
AN EQUATION FOR SALVATION

Michael Maw (approx. April 8, 2013)

In the spring of 2013, I was invited to give a talk to the students attending high school at our local academy, Fraser Valley Adventist School, during their upcoming week of prayer. I was scheduled to speak on the last day of the week-long event – on Friday, May 17. Approximately a month and a half before this date, I was considering what subject I should begin studying in preparation for my visit. I do not recall the exact date, but I do remember it was on a Monday morning around this time that the following events happened to me.

That Sunday night, I watched a few short videos on Creation vs. Evolution and was debating whether I should perhaps speak on this subject. I went to bed thinking about this and soon fell asleep. At about 3 or 4 in the morning, I woke up suddenly from sleep and opened my eyes. The room was dark, and my wife lay beside me sleeping silently.

Immediately, there appeared an awesome sight – what looked like a giant circle of fire approaching me in the darkness. It was so incredibly bright and glorious that I felt totally overwhelmed by its presence. It seemed as if the entire room around me became flooded in light. As I looked closer, I realized that it was not a circle, but a number – the number Zero. And from all its curves poured out fire, so that it glowed with dazzling brightness in a way that I cannot fully describe. I had a sense in that moment of what it must have felt like to see God descend onto Mt. Sinai, while the Israelites fell to the earth with fear and trembling. I could not turn away from this sight, and I was completely astonished by what was happening.

The fiery Zero drew very close to me, and then I felt as if someone suddenly turned on a thousand lights inside my brain. I have never experienced anything like this before or since – it appeared to me that every synapse was firing, and every area of my mind was active to its maximum potential. I remember thinking, “Is this what it feels like to use all of your brain at once?” Everything was bright. Everything was clear. It seemed as though my mind itself was on fire with activity.

Then, a series of concepts were presented to me that I had never thought of before. I heard no sound, neither did a voice speak at any time except for at the conclusion. Rather, I “saw” these things in my mind visually and at the same time understood what they meant. The whole time the image of that flaming, bright Zero remained in the forefront of my mind. The ideas brought to my attention seemed to be coming from this Source and were presented in perfect order, illustrating a complete history of events by means of mathematics.

Did man invent the rules of mathematics? No, these were observed and found to provide consistent results over time. Math is a means of understanding reality. And that reality declares the existence of One unseen through ages past, but now made manifest to us.

The Mystery of God

0

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness...” (1 Timothy 3:16)

Zero symbolizes aspects of the eternal nature and majesty of God, which is a great mystery. No other number more accurately depicts the divine attributes of God. Though we have a symbol for zero, it is not something we can “see”. No man has ever seen “zero” ducks swimming on the pond. He may see one, two, or more – but not zero. Likewise, *“no man hath seen God at any time”* (John 1:18) but only Christ, who is the image of the invisible God.

In vision, Ellen White *“saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son...The Father's person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, “If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist”* (Early Writings p.54).

$$+0 = 0 \quad -0 = 0$$

Zero is neither a positive nor a negative number. Consequently, it is not considered to be a “natural” number (so could we not call it *“supernatural”*?) Because it is unique from all other numbers, it sets the universal standard or reference point for them all. It has been said that the Law of God is the transcript of His character and the foundation of His throne. Zero is the perfect standard to which all other numbers must give account. This would become clearer to me as further concepts were presented.

$$0 + 0 + 0 = 0 \quad 0 \times 0 \times 0 = 0$$

More fascinating still, was that this Zero that I saw could be added and multiplied with itself and yet remain unchanged. In this is revealed the truth about the Trinity: The Father + The Son + The Holy Spirit = The Everlasting God. As well, Zero could give of itself without limit to other numbers through multiplication ($0 \times n = 0$) and division ($0 / n = 0$) without altering or diminishing its own value – such is the inexhaustible supply of the Infinite God. No other number possesses these traits. They represent the eternal and unchangeable nature of the Godhead. *“For I am the LORD, I change not”* (Malachi 3:6).

However, it was made clear that Zero will never be divided against *itself*. Does the possibility exist? Yes, it *must* exist – for love demands it to be so. Love requires free choice. But that decision was made in eternity past, and God will never change His mind. *“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”* (Numbers 23:19). The Godhead has always been and will forever remain united. Division will not enter in.

