

Be Warmed and Filled

by Tricia Berg

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? James 2:15-16

I think we can all agree on the common sense of the above passage, the context of which is:

*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father declared righteous by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith cooperated with his works, and by his works his faith was consummated [completed; made perfect]; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? **For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.** James 2:14-26*

James is NOT saying that unless we do works we won't **be** saved. He is saying that unless we do works, then it would appear that we have NOT **been** saved (since we do not display FAITH, which saves). Do we actually think that if Abraham had said he believed God but refused to step out in faith and do what God told him to do, it would have been counted to him as righteousness? Can God be tricked? I think not. Peter said if we don't show fruits of the Spirit then we have apparently forgotten we were cleansed of our former sins. (2Pet. 1:1-15, especially v. 9; also note that in v. 1, the letter is addressed to those who HAVE faith, and in v. 3, the "divine power" He has granted us is the Holy Spirit, who gave us the gift of faith and dwells within us, empowering us to live in a godly manner and to do God's will. Phil. 2:12-16)

For the **grace of God** has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, **training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives** in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 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**. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. **Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.** For we ourselves were **once** foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, **not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit**, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that **those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works**. These things are excellent and profitable for people. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned. Titus 2:11-3:11

Peter and John completely agreed with James and Paul that we must act upon our words for them to be genuine. (1John 3:18, 1Pet. 1:22-23) John also said that we must walk as Jesus walked, but whoever does sin can receive cleansing and forgiveness (upon repentance and confession to Him) so that they can be restored to fellowship with God and with the Body of Christ. (1John 1:5-2:6, 1John 2:26-3:24, Paul said: 1Cor. 1:4-10, 1Cor. 5:1-13, 2Cor. 2:6-8, 2Cor. 13:11-14) Works are the result of being saved. Works are putting faith that already EXISTS into practice. God cannot be fooled. (Gal. 6:7-9) He knows who is professing faith with empty words, not backing them up with actions (both good deeds - Matt. 5:13-16 - AND refraining from deliberately sinning - Heb. 10:23-39). We are saved TO DO good works that glorify God.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* Ephesians 2:8-10

As Paul said in the passage above, Jesus taught previously as well. We must abide IN Him by doing as He instructed. He and James both talked about being doers, not only hearers of the word. (Matt. 7:24-27, Jam. 1:19-27)

*By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. **If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.** These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. "This is my commandment, that you **love one another** as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. John 15:8-14*

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "**If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**" John 8:31-32

"If you **love** me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the **Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. **You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.** I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. **In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.**" Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "**If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.**" John 14:15-24

Whoever is born again (1Pet. 1:23, John 3:3-8, John 1:12-13) has the Holy Spirit within them and it is He who produces the "good fruit." If there is "BAD fruit," then that is a wake-up call that the Holy Spirit is either NOT present in that person, or they are grieving and/or quenching Him. (2Cor. 1:21-22, Eph. 1:13-14, Gal. 5:16-25, Eph. 5:9, Matt. 7:15-29, Eph. 4:3, 1Thess. 5:15-22, 2Cor. 13:5) Notice in the passage below that those who are LED by the Spirit are the sons of God. That fits perfectly about how Jesus said His servants must FOLLOW Him. Jesus didn't die for our sins so that we could continue delighting in them. He gives us NEW life by making us a NEW creation through His Spirit,

who enables us to overcome the desire to sin that used to control us. (Gal. 6:15, Rom. 6, John 8:34-36, 2Cor. 5:17, 1John 3:6-10, 2Pet. 2:18-22)

*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact **the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you**, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. **If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you**, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 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. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God**. 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!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 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. Romans 8:5-17*

*Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also**. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. John 12:25-26*

*Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And **whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me**. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. Matthew 10:37-40*

Some people say that "keeping Jesus' commands" means simply professing faith (but they ignore 1Thess. 4:2-8). Some say that we must keep the law to obey His commands, but Jesus simplified His commandments into two: Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Paul affirmed it. In fact, they both summarized the ENTIRE keeping of the law with ONE commandment - love your neighbor. (Mark 12:28-34, Rom. 13:8-10, Matt. 7:12) Why is that? Because IF

you love your neighbor (in word AND deed), then you are obeying God; and IF you obey God, that is proof that you LOVE God. (John 14:15-24) As always, though, "love" has NEVER been defined as "you look the other way while I sin and I'll do the same for you" or "unless you approve of and support me in my sin, then you are not being loving." (Rom. 1:32, 1Thes. 4:1-8, Jam. 5:19-20, Gal. 6:1)

*Therefore **let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.** Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. **If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—**"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? **These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.** Colossians 2:16-23*

*Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to indulge its desires.** Romans 13:13-14*

Some people say we are under a "renewed" version of the Old Covenant, but this is not really accurate. "The substance belongs to Christ" in the passage above shows us that those former things have passed away with the Old Covenant. Christ HAS come. He SEALED the New Covenant in His blood. His work of redemption IS finished. (John 19:30, Heb. 9:11-28) This is not still in the future. What IS future is His return to rule over the whole earth. (Isa. 9:7, Isa. 2:1-5, Zech. 8:20-23, Isa. 11, Isa. 65-66, 1Cor. 15:25)

*Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding attendants mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. **No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the***

skins are destroyed. But **new wine is put into fresh wineskins**, and so both are preserved." Matthew 9:14-17

And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "**This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.**" Luke 22:14-20

(The word for "new" in the above passage is the same as in the "new creation" of 2Cor. 5:17. We are born again—spiritually alive instead of dead—not simply "improved." Eph. 2:1-5, Col. 2:13)

