

THE HOLY BUT, Part 1

What if there were a “quick fix” app that could give you instant clarity and confidence? Its raw power would suddenly reverse the downward tug of life’s cares and Satan’s con games. The Bible says, “What we think is who we really are” (Proverbs 23:7). So how do we train our thinker to get the message?

*“Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, **BUT** let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God – what is good and is pleasing to Him and is perfect.”* (Romans 12:1-2)

Is it possible to suddenly see things from God’s perspective? This “Shazam moment” is yours whenever you need it. Let’s call it “The Holy **BUT**.”

Except for the names of God, the word with the most clout may well be **BUT**. It appears 3,992 times in the King James Version. “**BUT GOD**” is used 64 times to identify the nature of our Creator. Why is it a good idea to live on the right side of His holy **BUT**? And how do we do that? A prime example in the Old Testament is Joseph. **Let’s read Psalms 105:1-24 (p.546, Good News Bible).**

Joseph’s ten half-brothers jealously hated him for being his dad Jacob’s pet son. Stylin’ in his technicolor dreamcoat, he flaunts his dreams that one day he’ll rule his family. Offended by Joseph’s crowing, and *the horse he rode in on*, da boyz plot his demise. Just in time, Reuben, the oldest, convinces them to toss the lad of 17 into a cistern until they can pawn him off to some nomadic Arab merchants. The boys lie to Jacob, saying wild animals had killed their brother.

DISCUSS: Why does the Bible contain so many grim stories?

Pit and Pendulum

Sold into slavery in Egypt, Joe’s next stop is the palatial *casa* of Potiphar, Pharoah’s security chief. Could God be whispering to Joe, “It’s about to get messy, but trust me, kid, I have big plans for you. And I’ll stop at nothing to get your attention.”

When Ms. Potiphar fails to seduce Joe, she falsely maligns him to her husband, landing Joe in jail for years until he’s summoned to unpack Pharoah’s dreams. Joe’s interpretation: Egypt will have 7 boom years of harvests, then 7 of severe famine. For this, he’s named #2 in command under Pharoah (Genesis 39:1-41:57).

Egypt’s overstock attracts foreign grain shoppers like Jacob who sends his sons from Canaan to reload their larder. Ironically, they’re forced to buy from long-lost bro, Joe. With the gravitas of his position, revenge was an option for Joseph. Instead he moves his family to Egypt where he can care for them (Genesis 42:1-50:26).

Disclosing his identity, he employs the profound “50/20 Principle” which embodies God’s character and His plan for all Creation. It’s one of God’s most potent **BUTs**:

*“You plotted evil against me, **BUT GOD** turned it into good in order to preserve the lives of many people who are alive today because of what happened.”*

Genesis 50:20

Joseph could say this since he had forgiven the treacheries against him, i.e., sold as a slave by his brothers, his father’s grief thinking he’d lost a son, wrongly jailed by a spiteful woman, and a broken promise by a fellow prisoner. Growing in grace and wisdom from these setbacks, Joseph was primed for leadership. Let’s read Genesis 40:19-23, p. 36, and 45:1-8, p. 41).

*“Joseph suffered 13 years of hardship, loss, persecution and abandonment. **BUT GOD** understood the pressures that his character needed to withstand in order to succeed once he was promoted to rule over Egypt ... Joseph’s soul and character had to be purified and strengthened through these tests Otherwise, he would not have had the capacity and wisdom ... to manage the wealth of a vast nation such as Egypt.”* So says ministry consultant Steven DeSilva.

Had Joe lived on the wrong side of God’s holy **BUT**, he’d be saying, “I know God loves me, **BUT** He’s sure stuck me with rotten brothers.” -- “I work in a mansion compared to most slaves, **BUT** why did God let that dame lie about me?” -- “Sure, I was finally released, **BUT GOD** could’ve sprung me from prison years earlier.”

DISCUSS: Using Joe’s story, compose a sentence with you on the wrong side of **BUT**, then one with you on the right side:

pride
jealousy
sexual temptation
God’s faithfulness
suffering
patience
forgiveness
mercy
power/authority

DISCUSS: How would living on the right side of God’s holy **BUT** affect an issue you’re wrestling with today?