Creation and the Character of God



"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

I next saw a steady stream of numbers coming out of Zero, as if it created them all. Indeed, it was clear that Zero was the source and sum of every possible number:

$$1 + (-1) + 2 + (-2) + \dots = 0$$

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:28). By this we may also conclude that Zero is both the least and the greatest, that it might have supremacy in all things. *"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last"* (Revelation 22:13). There is much in common with zero and infinity: for Zero represents the invisible God (which we cannot see), and infinity represents the glory of God revealed throughout eternity by His creative power (which we can see). Creation, and every creature, is a revelation of God's hidden glory.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} & +2 & +4 & +6 & +8 & \dots & \\ +1 & +3 & +5 & +7 & & & \\ 0 & & & & & & \end{array}$$

As the numbers proceeded out from Zero, I saw them assemble on the right-hand side. Each number was unique. No two were the same, though they might have some similarities. My attention was then directed to an invisible line below them, on which Zero sat, the presence of which the other numbers seemed unaware. This line represented God's law of love; the foundation of His government and kingdom. The existence of this line was inextricably tied to the presence of Zero itself. The line was as unchangeable as the number Zero. So is God's law unchangeable, and like Him, it will last for eternity.

I could not help but notice that all the numbers were positive, though their symbol "+" was not shown – indicating that this was their "natural" state (are they not all called "natural" numbers?) This positive symbol is the character of God, His righteousness, displayed in the lives of the beings He has created. It is the seal of God, the mark of an unselfish heart submitted fully to the Spirit of God. By its very nature, this symbol illustrates the giving nature of God's love and how it binds us together in unity. The kingdom of God is built up by the power of addition, of self-sacrifice, of genuine love. God would have us put on *"the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price"* (1 Peter 3:4).

All the natural numbers appeared to be in perfect harmony with their Creator, and the scene was one of light and warmth, and gave me a sense of incredible joy. But a mysterious change was about to occur.

The Mystery of Iniquity



“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work...” (2 Thessalonians 2:7)

One of the numbers (it was not revealed to me which one) crossed below the invisible line. As it fell, I saw that its character was changed. By descending below the invisible standard, it took on itself a new and mysterious attribute: a negative symbol “-“ was now attached to the number, replacing what had once been a hidden positive symbol. This symbol did not represent a number and did not come from Zero. Its existence could not be accounted for, but its force was felt.

“It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence... Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin” (Great Controversy p.492, 493).

The other natural numbers, who had previously been unaware of this line, now became distinctly conscious of its presence. The influence of the first negative number produced a destabilizing effect. Soon other numbers began to fall below Zero as well, each one in turn receiving the same dark attribute. They exchanged their “natural” state for an “unnatural” one. The vacancies left above appeared as gaps between the other positive numbers, and there was a deep sense of loss, questioning and great concern.

$$0 - n = -n$$

The line – the universal standard for all numbers – now appeared as a barrier between the negative numbers and Zero. By their daring act of rebellion, they had crossed into unknown territory. And from this position their understanding of Zero was now entirely changed. *“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).* The standard which before had been the foundation of their joy now appeared to them as a symbol of stern judgment and fearful wrath – they now existed under the condemnation of the law.

$$n - 0 = n$$

Though many numbers separated themselves, leaving behind their natural state, I saw that this was not the fault of Zero. In fact, Zero will never separate itself from a number – it is a mathematical impossibility! The resulting number will always remain unchanged. *“...the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6).* What does this tell us? We may separate *ourselves* from God by sinning against His law, but He will not separate *Himself* from us – for God is love. He is able to reach down to the lowest depths of sin to reach the most filthy, degraded soul. The greatest sinner cannot escape the love of God. *“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things*

present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38, 39).

$$-0 = 0$$

Zero is the only number that is not affected by this “negative” force. As was shown earlier, Zero does not change – it cannot. By nature of its own self it defines where the line will always be, and therefore it is impossible for it to break its own standard. *“God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man”* (James 1:13). Can God cease to be God? God is love – and love is the fulfillment of the law. For Him to be unloving would first require Him to cease to exist. This cannot be, for He is the Source of all existence. Therefore, it is impossible for God to break His own law.