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "**This cup is the new covenant in my blood.** Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. 1 Corinthians 11:23-32

They serve a **copy and shadow of the heavenly things**. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For **if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second**. For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish

a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For **this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.** And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for **they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.** For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." **In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.** Hebrews 8:5-13

We ARE "under the law," but it is the Royal Law, also called the Law of Liberty, the Law of the Spirit and the Law of Christ. We will be judged by that law by our Lord and Master—by how well we served Him by loving our neighbor. (Matt. 25:37-40. Matt. 12:33-37, Romans 2:6-11, Luke 6:46-49)

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ***So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.*** For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. James 2:8-13

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the **law of the Spirit of life** has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the **law of Christ**. Galatians 6:2

For **freedom** Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the **Spirit of the Lord** is, there is **freedom**. 2 Corinthians 3:17

Whatever you do, work heartily, **as for the Lord and not for men**, knowing that **from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward**. You are **serving the Lord Christ**. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Colossians 3:23-25

So whether we are at home or away, we **make it our aim to please him**. For **we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10

God did not authorize anyone to place burdens on believers that He Himself didn't place there. He has always hated legalism and has always desired to be worshiped in TRUTH and SPIRIT. Jesus repeatedly rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. (John 4:23, Psa. 51:16-17, Prov. 21:3, Hos. 6:6, Matt. 9:13)

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. **They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger**. They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in**. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves**. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? And you say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.' You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him

who sits upon it. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!** Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.** Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. **So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.** Matthew 23:1-28

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." He answered them, **"And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.'** But you say, 'If anyone tells his father or his mother, "What you would have gained from me is given to God," he need not honor his father.' **So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites!** Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: **"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."** And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand: **it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.**" Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; **they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.**" But Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us." And he said, "Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But **what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.**" Matthew 15:1-20

If we were to try to "keep the law," knowing it is IMPOSSIBLE to do, where do they draw the line then? How can anyone possibly claim to keep the feasts

when they were for males only, and were to be observed at the temple in Jerusalem? If the "shadow of things to come" in Colossians 2 and Hebrews 8 and 9 is supposedly yet future, then what about circumcision? Paul said that he wished they would emasculate themselves if they still insist upon physical circumcision. (Gal. 5:12) Our hearts are circumcised without hands. God has desired true hearts along. (Deut. 10:16-21, Deut. 30:6)

*See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. **In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its **legal demands**. This he **set aside**, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. Colossians 2:8-15***

*Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who **mutilate the flesh**. For we are the circumcision, who **worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh**— 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: 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; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But **whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.** Philippians 3:2-7*

*Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; **remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, **because of the evil of your deeds.***** Jeremiah 4:4

This next warning applies not only to circumcision, but to reverting back to reliance upon any part of the law in order to be justified in the sight of God. The entire point is that we are saved by the power of God, not our own. Likewise, we receive the power from the Holy Spirit to do God's will AFTER we are saved. (God's grace is not only unmerited favor, but also His power within us that

transforms us from slaves to sin to slaves of righteousness.) We need to keep on the straight and narrow path, not swerving into working to try to contribute to our salvation or into disobedience, which dishonors God.

*Look: I, Paul, say to you that **if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.** For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For **in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.** You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves! **For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.** Galatians 5:2-13*

*For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. **But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.** Romans 6:20-22*

*For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. **They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.** Titus 1:10-11*

*Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, **be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.** And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.** But grow in the grace and knowledge of our*

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 3:14-18

So again, it's not "wrong" to obey God, and in fact His children are expected to do so. It's only wrong to think that we save ourselves by doing so. Jesus accomplished ALL that is needed for our salvation. We obey out of LOVE, not fear that if we don't do "enough works" then we will perish. We abide in Him and His Spirit bears GOOD fruit in us. (John 15:1-14) Those who do not love Him do not obey and they do not abide. (John 14:24, John 15:6) They should not claim promises God made to THOSE WHO LOVE Him for themselves. Again, we are not left on our own to try to obey, but His Spirit dwelling in us empowers us to desire to know and to do His will. (Phil. 2:12-16) He teaches us through His word, so the more we read the Bible, the better we will know Him and be able to discern His will. (Rom. 10:17, 2Tim. 3:16-17, Rom. 12:1-2)

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you **rest**. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For **my yoke is easy, and my burden is light**." Matthew 11:28-30*

*"For through the law **I died to the law so that I might live for God**. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live **by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for **if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!**" Galatians 2:19-21*

*By this we know that we love the children of God, when **we love God and obey his commandments**. For this is the **love of God**, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are **not burdensome**. 1 John 5:2-3*

***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, 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**. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your **faith with virtue**, and virtue with **knowledge**, and knowledge with **self-control**, and self-control with **steadfastness**, and steadfastness with **godliness**, and godliness with **brotherly affection**, and brotherly affection with **love**. 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.*

For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more **diligent to confirm your calling and election**, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. 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

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: **Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?** Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? **Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?** **Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.** And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles **by faith**, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. **For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”** Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.** Galatians 3:1-14

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. James 2:10-11

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever **believes** in him should **not perish but have eternal life.** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come

to the light, lest his works should be exposed. **But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.**" John 3:16-21

Sometimes people think that the following passage conflicts with James' discussion about how faith requires works, but it doesn't. James points out that because Abraham's faith was ALIVE and GENUINE, he followed up his faith with actions. The undeniable fact is that we prove we are liars if we SAY that we believe, and Jesus is our Lord, but we refuse to OBEY Him. We need to have enough common sense not to "pervert grace into sensuality" or "trample on the Son of God and outrage the Spirit of grace who sanctified us." (Rom. 10:8-13, Jude 1:3-7, Heb. 10:29) The warnings are for people who "have tasted" of the Holy Spirit, not unbelievers—that would be salvation by works! (Heb. 6:1-12)

