

Bad Company

by Tricia Berg

Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." Come to your senses and stop sinning, for some people are ignorant about God. I say this to your shame. 1 Corinthians 15:33-34

As we hopefully know by now, these words were written by Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, to believers at Corinth. The majority of the chapter (1Cor. 15) is about our future resurrection, however, Paul includes the exhortation above and he ends with this: *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:58* We need to remain steadfast, abiding in Christ, until we see with our own eyes what has been promised to those who endure--to those who LOVE God and show it by their obedience (not by fear due to lack of understanding--not trying to earn salvation, but because we ARE saved). (John 14:21, John 15:13-14, John 20:29, Luke 6:46, Rom. 8:25, 1Cor. 2:9, Heb. 11:1, 1John 4:18, Rev. 2:7, Rev. 2:11, Rev. 2:17, Rev. 2:25-26, Rev. 3:5, Rev. 3:11-12, Rev. 3:21)

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Romans 8:13-25

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works. 15 Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. Titus 2:11-15

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:19-25

We are not called to blend in with the world or to simply make a confession of faith and then go back to our life as it was before, waiting for Jesus to return. It's a shameful thing if our reaction to Jesus paying for our sins is to rejoice in our new freedom in such a way as to dishonor the One who paid such a high price for it, forgetting that He owns us now that He has redeemed us. (1Cor. 6:19-20, 2Tim. 2:21-22) We're meant to be faithful servants, doing His work until He returns, being conformed to His image. (Rom. 8:29, Rom. 12:2, Gal. 4:19)

Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.' Luke 19:13

The "minas" (one each) are given to ten servants, who must give account of how they "invested" them upon the master's return. I believe these represent faith, just as the payment in the workers in the vineyard parable receive the same "pay" of salvation whether they "worked" for a long or short time. (Matt. 20:1-16) The point was that when they were invited (to work in the master's vineyard), they accepted the invitation. How much time passed from the time they accepted and the return of the master was irrelevant. Saved is saved. However, we can shine our lights and make disciples because of our faith, or we can hide it under a bushel basket. Jesus said we are a "city on a hill." He

also said that if salt loses its saltiness, it is no good for anything. (Matt. 5:13-16)

When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. 16 The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' 17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' Luke 19:15-17

There is another parable where "talents" are given in the same context--the talent was a measure of money representing gifts of the Spirit. (Matt. 25:14-30) However in that instance, the talents were given to three servants in varying measures, representing abilities, talents and other gifts that the Holy Spirit has given us for the benefit of the Body of Christ Using these gifts and bearing the fruits of the Spirit will result in His work being done and His good pleasure with us when He returns. Our work includes the sharing of the Gospel and making disciples who FOLLOW Jesus, which results in a harvest for our Lord and Master at the end of the age. We are ALL His servants, not only the "called workers" who are pastors or missionaries.

Please note: Prosperity preachers and teachers like to make these parables all about how we will receive more money if we are generous with what God has given us. It is true that God loves a cheerful giver (2Cor. 9:7), but that is NOT what the parables are about. Even someone who seems to have nothing in the way of wealth can give of themselves, if only to show mercy. We are ALL called to be merciful--God values it more than offerings of money or worship with routine and ritual. (Micah 6:8, Matt. 5:7, Matt. 23:23, 1Cor. 13:3, Jam. 1:27, Jam. 2:13).

Our goal should always be to bring people closer to God, which includes an awareness of sin--otherwise what do they need a Savior for? (Rom. 3:23) The point of our mercy and forgiveness is not that we approve of or encourage sin (Matt. 18:7, 1Cor. 5), but that as our sins were forgiven, we must forgive those who sin against us. (Matt. 18:33, Luke 11:4) Jesus told us what to do in the case of unrepentant sin. (Matt. 18:15-17) Jesus and Paul both told us to restore to fellowship a believer who repents after being confronted and rebuked. (Luke 17:3, 2Cor. 2:6-8)

False teachers love to use the verse Luke 6:38 about God's generosity to those who are generous, however, the previous two verses apply the concept to those who are merciful--they don't judge (unfairly - John 7:24, by grumbling - Jam.