The Real His Deal

Paul writes: *"While we were still sinners Christ died for us! By His blood we're now put right with God ... We **were** God's enemies, **BUT** He made us His friends through the death of His Son."* (Romans 5:7-10)

Jesus' disciple John: *"I 'm writing this to you, My children, so that you will not sin; **BUT** if anyone does sin, we have Someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf – Jesus Christ, the righteous one. And Christ Himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven, and not our sins only **BUT** also the sins of everyone."* (1 John 2:1-2)

John sums it up: *"The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; **BUT** those who do the will of God live forever."* (1 John 2:17)

No Buts About It

Paul's recommendation: *"You have been raised to life with Christ, so set your hearts on things that are in heaven where Christ sits on His throne at the right side of God. Keep your minds fixed on things there, not on things here on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Your real life is Christ, and when He appears, then you too will appear with Him and share His glory!"* (Colossians 3:1-4)

You can take no credit for "getting right with God." When you were *spiritually dead*, God gave you faith to believe Him. Religion requires you to *do* something, **BUT** salvation is not a *reward*. It's a *GIFT*, bought for you with Christ's blood.

God's invitation is simply this: *"Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved!"* Have you honestly faced your sin and your desperate need for a Savior? If so, have you taken the next step of accepting God's forgiveness? It's yours for the taking, **BUT** if you refuse God's pardon that's payable to you by name (!), it's worth the same as an uncashed check. No ifs, ands or **BUTs**.

His Deal

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THE HOLY BUT: From Bad to Verse

Ultimate control

*"So it was not really you who sent me here, **BUT GOD**. He has made me the king's highest official. I am in charge of this whole country; I am the ruler of all Egypt. ... **You plotted evil against me, BUT GOD** turned it into good in order to preserve the lives of many people who are alive today because of what happened." (Genesis 45:8; 50:20, p. 41, Good News Bible)*

*"Father, He said, 'if You will, take this cup of suffering away from Me. Not My will, however, **BUT** Your will be done.'" (Luke 22:42, p. 946)*

*"The Lord frustrates the purposes of the nations; He keeps them from carrying out their plans. **BUT** His plans endure forever Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:10-12)*

*"Many are the plans in a person's heart, **BUT** the Lord's purpose prevails." (Proverbs 19:21, p. 587)*

*"According to His plan God already decided that Jesus would be handed to you; you killed Him by letting sinful men crucify Him. **BUT GOD** raised Him from death, freeing Him from its power. Death couldn't hold Him prisoner." (Acts 2:23-24, p. 981)*

Protection

*"When I was in trouble, they attacked me, **BUT** the Lord protected me. ... He saved me because He was pleased with me." (2 Samuel 22:19-20, p. 286)*

*"The righteous are guided and protected by the Lord, **BUT** the evil are on the way to their doom." (Psalm 1:6, p. 482)*

*"I praise You, Lord, because You have saved me and kept my enemies from gloating over me. I cried to You for help, O Lord my God, and You healed me; You kept me from the grave. I was on my way to the depths below, **BUT** You restored my life. ... Remember what the Holy One has done, and give Him thanks! ... Tears may flow in the night, **BUT** joy comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:1-5, p. 497)*

*"Good people suffer many troubles, **BUT** the Lord saves them from them all; the Lord preserves them completely ..." (Psalm 34:19-20, p. 501)*

Power

*"The Lord said (to Satan), 'All right, (Job) is in your power, **BUT** you are not to kill him.'" (Job 2:6, p. 448)*

*"We have this spiritual treasure and are like common clay pots to show that supreme power belongs to God, not us. We're troubled **BUT** not crushed; sometimes in doubt, **BUT** never in despair; many enemies, **BUT** we're never without a friend; badly hurt, **BUT GOD** not destroyed. At all times we carry in our mortal bodies the death of Jesus so that His life also may be seen in our bodies." (2 Corinthians 4:7-10, p. 1048)*

Trust

*"Some trust in their war chariots and others in their horses, **BUT** we trust in the power of the Lord our God. Such people will stumble and fall, **BUT** we will rise and stand firm." (Psalm 20:7-8, p. 492)*

*"I hear many enemies whispering; terror is all around me. They are making plans against me, plotting to kill me. **BUT** my trust is in You, O Lord; You are my God." (Psalm 31:13-14, p. 498)*

*"The wicked will have to suffer, **BUT** those who trust in the Lord are protected by His constant love." (Psalm 32:10, p. 499)*

*"It is dangerous to be concerned with what others think of you, **BUT** if you trust the Lord, you are safe." (Proverbs 29:25, p. 595)*

*"He strengthens those who are weak and tired ... **BUT** those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak." (Isaiah 40:29-31, p. 642)*

*"Heaven and earth will pass away, **BUT** my words will never pass away." (Luke 21:33, p. 944)*

Strength

*"My mind and my body may grow weak, **BUT GOD** is my strength; He's all I ever need." (Psalm 73:26, p. 526)*