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are **justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.** This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by **the law of faith.** For we hold that one is **justified by faith apart from works of the law.** Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised **by faith** and the uncircumcised **through faith.** Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law. 4:1 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? **"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."** Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And **to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,** just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? **For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.** The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that **righteousness would be counted to them as well**, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but **who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.** For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the **righteousness of faith.** For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. That is why **it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace** and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who **shares the faith of Abraham**, who is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. **No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."** But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our **justification.** Romans 3:19-4:25

We need to understand that NOTHING we DO contributes to our salvation. (2Tim. 1:9, Titus 3:5, Rom. 3:28, Rom. 5:6-11) Everything we do as believers that is pleasing to God is done through His Spirit within us. Pleasing God starts with accepting the gift of salvation through faith—up until that point, it is impossible. (Heb. 11:6, Rom. 8:7-8)

*For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a **new creation**. Galatians 6:15*

*It is the **Spirit** who gives life; **the flesh is no help at all**. The **words** that I have spoken to you are **spirit and life**. John 6:63*

*Already you are **clean** because of the **word** that I have spoken to you. John 15:3*

Some say that the Old Covenant instruction that the foreigner must observe everything that the natural-born Jew does still applies. If that's the case, then why did the apostles have a council and, after consulting the Holy Spirit, send a letter with a very short list of requirements for Gentile believers? (And yet this does not let believers "off the hook" when they decide they are free to DO the things on that list that are PROHIBITED, eg. sexual immorality.) Some say that the following restrictions are merely canceling the requirement to be circumcised. That is NOT what it says, and that does NOT match the rest of the New Testament teachings about our freedom in Christ. How would it be an "unbearable yoke on the neck" to circumcise infant boys? There is no longer any distinction (Rom. 3:22, Rom. 10:12, Col. 3:11), and no heavy burden to bear. (Matt. 11:28-30). We obey Jesus' simple commands out of gratitude and love for God. (1John 5:3, Col. 3:12-17, Heb. 12:28-29)

*When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. **But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."** The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he **made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?** But we believe that we will be **saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus**, just as they will." Acts 15:4-11*

*Therefore my judgment is that **we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been***

strangled, and from blood. For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues." Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. **Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,** it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. **For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.** Farewell." Acts 15:19-29

...Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you [Paul], but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. But as for the **Gentiles who have believed,** we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should **abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality.**" Acts 21:24-25

Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." But Peter began and explained it to them in order: "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. **And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.'** But I said, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' **But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.'** This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. And **the Spirit** told me to go with them, **making no distinction.** These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. And he told us how he had seen the

angel stand in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life." Acts 11:1-18

Peter's vision above showed what the food restrictions were about—a picture of separation between Jews and Gentiles, which was done away with. When the point of the restrictions was made obsolete, so were the restrictions. Some say no, it just made it acceptable for Jews to eat WITH "unclean" Gentiles, but that does not explain the OTHER New Testament teachings that all foods are clean, including those of Jesus Himself. It is possible that Jewish believers did continue observing the restrictions, but at no time were Gentile believers ever expected to do so. God can and does decide what is acceptable. (Lev. 11, Acts 15:20, 29, Acts 21:25) Don't forget that before the flood, everyone was vegan. (Gen. 1:29-30, Gen. 9:2-6)

*And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: **There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.**" And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that **whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?**" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. **All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.**" Mark 7:14-23*

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. ***For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.***

*Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. **Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.** It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. **But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.** Romans 14:14-23*

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and **require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.** 1 Timothy 4:1-5*

*But give as alms those things that are **within**, and behold, **everything is clean for you.** Luke 11:41*

***To the pure, all things are pure**, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. Titus 1:15*

Another major issue is observance of the Sabbath. When people say that Hebrews 4 is speaking of two Sabbaths, one of the weekly rest and one of entering the promised land, that is not quite right. BOTH the weekly rest AND Israel entering the promised land by following Joshua LOOK FORWARD to entering the kingdom of God by following Jesus. The VERY FIRST Sabbath in Genesis 2:1-3 was also a picture of the millennial reign of Jesus, of the 7th "day" of 1,000 years. (Psa. 90:4, 2Pet. 3:8, Rev. 20:4-6) Those of us who have entered into eternal life by believing (John 5:24) must now rest from our works of trying to "force our way into the kingdom" with our own power, but rather abide in Jesus—to live to Him and die to ourselves. (Luke 16:14-16, Matt. 3:7-12, Luke 7:29-35, Rom. 9:30-33, Col. 3:1-25, Gal. 2:20, Rom. 6:1-23) He IS the Sabbath rest we have entered into—when we TRULY believed, He took up residence IN us. (Luke 17:20-21, John 3:3-8, John 17:20-26) Just as we did nothing to create the world, neither can we do anything to earn salvation.

***Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.** He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the*

street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. **He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.** Isaiah 42:1-4

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "**Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.** He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, **until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope.**" Matthew 12:17-21

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you **the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**, but we were **eyewitnesses of his majesty**. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and **the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,"** we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that **no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.** 2 Peter 1:16-21

"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and **my servant whom I have chosen**, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. **I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.** I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and I am God. Also henceforth I am he; **there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?**" Isaiah 43:10-13

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. **Believe me that I am in the Father**

and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. John 14:8-11

Those among Israel who failed to enter into the "rest" of the promised land (where they could stop wandering and live in peace) were not denied entrance for breaking the weekly Sabbath. They were denied entrance for refusing to believe and trust in God. They were afraid of the report of ten of the twelve scouts, despite all God had just done in rescuing them from Egypt. (Num. 13:25-14:38) They could have entered in if they had been willing to FOLLOW and take possession of what God was giving them, but instead they wandered in the wilderness for forty years, one year for every day the men scouted the land. This passage is clearly about entering the kingdom of God by following the ONE whom God has appointed to bring His people in.

*Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have **failed to reach it**. For good news came to us just as to them, but **the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened**. For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,'" although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest." Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and **those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience**, again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." **For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his**. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, **let us hold fast our confession**. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. **Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.** Hebrews 4:1-16*

*"This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And **there is salvation in no one else**, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*
Acts 4:11-12

Man was not made for the Sabbath, but the other way around. (Mark 2:27) If anyone refuses to rest from working, they are only harming themselves (through wear and tear on their bodies and mental stress) and showing that they are not trusting God to take care of them—God gives His people rest. (Psa. 127:2) James said that if we don't have what we need, we either haven't asked or we have asked in order to indulge ourselves rather than to glorify God. (James 4:1-5, Psa. 37:23-31, 2Cor. 9:6-12)

As Jesus said in the passages below, even under the law, one was allowed to do good on the Sabbath (which is serving God as we are called to do—Jesus used the priests as an example, since they "worked" on the Sabbath, whereas all believers in this age are all part of a royal priesthood. 1Pet. 2:9-12)

*At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. **And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.**" He went on from there and entered their synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him. He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! **So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**" Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him. Matthew 12:1-14*

One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And he said

to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" And he said to them, "**The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.**" Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." And he said to them, "**Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?**" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. Mark 2:23-3:6

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. "Breaking the Sabbath" in this age is trying to earn salvation—ONLY Jesus was qualified to save us and His work is FINISHED. God was not pleased when Israel *convinced themselves they were keeping the letter of the law perfectly* and thus thought they were saving themselves. (Rom. 9:30-33, 2Cor. 3:4-6) He was also angry when they did their own pleasure on the Sabbath and couldn't wait for it to be over so they could go back to cheating people and doing other things he hated. (Isa. 58:13-14, Amos 8:4-6, Prov. 6:16-19) We (the Church/believers) have been PURCHASED by Jesus' blood and He IS our Sabbath—every day, forever. We're to seek HIS will and good pleasure continually in all things—not merely one day a week. (Rom. 12:2, 2Cor. 5:14-15, 1Thess. 5:16-19)

We never leave "church" behind, because it is NOT a building or a worship service—it is the assembly of called out believers. We could view "failing to keep the Sabbath holy" as when we disregard our Lord's will and choose to do our own instead—loving the world more than Him who gave His LIFE for us. (Matt. 10:37-40, 1John 4:8-12, Rom. 5:6-8) Jesus didn't set us free so that we could continue enjoying sin the same as we did before. (Rom. 6:1-4, 12-15)

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of

God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but **Christ is all, and in all.** Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in **one body**. And be thankful.
Colossians 3:1-15

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the **knowledge of his will** in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.** May you be **strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might,** for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:9-14

Besides refraining from committing grievous sins, we're called to work in His field until He returns. (Matt. 20:1-16, Matt. 24:45-46, 2Tim. 2:19, 1Thess. 5:22, Ruth 2:1-23) That includes sharing the gospel and making disciples (not *believers*—only God does that), caring for the poor and helping those in need—in general, doing the good works that He planned for us to do. (Titus 2:14, 3:8, Eph. 2:10, Matt. 5:16, 1Pet. 2:12, Jam. 1:27) This world is TEMPORARY, and the time we have left after coming to salvation is to be spent *servicing our Lord*, the same as we will be doing for eternity. (1John 2:15-17) This is an unfathomably great privilege not to be taken for granted. "Called out" means that we are SPECIAL and set apart from the world. We were told to expect to be hated for being different (but there is no "danger" of that if the way we behave is the SAME as the world, is there?) (John 15:18-19, 1John 3:13, 1Pet. 4:1-5, 2Tim. 3:12-13, Eph. 4:17-25)

And let our people learn to **devote themselves to good works**, so as to **help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.** Titus 3:14

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. **Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. **Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.** Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, **"if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:6-21

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Colossians 3:23-25

We are not obligated to tithe anymore, but ALL we have belongs to Jesus. He has purchased our very lives back from the dead by His precious blood. Just as Adam and Eve died spiritually when they sinned against God, so did we. (Gen. 2:15-17) After sinning, they were no longer covered with righteousness but were naked and knew it. (Gen. 3:6-8) At that time, God killed an animal to cover them with. Now Jesus offered Himself to cover us in His righteousness. (Gen. 3:21, Rom. 13:14, Gal. 3:27, 1Cor. 1:30-31) The owner of the donkey that Jesus rode into Jerusalem didn't ask any questions when the disciples told him that Jesus needed it. Neither should we hold back ANYTHING that we have been blessed with by God. (Luke 19:28-44, Mark 11:1-10, Rev. 5:9-10, 1Cor. 6:19-20, Acts 20:28, 1Pet. 1:17-21)