$$-n \text{ or } (n)$$

In accounting, a negative number is used to represent a financial loss or debt, and can be expressed in two ways (as shown). This is interesting for two reasons: First, because those who have broken God’s law are now under the law, and owe a debt so great that they are unable to pay it themselves (*by itself*, it is impossible for a negative number to be restored to a positive state); and second, because the result of sin is separation from God and others – an inward focussing on self. Look at the second formatting of a negative number: (n). It is in complete isolation from everything else. It cannot give to others, for it is enclosed in selfishness. This is pride expressed. This is self-exaltation. It is the opposite of love, and its end is death.

$$-n \rightarrow ? \rightarrow +n$$

God now had a dilemma on His hands: how would He restore a rebellious sinner back into His kingdom, and pay the tremendous debt that was incurred, restoring all things and destroying the presence of sin from His creation? How could Zero, by itself, accomplish this seemingly impossible mathematical equation? How can it remove the negative symbol from a fallen number, and restore that same number to its original, positive state without destroying the original number in the process? *“With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible”* (Matthew 19:26). There is only One way.

God Becomes Man

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"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

I saw Zero become One. How? There is a way:

$$0^0 = 1$$

By the *power* of the Holy Spirit, the Son of God became One with mankind. *"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth... No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him"* (John 1:14, 18). But while He became man, He also remained fully Divine. How is this possible – can One be both 1 and 0 at the same time?

Do we debate whether $1 + 2 = 3$? Do mathematicians claim $4 / 2 = 7$? No. The answers to these equations are clear, but not so with the expression: 0^0

"Zero to the power of zero, denoted by 0^0 , is a mathematical expression with no agreed-upon value. The most common possibilities are 1 or leaving the expression undefined, with justifications existing for each, depending on context" ([Wikipedia – Zero to the Power of Zero](#)). Mathematicians have been arguing over this for more than a century. Why? What is it about this particular expression that makes it so controversial, so mysterious, so undefinable?

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). Is there controversy over the nature of Christ? Yes, absolutely! Many claim that Jesus was just a man (1) while others say he was God in the flesh (0), but the details of how this is possible are unclear (*undefined*). Theologians have debated for centuries over the exact nature of Christ and some have speculated as to the means of the incarnation, just as mathematicians have argued over this particular expression.

But we have this testimony from Christ Himself: *"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"* (John 14:9) and also *"I and my Father are one"* (John 10:30). Zero to the power of zero is equal to One. The reverse could also be true: One is equal to 0^0 . The Son of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, became the Son of Man. Yet, He remains the Son of God. This is a great mystery.

One is a unique number with very special characteristics, just as Zero is special. They both possess qualities and produce certain results common to these numbers alone. Why is it that these two whole numbers are so different from all the other numbers? Is this simply the result of random chance? Certainly not! It is because math represents reality, and these two numbers are a revelation about God.

For example, what other numbers can multiply themselves by themselves and produce the same result? $0 \times 0 = 0$ and $1 \times 1 = 1$, but this is not true for any other number (ie. $2 \times 2 = 4$, etc.) More striking still, is that One raised to any power still equals One ($1^n = 1$, where $n =$ any real number). The same holds true for Zero ($0^n = 0$), with one exception: $0^0 = 1$. What can we conclude then? That God is *“far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come”* (Ephesians 1:21). *“He is the head over every power and authority”* (Colossians 2:9). If there were a power greater than God, it could be demonstrated here. But these equations show otherwise.

“To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One” (Isaiah 40:25). Search the scriptures and you will find that Christ is referred to at least 47 times as the “Holy One”. Even the demons recognize Him by this name, saying *“what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God”* (Luke 4:24). He is also called the “Firstborn”, the “Just One”, the “Mighty One”, the “First and the Last” among many other titles. This is by no accident.

But why did God have to become man in order to save fallen humanity? Was there really no other way? The final two concepts that were revealed to me display in a most remarkable manner God’s plan to eradicate sin from His creation, while saving sinners in the process.