*The prophet Zechariah to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah: "Not by might, nor by power, **BUT** by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6, p. 839)*

*"Every test you've experienced is normal. **BUT** God keeps His promise and won't let you be tested beyond your power to remain firm ..." (1 Corinthians 10:12-13, p. 1038)*

Worry

*"I said, 'I'm falling,' **BUT** your constant love, O Lord, held me up. Whenever I'm anxious and worried, You comfort me and make me glad." (Psalm 94:18-19, p. 540)*

*"Stupid people are destroyed by their lack of concern. **BUT** whoever listens to Me will have security. He'll be safe with no reason to be afraid." (Proverbs 1:32-33, p. 575)*

Love

*"Hate stirs up trouble, **BUT** love forgives all offenses." (Proverbs 10:12, p. 589)*

*"I may be able to speak the languages of humans and angels, **BUT** if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or clanging bell. I may have the gift of inspired preaching, have all knowledge and understand all secrets; I may have faith to move mountains, **BUT** if I have no love, I am nothing. I may give away everything, even my body, **BUT** if I have no love, it does me no good." (1 Corinthians 13:1-3, p. 1041)*

Justice

*"You have nothing to do with corrupt judges who make injustice legal, who plot against good people and sentence the innocent to death. **BUT** the Lord defends me. He will punish them for their wickedness and destroy them for their sins ..." (Psalm 94:20-23, p. 540)*

*"When you tell the truth, justice is done, **BUT** lies lead to injustice. Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, **BUT** wisely spoken words can heal." (Proverbs 12:17-18, p. 582)*

*"Everybody wants the good will of the ruler, **BUT** only from the Lord can you get justice." (Proverbs 29:26, p. 595)*

Patience

*"Hot tempers cause arguments, **BUT** patience brings peace." (Proverbs 18:18)*

*"I will ... wait to see what the Lord will tell me to say and what answer He'll give to my complaint. He gave me this answer... 'Put it in writing because it's not yet time for it to come true. **BUT** the time is coming quickly ... It may seem slow, **BUT** wait; it will take place and not be delayed.'" (Habakkuk 2:1-3, p. 830)*

*"The Lord is not slow to do what He promised ... He's patient with you because He does not want anyone to be destroyed **BUT** wants all to turn from their sins." (2 Peter 3:9)*

Salvation

*"We despised and rejected Him; He endured suffering and pain. No one would look at Him – we ignored Him as if He were nothing. **BUT** He endured suffering that should have been ours, pain we should have borne. We thought His suffering was punishment sent by God, **BUT** because of our sins He was wounded, beaten because of evil we did. We are healed by the punishment He suffered, made whole by the blows He received. All of us were like sheep that were lost, each going his own way. **BUT** the Lord made the punishment fall on Him, the punishment all of us deserved." (Isaiah 53:3-6, p. 658)*

*"For God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son so that everyone who believes in Him may not die **BUT** have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to be its judge **BUT** to be its Savior." (John 3:16-18, p. 954)*

*"(The unrighteous) will be sent off to eternal punishment, **BUT** the righteous will go to eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46, p. 882)*

*"The disciples were completely amazed and asked one another, 'Who then can be saved?' Jesus looked straight at them and answered, 'This is impossible for human beings **BUT** not for God; everything is possible for God.'" (Mark 10:26-27, p. 901)*

*"If you want to save your life, you'll lose it, **BUT** if you lose your life for My sake, you'll save it. Will you gain anything if you win the whole world **BUT** are yourself lost? Of course not!" (Luke 9:24-25, p. 926)*

*"Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. **BUT** by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with Him through Christ Jesus who sets them free. God offered Him so that by His blood He should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in Him. (Romans 3:23-25, p. 1018)*

*"For the message about Christ's death on the cross is nonsense to those who are being lost; **BUT** for us who are being saved, it is God's power. ... we proclaim the crucified Christ, a message that is offensive to the Jews and nonsense to the Gentiles; **BUT** for those whom God has called, both Jews and Gentiles, this message is Christ who is the power of God and the wisdom of God. For what seems to be God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and what seems to be God's weakness is stronger than human strength." (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23-24 p. 1031)*

*"The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; **BUT** those who do the will of God live forever." (1 John 2:17)*

*"Friends, we're now God's children, **BUT** it's not clear what we shall be. **BUT** when Christ appears, we'll be like Him because we'll see Him as He really is." (1 John 3:2)*