But you have come to **Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,** and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the **church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven,** and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to **Jesus, the**

mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Hebrews 12:22-24

We are not authorized to FORBID anyone from honoring God in ways that are acceptable according to their understanding of His will (and no one is perfect). (Rom. 14:1-23) Nor are we to try to FORCE them to do things that we feel led to do or things that are part of the Law, which WAS our "guardian" UNTIL Jesus. The way I read it, this works both ways. For example, if we are in the presence of a believing Jew who cannot accept that all foods are clean, we should not press them to do so. (Rom. 14:14-15) However, that same believing Jew should not insist that we must observe the feasts, etc. (Rom. 14:5-6) Another example would be whether to use wine or grape juice to celebrate the Lord's Supper. (Rom. 14:21) In a perfect world, we would all be on the SAME PAGE. (Rom. 3:22, Gal. 3:28, Col. 3:11, Rom. 12:5, 1Cor. 12:12-14, 18-19, 1Cor. 10:17, Eph. 2:14-18, Eph. 3:6, Eph. 4:4-6, Col. 3:15) We would all understand that we are ONE Body, given freedom in Christ, and not seek to place ourselves "in bondage" again OR to use our freedom for evil. (Rom. 8:13-17, 1Pet. 2:16) We would not *quarrel over words*. (2Tim. 2:14-16)

But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble. 1 Corinthians 8:8-13

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to

God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. Romans 14:1-12

For the **whole law is fulfilled** in one word: "You shall **love your neighbor as yourself.**" But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. Galatians 5:14-15

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. **So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.** For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have **put on Christ.** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.** I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, **to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.** And because you are sons, God has sent **the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,** crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are **no longer a slave, but a son,** and if a son, then an **heir** through God. Galatians 3:23-4:7

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the **slave** was born according to the **flesh,** while the son of the **free woman** was born through **promise.** Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But **the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.** For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud,

you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband." **Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.** But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." **So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.** Galatians 4:21-31

Paul said TWICE that "all things are lawful" (because we are NOT under the law) but he made sure to add that "not all things are helpful." That is because it is evil to use our freedom in such a way that we dishonor God—especially if we defile His temple, which is our body.

"All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." **If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience.** But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience—I do not mean your conscience, but his. **For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks? So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.** Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. 1 Corinthians 10:23-33

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. **The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.** And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. **Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!** Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. **Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is**

outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

We must not **indulge in sexual immorality** as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. 1 Corinthians 10:8

I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and **have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery** in which they have indulged. 2 Corinthians 12:21

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. Romans 6:12-13

But I **discipline my body and keep it under control**, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:27

Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you **ought to walk and to please God**, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. **For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.** For God has not called us for **impurity, but in holiness.** Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Giving believers permission to commit sexual immorality of ANY kind, since God has NOT given it, is wrong. (Refresher: Only intimate physical relations between a man and woman who are married to each other are acceptable in God's sight. "The two become one" ONLY in the way that God designed them to do.) Likewise, requiring believers to remain unmarried is wrong. (1Tim. 4:1-5) Jesus and Paul both said that IF a man were able to remain single without sinning due

to *passionate desire* (perhaps in order to serve God without competing obligations), then that is good. If not, then they should marry. This was clearly to be each person's own decision based on their level of self-control.

*And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who **created them from the beginning made them male and female**, and said, 'Therefore a **man** shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his **wife**, and **the two shall become one flesh**'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." **The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry."** **But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."**
Matthew 19:3-12*

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." **But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.** The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, **so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.** Now as a concession, **not a command**, I say this. **I wish that all were as I myself am** [unmarried]. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But **if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.** To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. 1 Corinthians 7:1-11

But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. 32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The **unmarried** man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the **married** man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the **unmarried or betrothed** woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the **married** woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, **not to lay any restraint upon you**, but to promote good order and to secure your **undivided devotion to the Lord**. If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better. 1 Corinthians 7:28, 32-38

God is the same as He always was and ever will be. (Heb. 13:8, Mal. 3:6) He reveals Himself to us and teaches us as He chooses. (Deut. 29:29, Matt. 11:25-26, Mat. 13:34-35) In times past, He spoke through prophets and now through Jesus. (Heb. 1:1-14) Everything in the Old Testament pointed toward Jesus fulfilling it in the future. It is not our place to insist that He deal with each generation in exactly the same way—to decide for God how and when to fulfill each prophecy or “foreshadow.” (Rom. 9:14-26, Rom. 11:32, Rom. 15:4, 1Cor. 10:1-22) The changes in His dealings with us are not changes in His nature or character, or “changing with the times,” but were planned as such from the beginning. (Jam. 1:17, 1Pet. 1:10-12, Eph. 1:3-14, Eph. 3:1-12, Isa. 49:6)

God detests when people go through the motions legalistically instead of obeying the spirit of the law. (But saying “God knows what’s in my heart” is usually only an excuse to keep sinning. Luke 6:44-49, Matt. 15:18-20, Mark 7:20-23) In Jeremiah 4:3, God told Judah and Jerusalem not to “sow among thorns,” but to “break up the fallow ground.” Doesn’t that sound just like the Parable of the Sower that Jesus told in Matthew 13:1-23? God has always been interested in our sincere, devoted, FAITHFUL hearts. (Matt. 12:33-35, Matt. 22:36-38, Mark 12:28-30, Luke 10:25-28, 2Cor. 6:11-13, 2Cor. 11:2-4, 1Chron. 28:9, 2Chron. 15:15, Deut. 4:29-31, Deut. 6:5, Num. 32:11-12, Josh. 22:5, 1Kings 8:22-23)

*Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their **faith. Jesus Christ is the same***

yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. **Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.** For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us **continually** offer up a **sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. **Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.** Hebrews 13:7-16

O Jerusalem, wash your **heart** from evil, that you may be saved. How long shall your wicked thoughts lodge within you? Jeremiah 4:14

"Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me **with all your heart**, with fasting and weeping and mourning." **Rend your heart and not your garments.** Return to the LORD your God, for he is **gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love**, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God. Joel 2:12-14

