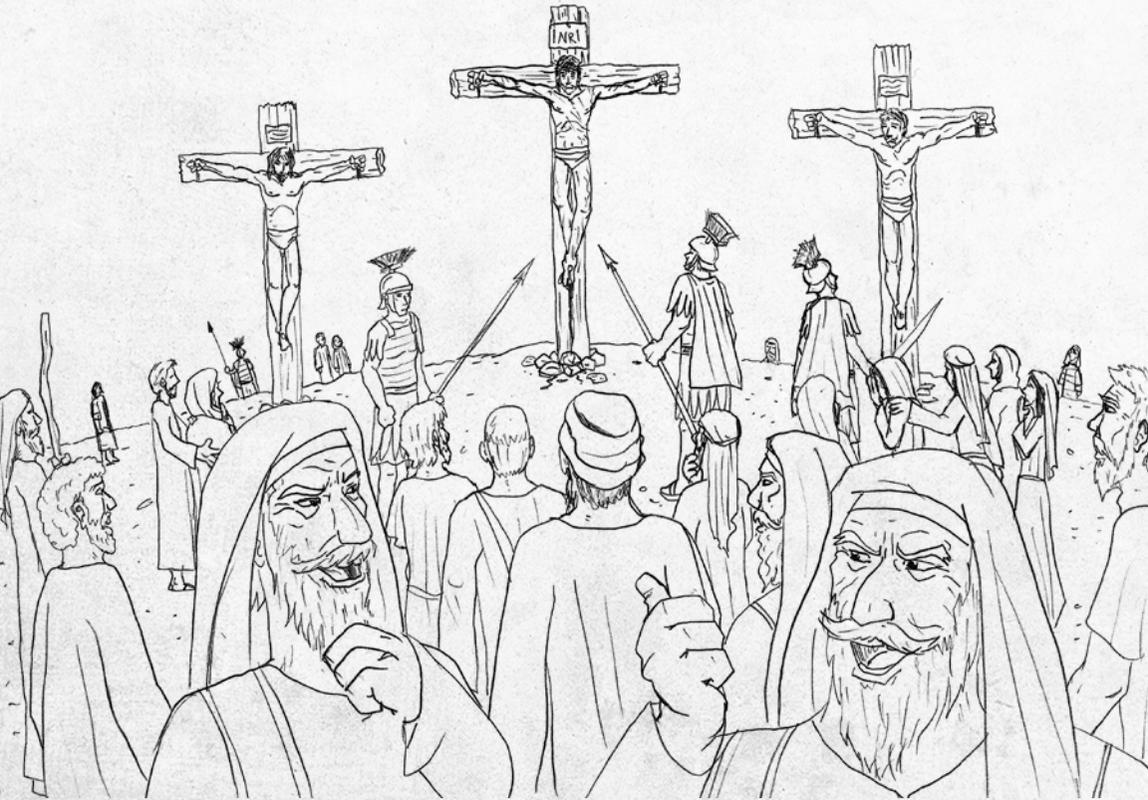
Our unanswered questions are what we should be bringing to God
so we can get to know Him more
He knows we are frail
He knows our lack of understanding
That is why He uses these unanswered questions
these hard, painful moments in life

to draw us closer to Him
He wants to grow our faith
our trust
in Him
He uses the question marks
to pave the road
to Calvary
why the handicap
why the assault
why the war
can all be found
in two nail-pierced hands

We are called to live by faith, not by sight
not by answers
We are to follow Him in the light He has given us
Is what we know of God
good enough to keep following Him?
God may seem enigmatic at times
But who He is was never seen more clearly than on the cross
That is God in His most shining glory
pouring out His heart,
blood
and life
for the world to see
Calvary was one big: "Here I am!" statement
What are you going to do with that?
Jesus has shown us all He is
He has kept nothing back in showing us His heart
He exposed His love to us

What other questions are there, really?
Our Creator has revealed Himself to us in real time and space
Are unanswered questions
no matter how important they are
so essential in keeping you from the Almighty?
He showed us everything inside Him on that cross
What unanswered question could possibly keep you
from turning to God
in your darkest hour?

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST



What is the Gospel?

The gospel is the undeserved salvation of all mankind from sin and eternal death, accomplished only by the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These facts are made real to an individual's heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the gospel is God's plan to rescue us, sustain us and grow us up in Him for all eternity. The famous passage, John 3:16, explains the gospel:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

The gospel's foundation is only based upon what Jesus has done; not what we have done. It is God's free gift to us. Heaven is for those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior. People think that getting to heaven is some long, drawn-out process in which you have to try and follow the Ten Commandments or be a do-gooder or go to church or something. But it's really not complicated at all. See, salvation isn't about getting to God on our own terms or pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps, it's about God reaching down to us and offering us salvation free of charge.

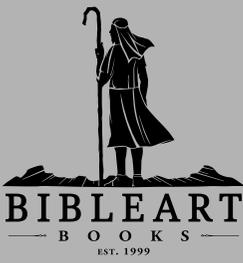
Paul says in Ephesians 2:4-5, *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)."*

Our sins won't allow us to get to heaven on our own terms; it is only God's rich mercy that He has made a way for us. God demands no less than perfection, and only perfect people get to go to heaven. Based on works, none of us would make it; only Jesus would. But, God has provided a way to give perfection to us through Jesus. Jesus is the exclusive, one-way to the Father.

Jesus says this in John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

Either that statement is true or it is not. Every Christian knows that it is absolutely and irrevocably true. Ask Christ to reveal Himself to you today. It's your choice.





*Visual Resources
for your Church,
and Home Group*



Books.

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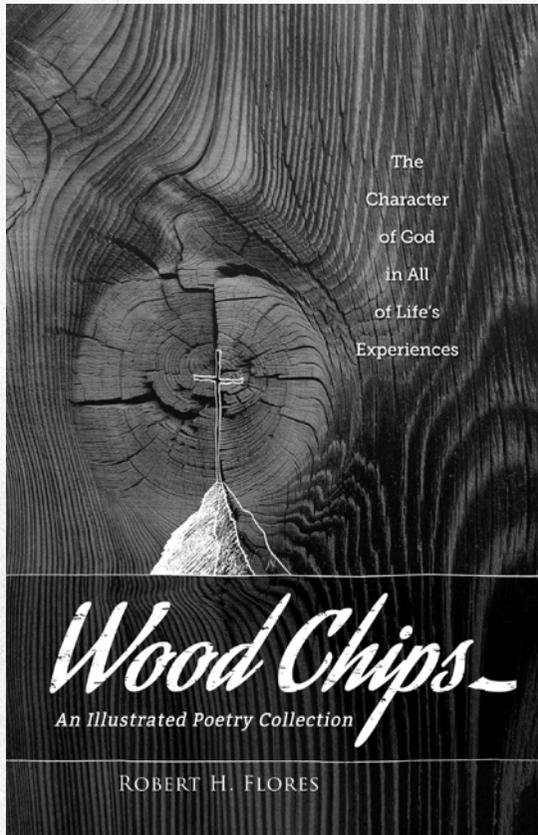
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