An Equation for Salvation

$$-n / -1 = +n$$

“There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

Only the number One can restore a negative number (-n) to its original “natural” state (+n). But something must first happen to the number One before it can do this. It must take on that negative symbol itself.

$$0 - 1 = -1$$

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Does this mean that Christ sinned against His own law? Absolutely not! Notice that the verse clearly states Jesus *“knew no sin”*. The Bible is clear that He *“was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15). What is happening here then? This equation looks just the same as $0 - n = -n$ does it not? There is a difference in this One case.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). God laid on Christ not His own sins (for He had none), but the sins of all mankind. He became our perfect substitute, and every single sin from the time Adam and Eve fell in the garden to the very close of probation was placed on the Holy One of God. Christ literally traded places with us, suffering the consequences for *our* sins, that we might be restored to the Father and dwell in Heavenly places once more.

$$- | \rightarrow \dagger \rightarrow +$$

What I saw next astonished me. The negative symbol was taken and placed on the “shoulders” of the number One, and when this occurred the result was a cross. When I looked again, it had transformed into the positive sign. If that negative symbol had been applied to any other number in this way, the results would not look the same. When Christ took all the sins of the world on His shoulders, He sacrificed His life on the cross and by doing so He demonstrated God’s character of self-sacrificing love – which is what the positive symbol stands for. By this act, Christ disproved Satan’s false accusations against God’s character.

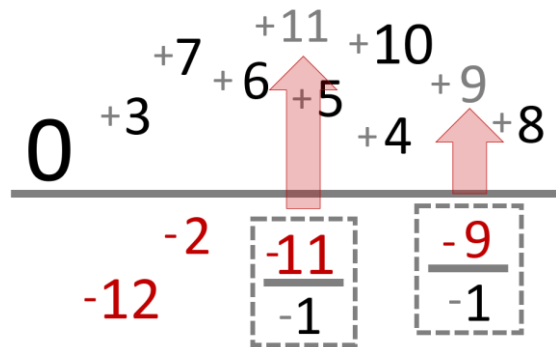
What is a negative sign after all? It is the positive sign with the number One *removed*. It is life without Christ, a rejection of the God who is love – and the result is selfishness ending in death. The cross restores what was removed, and Christ’s death pays the full penalty for the debt that was owed.

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:14, 15). All the charges of sin against us, for which we stood justly condemned under the law, Christ has now nailed to the cross. What wonderful love and mercy from God!

The cross now shows the way of salvation, for Christ has opened “a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Hebrews 10:20). If we take this narrow way (which is Christ Himself) we may cross over from the valley of death to the land of the living; from the kingdom of this world to the kingdom of our God.

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I saw the Holy One bearing the sins of the world, and the negative numbers were drawn towards Him. Those numbers who accepted His sacrifice humbled themselves before the cross, and they were lifted up and restored to their original state. They now stood on top of the Holy One, who divided their sins from them, and by this incredible equation they obtained the positive character which they had lost. For He “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). This is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).



By what means was this done? By division. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division” (Luke 12:51). And by this division He also sets a man against His neighbour and even the members of His own household. Where before there was unity among evildoers in their common rebellion, now there is separation between those that follow Christ and those who remain servants of sin. For the redeemed have not yet been taken out of the world, so they are “out of place” as it were. Those who are united, are either united in the Truth (Christ) or in rebellion – but not both. For “what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Corinthians 6:16, 17).

But can't multiplication also convert a negative number into a positive one (ie. $-n \times -1 = +n$)? Yes, it can. However, this is not the method God has chosen to *remove sin* from us. Rather, what is the promise He made to Abraham? “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies” (Hebrews 6:14). So, by division He removes sin from the sinner, and by multiplication He increases the number of the redeemed.

What whole number is placed directly to the right of Zero? One. *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God”* (Colossians 3:1). Having justified by His death those who would receive Him, He now ministers in the Heavenly sanctuary on their behalf. And He left them with this promise: *“It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you”* (John 16:7).

$$n^0 = +1$$

What happens when *any* number receives the power of Zero? It is transformed into the number One. This is the miracle which the Holy Spirit performs when it enters into the heart of Christ’s followers – we are transformed into the image of Christ. *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 3:18). We truly become Christ’s representatives on earth, revealing His glory to a dying world.