For this is what the high and exalted One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, **to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.** I will not accuse them forever, nor will I always be angry, for then they would faint away because of me—the very people I have created. I was enraged by their **sinful greed**; I punished them, and hid my face in anger, yet they kept on in their **willful ways.** I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel's mourners, creating praise on their lips. **Peace, peace, to those far and near,**" says the LORD. "And I will heal them." But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked." Isaiah 57:15-21

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." When the people heard this, they were **cut to the heart** and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the**

name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, **“Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”** Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. **They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.** Acts 2:36-42

Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! **“What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. **Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.** Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” Isaiah 1:10-20**

Thus says the LORD: **Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.** Jeremiah 22:3

“How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” Psalm 82:2-4

O house of David! Thus says the LORD: **“Execute justice in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed,**

lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of your evil deeds.” Jeremiah 21:12

If anyone thinks he is religious and does not **bridle his tongue** but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is **worthless**. Religion that is **pure and undefiled** before God, the Father, is this: to **visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world**. James 1:26-27

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: “Stand in the gate of the LORD’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: **Amend your ways and your deeds**, and I will let you dwell in this place. **Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’** “For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly **execute justice** one with another, if you do not **oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood** in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever. “Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you **steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely**, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations? **Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?** Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD. Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and **see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel**. And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD, and **when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh**. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim. Jeremiah 7:1-15

Do you not know that you are **God’s temple** and that **God’s Spirit dwells in you**? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is **holy**, and **you** are that temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, 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.** Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with **that generation**, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not **enter my rest.**'" **Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.** But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be **hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.** For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." Hebrews 3:5-15

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. But **rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.** If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. 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? And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" **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 (also see Ezek. 9:4-6)

In Rev. 2:1-7, the church at Ephesus was warned that they had abandoned their first love and must repent and resume doing the works they did at first. Their promised reward for correcting (overcoming) this deficiency is to eat of the tree of life. Many teach that everyone who professes faith, whether they act upon it/live it out or not, will be spared the entire tribulation and take part in Jesus' thousand-year reign. However, careful study does not support that view. Even examining only the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 would seem to cast doubt on that position. There are seven churches but just ONE received the promise to be kept out of the "hour of trial" (reign of the beast during the tribulation). Those at Philadelphia had already endured severe persecution without wavering in their faithfulness to the Lord Jesus. (Rev. 3:7-13) You could say they "tested out"—no further proof of the genuineness of their faith was needed.

The Scriptures clearly indicate that only those who overcome by faithfully abiding in Jesus will rule with Him during His millennial kingdom (which obviously necessitates being part of the FIRST resurrection). (John 15:8-11, Rev. 2-3, Rev. 20:4-6, 2Thess. 1:5, Rom. 8:16-19, 2Tim. 2:12, 1 Pet. 2:19-23, Phil. 1:27-30, Luke 20:34-36, Rev. 2:8-11, Rev. 20:4-6) That would explain why we are encouraged so often and so strongly to compete according to the rules, run the good race, fight the good fight, endure to the end, hold fast, etc. (Rev. 2-3, Heb. 12:1-29) The "rest of the dead" live AFTER the thousand years end. IF their names are not in the Book of Life, they are thrown in the Lake of Fire. (The text does NOT say "all" who are resurrected after the millennium are thrown in the Lake of Fire because "none" of their names were found in the Book of Life).

*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 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—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 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. 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, **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.** Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. **Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.** But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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 3:8-21*

*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So **run that you may obtain it.** Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I **discipline***

my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

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**, 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. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. **In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.** Hebrews 12:1-4

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is **to please the one who enlisted him**. An athlete is not **crowned unless he competes according to the rules**. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. 2 Timothy 2:3-7

*They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those **with him** are called and chosen **and faithful**.* Revelation 17:14

Whoever doesn't obey Jesus by loving their neighbor as themselves (in word and deed) does NOT love Him. (John 14:15-24, John 15:10, John 13:34-35) The great and glorious promises are to those who love Him, which requires being willing to suffer for His sake IF He deems it necessary. (1Cor. 2:9, Jam. 1:12, Jam. 2:5, Rom. 8:16-17, Rom. 8:28, Eph. 6:24, 1Cor. 16:22, Acts 5:40-41, Heb. 6:10-12, Heb. 10:35-36) Notice again in the following passage that it is the power of the Holy Spirit in us who guards our faith. He is the Key to overcoming this world. We must yield to Him as He transforms us into the image of Jesus. (Rom. 8:29, Rom. 12:2, Eph. 6:10-20) The better we know Him from spending time in the Word of God and in prayer, the better we can recognize His prompting our spirit to do or refrain from doing (or saying, or even thinking) something. He is our Helper without whom we are helpless.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who **by God's power are being guarded through faith** for a salvation ready to be revealed*

*in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, **if necessary**, you have been **grieved by various trials**, so that the **proving of your faith—precious gold that, being destroyed by fire, is moreover being tested**—may be found to **result in praise and glory and honor** at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **Though you have not seen him, you love him.** Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:3-9*

