

## **“BUT GOD”**

Most of us would say the best verse of the Bible is John 3:16, “For God so loved...” We would say that because it summarizes the story of God’s redemption. I would like to suggest to you the best 2 words in the Bible are not from that verse. The best two words of Scripture, from my point of view, are “*but God!*”

I like to pick a topic or phrase when reading through the Bible. Recently I chose the two words “*but God*” as my focus. In my less than scientific research I have come across 129 times the words are used in the ESV. My article this month will zero in on 4 areas I have seen the Bible uses **BUT GOD**.

At least 25 times I discover God steps into the affairs of this world and speaks. A wonderful truth for us is that God has spoken. He intervenes by letting us know His thoughts. “*But God said*” appears early in the text of Genesis. However, it is not what we would expect. It is Eve misquoting God to the serpent. The serpent had asked Eve: “Did God actually say...?” Eve responds with these words: “*but God said*, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree ... (and here is where she adds to God speaking) NEITHER SHALL YOU TOUCH IT...’” If you check the text God had not said to avoid touching the fruit—just don’t eat it. Now it might have been a good idea not to touch the fruit. It is dangerous to add things to what God says. The last book of the Bible even warns us to avoid adding to the words of Revelation lest the curses of the book come upon us. (Rev 22:18) Having said that we see one of Satan’s strategies is to get us to question God’s meaning. Five times in Matthew 5 Jesus corrects the standard thinking of the day by saying: “You have heard it said...*but I say to you*. A favorite passage of mine is God speaking to Elijah in 1 Kings 19. *But the Lord was not in...the wind...earthquake...or fire*. He spoke with the sound of a low whisper. God speaking to us is infallibly through the Bible. He may choose a gentle nudging in our lives but the only infallible way is through the Word.

A second area that God intervenes is showing his displeasure. When the disciples tried to herd the parents with children away from the busy Jesus he responded with: “*But when Jesus saw it*, he was indignant...” (Mark 10:14). Then there was the time in Luke 9:55 when James and John wanted Jesus to “tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them...*But he (Jesus) turned and rebuked them* (James & John). Stephen’s self-defense before the religious authorities adds this summary of the wayward people of old: “*But God turned away* and gave them over to worship the host of heaven...”

The third area of God’s intervention is His compassion. 2 Kings 13:23 reads: “*But the Lord was gracious to them and had compassion on them*, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant...”

The most glorious usage of **BUT GOD** comes, as I see it, in the area of redemption. Ephesians 2 makes us aware that we are dead to God; following the prince of the power of the air; he is working in the sons of disobedience; we are caught in our passions and desires of the body; and we are children of wrath like all of mankind. Then Ephesians 2:4,5 is the GREATEST INTERVENTION of our God. It summarizes our redemption. “*But God*, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—... Again in Romans 5:8, “*but God shows his love for us* in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

You probably would arrange God’s intervention in a different way. I am moved by these four areas. I know God has revealed Himself (spoken); He lets us know what displeases him; He further reveals Himself as compassionate. And best of all He redeemed us when we desperately need it.