*"We believe human testimony; **BUT** God's testimony is much stronger. He's given this*

testimony about His Son. So those who believe in the Son of God have this testimony in their heart; **BUT** those who do not believe God have made a liar of Him because they haven't believed what God said about his son. The testimony is this: God has given us eternal life, and His life has its source in His Son. Whoever has the Son has this life; whoever doesn't have God's Son doesn't have life. I'm writing so that you may know that you have eternal life – you who believe in God's Son." (1 John 5:9-13, p. 1117)

Faith

"Those who are evil will not survive, **BUT** those who are righteous will live because they're faithful to God." (Habakkuk 2:4, p. 830)

"A person who works is paid wages, **BUT** they are not regarded as a gift; they are something that has been earned. **BUT** those who depend on faith, not on deeds, and who believe in the God who declares the guilty to be innocent, it is this faith that God takes into account in order to put them right with Himself." (Romans 4:4-5, p. 1018)

"... someone might die for a good person. **BUT GOD** has shown us how much He loves us – while we were still sinners Christ died for us! By His blood we are put right with God ... We were God's enemies, **BUT** He made us His friends through His Son's death of His Son." (Romans 5:7-10, p. 1019)

"When we die, we're set free from sin's power. Since we died with Christ, we'll also live with Him. Christ has been raised from death and will never die ... Because He died, sin has no power over Him ... think of yourselves as dead so far as sin is concerned **BUT** living in fellowship with God through Christ Jesus." (Romans 6:7-11, p. 1020)

"Sin pays its wage – death; **BUT GOD**'s free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23, p. 1021)

"Your faith does not rest on human wisdom **BUT** on God's power." (1 Corinthians 2:5, p. 1032)

"No one is put right God by the Law because Scripture says, 'Only the person who is put right with God through faith shall live.' **BUT** the Law has nothing to do with faith. Instead, as the Scripture says, 'Whoever does everything the Law requires will live.' **BUT** by becoming a curse for us, Christ has redeemed us from the curse that the Law brings; for the Scripture says, 'Anyone hanged on a tree is under God's curse.' Christ did this in order so that the blessing God promised to Abraham might be given to Gentiles by means of Christ Jesus, so that through faith we might receive the Spirit promised by God." (Galatians 3:11-14, p. 1057)

Mercy

*"Everything depends not on what humans want or do, **BUT** only on God's mercy."
(Romans 9:16, p.1023)*

*"So, friends, because of God's great mercy to us, offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to His service, pleasing to Him. This is the true worship you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to this world's standards, **BUT** let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God – what is good and is pleasing to Him and is perfect." (Romans 12:1-2, p. 1026)*

*"We were slaves to passions and pleasures of all kinds. ... **BUT** when the kindness and love of God our Savior was revealed, He saved us ... not because of any good deeds we'd done, **BUT** because of His mercy He saved us through the Holy Spirit Who gives us new birth and new life by washing us. God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that by His grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for." (Titus 3:3-7)*

Strength

*"Every test you have experienced normally comes to people. **BUT** God keeps His promise and will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, He will give you strength to endure it and provide a way out." (1 Corinthians 10:12-13, p. 1038)*

Freedom

*"We (can) do anything ... **BUT** not everything is good. 'We are allowed to do anything' – **BUT** not everything is helpful. None of you should be looking out for your own interest, **BUT** for the interests of others." (1 Corinthians 10:23-24, p. 1038)*

*"Remember what you were, my friends, when God called you. From the human point of view few of you were wise, powerful or of high social standing. God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense to shame the wise, and what the world considers weak to shame the powerful. He chose what the world looks down on, despises and thinks is nothing in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. This means no one can boast in God's presence. **BUT GOD** has brought you into union with Christ Jesus, and God has made Christ to be our wisdom. By Him we are put right with God; we become God's holy people and are set free." (1 Corinthians 1:26-30, p. 1031)*

Death

*"Those who live as their human nature tells them have their minds controlled by what human nature wants, (**BUT**) those who live as the Spirit tells them, have their minds controlled by the Spirit. To be controlled by human nature results in death, (**BUT**) to be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace (Romans 8:5-8, p. 1022)*

*“Listen to this secret truth: we shall not all die, **BUT** when the last trumpet sounds, we’ll all be changed in an instant, as quickly as the blinking of an eye.” (1 Corinthians 15:51, p. 1044)*

*“... I’ve been put to death with Christ on His cross, so that it’s no longer I who live **BUT** Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:19-20, p. 1057)*

Forgiveness

*“I’m writing this to you, my children, so that you won’t sin; **BUT** if anyone does sin, we have Someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf – Jesus Christ, the righteous one. And Christ Himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven, and not our sins only **BUT** also the sins of everyone.” (1 John 2:1-2)*

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