How was negative One converted back to a positive number and returned to its original place? And why could the Comforter not come until Jesus had returned to Heaven? I was not shown these things in my experience, and I will not speculate on them. However, Jesus gave this testimony: *“I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father”* (John 10:18). I believe this also can be shown through mathematics, but God did not see it necessary to reveal these things to me at this time. True faith does not need to know *everything* before it will believe, for that is not genuine faith. As Jesus said to doubting Thomas, *“blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed”* (John 20:29).

The Wrath of God

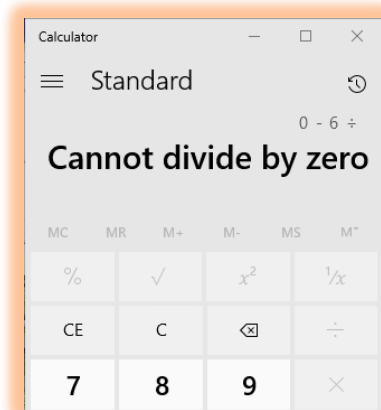
-n / 0

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28)

“In computing, a program error may result from an attempt to divide by zero... it may generate... an exception, generate an error message, cause the program to terminate, result in a special not-a-number value, a freeze via infinite loop, or a crash.” ([Wikipedia – Division by Zero](#)).

This is the fate that awaits those who reject the sacrifice of Christ. Those who refuse to allow Jesus to divide their sins from them must face their life’s record before Almighty God without a mediator. As there is no excuse for sin, they are without a defence – they will be speechless in that day. There is only *“a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries”* (Hebrews 10:27).

What was made absolutely clear to me, is that it was never God’s plan that a single human being should have to suffer this fate. It is so unnecessary – for Christ has already died for them! But He cannot force salvation on anyone who does not want it. And so, this is Love’s strange act. *“For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act... for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth”* (Isaiah 28:21, 22).



If you try to divide any number by Zero on a calculator, you may get one of several possible messages, including *“Cannot divide by zero”* or simply *“ERROR”*. Why is mathematics so opposed to this equation? For the same reason that God is opposed to it. The destruction of one of His creatures, formed by the Word of His mouth, and loved by Him with an everlasting love is almost unthinkable. Yet, sin threatens the peace and stability of His entire kingdom. He must destroy sin, and those who cling to sin rather than Christ will be destroyed with it.

On that final day, the wicked “*shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Every negative number will become “not-a-number”. They will completely cease to exist. They cannot stand in the presence of a Holy God, “*for our God is a consuming fire*” (Hebrews 12:29).

There is something else very important to understand that is revealed by this equation. Consider it once more:

$$\frac{-n}{0}$$

I have a question for you: “*Why is a negative number above Zero, and why is the standard now shown above Zero instead of below it?*” This should not be possible – remember, God cannot *cross His own line* and sin. Zero always sets the standard for all other numbers. Therefore, wherever Zero is, its standard (that long line – the law) will be the foundation seen just below it. So then, this standard we see above Zero is not God’s standard but that of another. The negative number has created its own standard and is seen sitting on top of Zero, as if declaring that its standard is superior to that of Zero.

What has been Satan’s end goal all along in his rebellion against God? “*For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:13, 14). Finally, God has given Satan just what he has always wanted. And he gives the same to all of Satan’s followers also.*

Yet, do they realize what they have actually requested? It is not what they expect. By raising themselves above God, and erecting their own standards, they destroy themselves. The law of God prevents such a co-existence of “double” standards. The very next verse shows the awful result of this: “*Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit” (Isaiah 14:15). In the end, God gives everyone exactly what they want. His mercy, justice, and righteousness will be vindicated in all of this.*

So, friends, our destiny hangs on a single choice between two equations. Which one will you choose?

$$-n / -1 = +n \quad \text{or} \quad -n / 0 = \text{Not-a-Number}$$

* * *

After I saw these things, I heard a voice speaking in my mind, “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:25).

For more information:

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