The road is NARROW. (Matt. 7:13-14) We mustn't veer off of it by treating grace as a license to sin OR turning back in the direction of working FOR salvation. We don't live by the letter of the law, in fear. (Rom. 7:6, 2Cor. 3:3-18, 1John 4:16-19) Our motive for obedience is LOVE of God. (1John 4:7-13) He said that we can't possibly love Him if we don't even love our neighbor. And we can't say we love Him if we don't obey Him. It is not loving our neighbor, but sinning against them if we behave in any way that confuses them as to what is expected of the children of God. (John 1:12-13, Heb. 12:5-11, Rom. 8:14-17) We're supposed to have enough sense to obey the God we claim to believe in and realize that the reason others don't obey Him and is that they DON'T believe. (Psalm 37, Psalm 73, Psa. 111:10, 2Cor. 4:1-6, 2Thess. 2:9-10, Rom. 1:18-21, 1Pet. 4:1-5, John 3:19-21) The loving thing to do if a believer refuses to repent of their sins and obey Jesus as Lord is to gently correct their error. (Gal. 6:1, Jam. 5:19-20) If they still refuse, then both Jesus and Paul said to exclude them from fellowship. It's wrong to reassure them they have saving faith if they show no fruit of the Spirit. (Matt. 18:15-17, 1Cor. 5:1-13, 1John 1:5-2:6, 1John 3:4-10, Heb. 10:26-27, Eph. 5:1-20, Gal. 5:16-25)

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1 John 4:20-21

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

It's incredibly sad when lukewarm believers criticize their brothers who try to live in a manner to please God. (Rev. 3:14-22) It is also wrong to condemn those who refuse to revert to the Law. (Gal. 5:14-15) We are NOT to judge God's servants in matters of FREEDOM. (Rom. 14:4, 10-12) (This doesn't apply to obvious sin, such as sexual immorality (1Cor. 5:9-13)—and unbelievers are

NOT God's servants. We are not meant to be "yoked" to them - 2Cor. 6:14-18, 1Cor. 15:33-34). Persecution was never meant to come from WITHIN the Church itself! We are supposed to be stirring one another to good works, supporting one another in our Christian walk. (Heb. 10:23-39) We need to be ready for Jesus' return. (Matt. 24:36-25:13, Luke 21:34-36, 1Thess. 5:4-11)

I personally believe (and you should do your own study) that the Church age (believing Jews and Gentiles entering into the New Covenant) is represented by the counting of the omer. A great many people seem to have missed the fact that there is a "fullness of the Gentiles" and after that has "come in" (as in a harvest, as Jesus so often taught - Matt. 13, Matt. 9:37-38, Matt. 20:1-16, Matt. 21:43, Matt. 25:24-30, Mark 4:26-29, John 4:35; Paul: Rom. 1:13, 1Cor. 9:11, 2Cor. 9:10, Gal. 6:9, 2Tim. 2:6-7), then God will "unblind" Israel and continue His dealings with them. (Rom. 11:25)

Each crop has its own firstfruits. (1Cor. 15:20, Jam. 1:18, Rom. 8:22-23) Jesus rose from the dead at the fulfillment of Firstfruits when the sheaf—the first "omer" of barley—was waved. There will also be a "firstfruits" of wheat—perhaps the two witnesses being resurrected—signified by the waving of the two loaves of wheat bread. You cannot offer firstfruits of a grain (barley) that has already had its firstfruits offered. The Pentecost offerings were to be of "new grain" (thus, the first wheat to be harvested that year). (Ex. 34:22, Lev. 23:15-22) The main harvest always begins after the firstfruits of it has been offered to God. The final harvest will be of grapes, which are subject to God's wrath. (Rev. 14:17-20, 19:17-21)

It is my belief from studying the Scriptures themselves that Pentecost is not yet fulfilled, but will be fulfilled when the "barley harvest" is complete. This current age would then be a "pause" of two "1,000-year days" in the annual feast calendar. I am also convinced that the last three feasts will be fulfilled in one year just as the first three feasts were. Only Pentecost, the center feast (representing Jesus—to whom all of the feasts point, who supports the entire "menorah/people of God"), has a gap before and after its fulfillment. If you picture a menorah (designed by God Himself, with EXACTLY SEVEN lamps - Exo. 37:17-18) as having four candles on one side and three on the other, that is absurd, right? The lamps are balanced with three on each side of a center lamp. Now picture those seven lamps as feasts—it doesn't fit God's pattern to view the fulfillment of the feasts in the way we have *traditionally* been taught.

Some say that Pentecost *traditionally* celebrates the giving of the law, but if that's so, then why doesn't God mention it in the Scriptures? If Pentecost was fulfilled by the writing of the law on our hearts, how would that fulfill the omer

count, since the arrival of the Holy Spirit marked the beginning of the full number of the "harvest" to come? Food for thought... Three thousand died when Moses returned with the two stone tablets of the Law, having fallen into idolatry and sexual immorality when he tarried forty days on Mt. Sinai. (1Cor. 10:1-15, Ex. 24:18, Ex. 32:1, Ex. 32:28 - 3,000 by the sword by the Levites as commanded, plus those by plague in Ex. 32:35 - according to 1 Corinthians 10, this appears to be another 20,000.)

At Pentecost, 3,000 were added to the Church. (Acts 2:41) Paul tells us some branches were broken off so that the church could be grafted in to the olive tree of Israel. (Rom. 11:17-24) After some of the "original branches were broken off" in Exodus, Israel ended up wandering around the wilderness for forty years, being fed manna by God. The Church is "navigating the wilderness" (as "sojourners and exiles" whose citizenship is in heaven - Eph. 2:17-22, Phil. 3:20-21) for forty *Jubilee* years (2,000 years), being fed the Bread of life, while it appears that Jesus is tarrying in heaven (Mt. Zion). (Lev. 25:10, John 6:31-51, Luke 12:35-48, Mark 13:32-36, Hab. 2:2-4) We must remain faithful during this journey. (1Cor. 10:1-15)

*Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being **sober-minded**, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."** And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, **conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile**, knowing that **you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers**, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:13-19*

*Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. **Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.** Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:10-12*