5:19, for the same sins we do ourselves - Rom. 2:3, for things others do wrong when own sins are even worse - Matt. 7:3-5, our brothers and sisters for the way they serve God - 1Cor. 4:5, or for the way others exercise their freedom in matters unrelated to sin - Rom. 14:1-10), condemn or refuse to forgive - Eph. 4:32).

Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. 37 "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38 give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." Luke 6:36-38

There is no mention of money, except that money is among the many things that we can give. Prosperity preachers and teachers make the main focus on money because they like to be on the receiving end of those donations people hoping to be blessed make. It is true that God will shower us with more blessings when we are generous (Mal. 3:10), but tithing was an Old Testament requirement. In this age, we know that Jesus gave His ALL for us and we belong to Him 100%. Giving 10% of what we receive is really only a starting point. If we really know God, then we know that all good gifts come from Him (Jam. 1:17) and He Himself is our priority. He alone is worthy. We seek Him and the good of His kingdom FIRST and THEN other blessings are added. (Matt. 6:33)

Back to the parable, the master who represents God is not happy with some of His servants--some do not serve Him well (according to their ability, which is according to the exercise of His gifts and power within them). After all, they didn't have to earn the mina or talent--it was given to them. (Rom. 5:15-17, Eph. 2:8-10, 4:7, 1Pet. 4:10-11) All they had to do was USE it--live out their faith, share their gifts. Not everyone receives the same gift, but each person receives something. (Rom. 12:4-8, 1Cor. 12:4-11) What each of us does with what we receive determines whether we will receive more to use in doing His work (because we used what we had faithfully and fruitfully) or if what we have will be taken away from us (because we didn't use it for His purposes, or perhaps at all)--both now while He's away and when He returns. (2Cor. 12:20-13:2) *And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming. 29 If you know that He is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him. 1 John 2:28-29* (Note that we are either practicing sin or righteousness. Someone who slips by committing a sin is not practicing lawlessness (sin), and someone who happens to do something righteous but has no faith is not saved.)

Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; 21 for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' 22 He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' 24 And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' 25 And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' 26 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.' Luke 19:20-26

Believers are His servants. The people who DON'T believe are NOT. They are the ones who are destroyed in the parable. The earth and everything in it belong to God, but only those who believe are adopted as God's children, born again into His family by His Spirit, made a new creation. (John 1:12-13, John 3:3-8, Rom. 6:1-8, Rom. 8:15, Rom. 8:23, 2Cor. 5:17) If believers do not understand this, then they run the risk of listening to the advice and "wisdom" of people who are NOT their brothers and sisters and do NOT know best. (1Cor. 1:20-21, 1Cor. 3:18-20) GOOD advice will align with the Bible, of which unbelievers are usually ignorant. Some unbelievers have head knowledge, but it doesn't get into their hearts. God ONLY accepts worship in spirit and truth. He is not interested in anything fake, and whoever is not WITH Him is AGAINST Him. (Matt. 12:30, John 4:23)

But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' 27 But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.' Luke 19:14, 27

The only way to know what is expected of "faithful servants" is to read the Bible (or hear it read, in context, not just little "feel good" bites) and let the Holy Spirit illuminate it for us. (Psalm 119:9-16) He teaches and guides us (through understanding what we read and reminding us of what we've learned), convicts and corrects--IF we listen to His prompting in our spirit. The only way to recognize His voice is to know the Word. (John 10:27, Rom.10:17) A few verses quoted in a 20-minute sermon a week will give us a very skimpy education and, probably, weak faith. Conversely, all of the study in the world will not help someone who is not born again, because they do not have the Holy Spirit enabling them to understand spiritual things. (1Cor. 1:18, 1Cor. 2:14)