The Church is grafted in to the blessings of Israel, but the Church has not replaced Israel (Rom. 11), and neither was it ever meant to practice Judaism or invent a replacement for or imitation of it. God never instructed us to construct buildings and call them "churches," to wear robes, to offer any sort

of “sacrifices” on a physical altar, or to worship Him according to a “formula” (whether a liturgy or other prescribed “right” way). In this age, God is building His spiritual temple out of “living stones” without the assistance of any human hands or physical materials. We believers are ALL part of a royal priesthood, and He is building His own church. The way we live our lives is our sacrifice of worship—no altar needed. (Rom. 12:1)

*As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. **But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.** Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:4-12*

*Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances,** that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom **the whole***

structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Ephesians 2:11-22

God is orderly and He knew everything He was going to do, and when, before He did ANYTHING. He is in complete control and everything will proceed according to His plan whether we understand it or not. Our duty is to be READY. Our duty is to stay on the NARROW path and FOLLOW Jesus. Off to one side of it is legalistically keeping the law out of fear, and off to the other side is blending in with the world, doing as we wish without any care for what pleases God. Our walk must not be careless or with rote and ritual, but seeking God FIRST with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

*The end of the matter; all has been heard. **Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.** For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14*

*And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, **what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**" He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" And he answered, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.**" And he said to him, "**You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.**" Luke 10:25-28*

*And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "**Which commandment is the most important of all?**" Jesus answered, "**The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'** The second is this: '**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'** There is no other commandment greater than these." And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And **when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."** And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions. Mark 12:28-34*

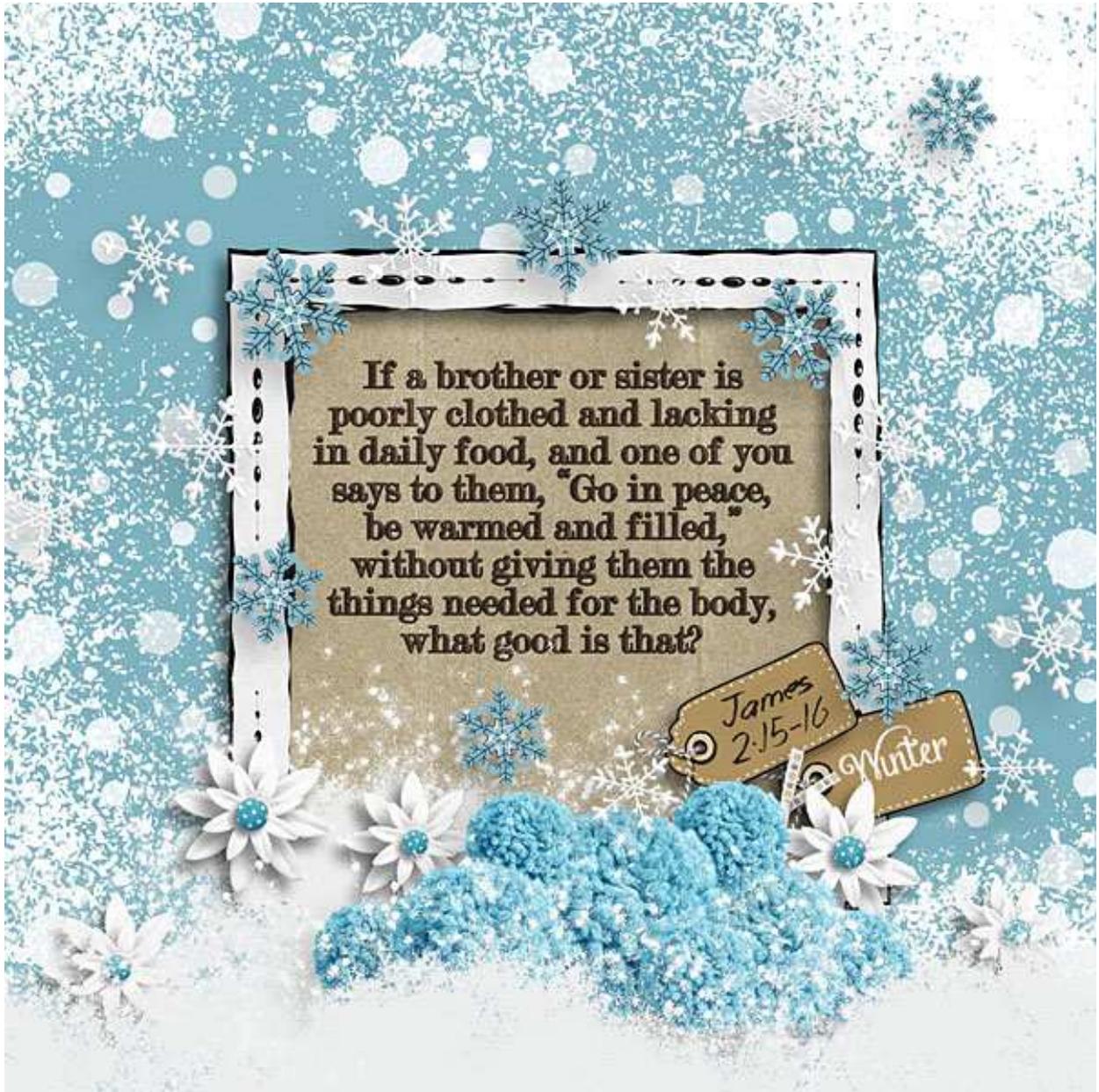
*For God is not unjust so as to overlook **your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints**, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to **show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end**, so that you may **not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises**. Hebrews 6:10-12*

*Finally, **be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might**. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. **Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.** Ephesians 6:10-20*

I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. Revelation 3:11

The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. Revelation 21:7

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