Jesus will be coming in the clouds for those who are His to take them where He is. (John 14:3, 1Thess. 4:17, 1Cor. 15:51-52) When He returns to RULE (Rev. 11:17-18), it will be WITH the "called, chosen and faithful." (Rev. 17:14, 19:11-16) They will have had their faith found to be genuine through trials and tests. **If you think about it--we would never see the stars if there were no NIGHT. Night time is the opportunity for stars to SHINE. So it is with believers going through trials--periods of "darkness" and coming out purified and refined because of passing the test through faith. (Daniel 12:3)** We are told to take up our crosses and FOLLOW Jesus, not turning back. (Matt. 10:38, 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23, 9:62, 1Pet. 2:21) Simon of Cyrene in Luke 23:36 was a picture of both taking up the cross and following--His name means "hearing," which is to whom the warnings of the Bible are addressed. (Matt. 11:15, Rev. 2:7, Rev. 2:11, Rev. 2:17, Rev. 2:29, Rev. 3:6, Rev. 3:13, Rev. 3:22) It is no good at all to hear, but not understand, to listen but not obey. You may also find it interesting to know that when Jesus was brought to the temple at the end of Mary's days of purification, the man who prophesied over Him was named Simeon, which is the Hebrew version of Simon (in Greek), also meaning "hearing." Simeon understood the scriptures about the coming Messiah, and he was ready and waiting for Him, as was Anna, whose name means "grace" (of God). (Luke 2:22-38)

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. Colossians 1:21-23

Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, 6 but Christ is faithful over God's house as a Son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. Hebrews 3:5-6

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, 2 in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began 3 and at the proper time manifested in His word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; Titus 1:1-3

We are encouraged repeatedly in the Bible to hold fast, endure, persevere--that IF we overcome through sufferings, we will share in His glory. (Rom. 5:3-5,

Rom. 8:16-18, Rom. 12:12, 1Cor. 3:13, 2Cor. 1:3-5, 2Cor. 2:9, 2Cor. 8:2, Gal. 6:4-5, 1Thess. 2:1-4, Philip. 1:27-30, Heb. 3:8, Heb. 11:17, 2Tim. 2:11-13, Jam. 1:3, Jam. 1:12, 1Pet. 1:6-7, Rev. 1:9, Rev. 2:9-10)

But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, 33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. 34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. 35 Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 37 For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. Hebrews 10:32-39

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. Hebrews 12:1-4

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" 19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. 1 Peter 4:12-19

This sounds awfully difficult doesn't it? But it's not by our power that we do anything at all. (John 15:5, 2Cor. 1:21-22, Philip. 4:13, 2Thess. 1:11-12, 2Tim.

1:7-13) The good works we are to do is often called "bearing fruit." (John 15:4, 16, Matt. 21:43, Luke 8:15, Rom. 6:22, 7:4, Gal. 5:22-23, Philip. 1:9-11, Col. 1:10, Heb. 12:11, 13:15) So we are like a branch on a vine (Jesus) in God's vineyard, being tended by Him. (John 15:1) His Spirit within us brings forth the fruit, so long as we walk in the Spirit, which means we consciously yield to Him in all areas of our lives. If we resist Him and refuse to cooperate, there will be no fruit and He will not be happy. (Is. 5:1-7, Jer. 2:21, John 15:6-8, Matt. 21:19, Luke 13:6-9, Rom. 8:5-9)

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, 4 by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:3-11

Doesn't it sound like we should take Paul's advice and stop sinning (deliberately - Heb. 10:26-27, 1John 1:5-10, 1John 2:1) and work OUT the evidence of the salvation that we hold within us (if we do truly believe and are saved)? (Philip. 2:12-13, Rom. 8:9, 2Cor. 13:5, 2Pet. 3:11-13) If we truly love our neighbor, we'll be concerned for their eternal souls and love them in truth and deed, not with empty words that tell them what they want to hear but don't warn them about the wrath of God to come. (John 3:36, Rom. 1:18-21, Rom. 2:5, Eph. 4:15, Eph. 5:3-12, Col. 3:5-10, John 3:18, Jam. 2:8)

Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. 5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. 6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know

God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might 10 on the day He comes to be glorified in His holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you. 11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling, and that by His power He may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. 12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 1:4-12

And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35 but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, 36 for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. Luke 20:34-36

The "resurrection of the dead" referred to above appears to be the same one that Paul says he hopes to attain. Since we know everyone will eventually be resurrected and judged, this would seem to refer to the FIRST resurrection (at the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ.) (1Cor. 9:23-27 - also see chapter 10 for words of warning, Philip. 3:11-16, Rev. 20:4-6) Obviously, Paul already believes and so he is not referring to merely professing faith in Jesus, but something more. Paul understood that his body was to be used as a living sacrifice to the Lord. (Rom. 12:1, Philip. 2:17) Peter referred to his body as a "tent" (to be laid aside when its usefulness has ended) which brings to mind the Tabernacle--how appropriate, since that was God's dwelling in the desert and we are His dwelling in this current "wilderness." (2Cor. 5:1, Heb. 8:5, 1Pet. 1:13-14, 2:4-5)

He will render to each one according to his works: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality. 12 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. Romans 2:6-13

Please note that verse 13 above does not mean that we save ourselves by obeying the law. It means that if we are sincere in our faith, then we will seek to please God and not ourselves--we will show a healthy respect for Him and appreciation for what He has done for us. (Job 28:28, Heb. 10:29) The reason faith without works is dead is because without works, there is no evidence of saving faith existing at all. There are Old Testament examples of obedience through true faith given in James 2:14-26, as well as that of Jesus Himself in John 15:9-10. If we REALLY believe, then there WILL be works to show for it (in the form of obedience out of love and respect for God.) This is the reason for the warning "do not be deceived," because we can't fool God and if we're smart, we won't listen to anyone encouraging us to try to trick Him (not even our own selfish inner voice.) (Matt. 7:26-27, Matt. 18:7, 1Cor. 6:9, 1Cor. 15:33-34, Gal. 6:7, Jam. 1:14-16, 2Tim. 3:12, 1John 1:8-10)

"As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. 10 If you keep My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commands and remain in His love." John 15:9-10

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. James 1:22

Look out for the dogs [Is. 56:10-12], look out for the evildoers [Psalm 22:16], look out for those who mutilate the flesh [Gal. 5:3, 12]. 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. 7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward

call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained. 17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself. Philippians 3:2-21

The reason we "are" the circumcision is because our HEARTS are circumcised because of our TRUE faith (by the Spirit, not empty words or actions taken out of fear instead of the accurate knowledge of God). (Rom. 10:8-10, Matt. 12:7, Matt. 15:7-9, Deut. 30:6)

And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. Deuteronomy 30:6

In today's world, there are so many people not only tolerating things that God hates, but even celebrating them. Our response is not supposed to be to support sin "in love," but to speak the TRUTH in love. There is a BIG difference between speaking the truth out of concern for someone's soul and literally stoning someone to death as the mob wanted to do to the adulterous woman. Even after Jesus dispersed the crowd, He told her to go and SIN NO MORE. The goal is always repentance, whether from unbelief or any other sin. (Luke 5:32, 2Cor. 7:8-10, Heb. 12:8-11) To say something is not a sin that God HAS called sin is very dangerous for those committing it as well as for those who approve of and encourage it. I don't recommend doing either. It's not worth it. Even if everyone hates us, so long as it's not that we did something wrong, but because we were not ashamed of Jesus AND His words (the entire Bible), then it's worth it. (Mark 8:38, John 12:25, John 15:18-19, John 17:14, 1John 3:13, Philip. 1:29, 1Pet. 2:19-20, 1Pet. 3:14, 1Pet. 4:19) It's all about His satisfaction with our faithful service for His glory and honor. Happiness and joy for eternity or temporary fulfillment from worthless earthly treasures and pleasures. No contest. This is not an unwelcome burden, but a privilege to "carry our cross," one that also comes with great rewards in the age to come. May we all prove to be worthy of Him who gave His ALL for us (even me, though I am quite sure I am the LEAST of all).

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. 3 For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. 4 With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 1 Peter 4:1-5

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