

## **Ears to Hear** by Tricia Berg

*He who has ears, let him hear.” Matthew 13:9*

The above verse is from the Parable of the Sower, which is about how various people respond to hearing the Good News of salvation through Jesus. If we read the whole chapter, we find that not everyone who hears and even accepts the Gospel will actually follow Jesus. Many will fall away, whether due to the deceitfulness of riches, the cares of the world or persecution.

This brings to mind an interesting Instagram post I saw the other day. (I’m not big into social media, and the system was making suggestions for me as a newbie.) I’m not sure if the image in the post qualifies as a “meme” (an element of culture passed from one individual to another by image, video, text, etc., spread rapidly by internet users). It was not humorous, but it had over 5,000 likes in only two days (and counting, I’m sure). We’re living in a fast-paced, instant society that doesn’t have time to pause and reflect before reacting. That said, I’m afraid that my own message will fall on deaf ears. It’s not quick, but this is too important for that.

As things like this often do, the message sounded great on the surface—but not so much once you consider the thought process behind it and think forward to where it leads. Then it might not be as wonderful as it first appeared to be.

*Every time we use religion to draw a line that keeps people out,  
Jesus is with the people on the other side of that line.*

(Credited to thehappygivers.com, shared on Instagram by houseofbelonging.com)

OF COURSE it's wrong to behave as though God loves us but not people who aren't like ourselves! No one should have any argument with that. God desires ALL to be saved. (1Tim. 2:3-4, 1Pet. 3:9) Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. (John 3:16, 1John 2:2) ALL have fallen short and sinned; ALL need a Savior. (Rom. 3:23, 6:23)

The problem begins when “come as you are” becomes “stay as you are.” Jesus didn’t save us so that we could continue on our own way, as if nothing of importance has even happened. We are a NEW creation! (2Cor. 5:17) When Jesus saves us, we become His treasured possession. (Rev. 5:9, 1Cor. 6:15-20) We are members of His Body, the Church, each with our own purpose as

determined by Him. (Eph. 4:1-5:33, Rom. 12:1-21, 1Cor. 12:4-27) He equips us to do good works that He planned for us in advance. (Remember, our God—Father, Son and Spirit—is ONE.) His Spirit within us empowers us to desire to know and do His will. (Phil. 2:12-16, 1John 3:24, 1John 4:13, 1Cor. 3:16)

*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. Titus 2:11-15*

*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. Titus 3:3-8*

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you **once walked**, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 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 2:1-10*

What many "accepting of all" Christians seem to be saying with their message isn't just that we shouldn't discriminate as to who is invited to partake of the table of the Lord, but that we should allow people to remain in their sins. "Don't judge," but Jesus said rebuke your brother (and if he refuses to repent, then disown him!), remove the log in your eye FIRST, judge with RIGHT judgment. (Matt. 18:15-17, Matt. 7:1-5, John 7:24) Jesus NEVER gave people permission to continue sinning against God or one another purposefully! The "golden rule" is NOT "you look the other way for me when I sin, and I will do the same for you." (Matt. 7:12, Rom. 1:32)

EVERYONE is invited to be CLEANSED and set free from not only the penalty for their sins, but ALSO, by the power of the Holy Spirit, from their inability to resist the temptation to sin. (1Cor. 10:13, Rom. 6) We CAN'T claim to have been set free from sin if we are STILL living in sin! Common sense tells us that would be a LIE. We're to serve the One we love most, starting the day we're saved and then FOREVER. (Matt. 22:37-40, Mark 12:28-34, Luke 10:25-28) Love God first, then your neighbor as yourself. Putting the second most important commandment in front of the first doesn't work. The people will still perish even though their physical needs are met, because they haven't come to a true knowledge of Christ. (2Cor. 10:4-6, Eph. 4:13, Titus 1:1, 2Pet. 1:8, 2Pet. 2:20, 2Pet. 3:18, Eph. 4:17-24, Mark 8:36)

*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? **By no means!** How can we who died to sin still live in it? Romans 6:1-2*

***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***

*Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin**." John 8:34*

*Everyone who makes a **practice of sinning** also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; **no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him**. Little children, **let no one deceive you**. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. 1 John 3:4-7*

It's politically and culturally "correct" these days to give some sins a free pass (including many sexual sins, and often pride, for example). They say the times

have changed—but God doesn't change. We couldn't trust Him if He did, could we? (Heb. 13:8, Mal. 3:6) We are not to judge one another in matters of freedom, including our personal efforts to serve and glorify the Lord using the various gifts He has given us. (Rom. 14) However, we are meant to keep the Body healthy, and that involves repentance from sin so that the disease of it will not spread throughout the Body in the same way that yeast works its way through dough. (1Cor. 5:1-13) If someone refuses to repent, particularly of sexual immorality, they are to be out of fellowship with the Body—with the goal of helping them to realize their error and remedy it, restoring fellowship. (2Cor. 13:10-14, 2Cor. 2:4-9) Sexual immorality is actually singled out as a more grievous sin, despite the popular opinion of believers that "all sins are the same." (1Cor. 6:18)

Once we are saved, we are to behave like it, keeping the leaven out of the pure lump of dough that is Jesus' body. (Rom. 11:16) So no, Jesus is NOT siding WITH people who want to live in their sins and corrupt His pure, spotless Bride. The admonitions to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord are for US—who else would they be for? The references to the sins people commit are in PAST TENSE for believers. (Rom. 6:20-23, Rom. 7:5, 1Pet. 4:1-5, Eph. 4:17-24, Rom. 6:1-23, Heb. 10:26-29, Titus 2:11-15, Titus 3:3-8, Eph. 2:1-3) Walking in love does NOT mean accepting intentional sins of believers. Walking in the truth does NOT mean redefining "love" to be tolerance of evil. Truth and love are not at odds with each other.

Whether people "have ears to hear" it or not, Jesus DID say that some will NOT be allowed into the kingdom. Everyone is invited, but they must accept the invitation on the terms of the One extending it. (Matt. 22:8-14, Jam. 1:27) Refusing to put on the pure white "wedding garment" of Jesus' righteousness (which ONLY He can provide for us when we come to faith in Him as our Lord and Savior - John 14:6, Gal. 5:24, Rom. 10:8-10), taking it off or soiling it purposely is not the way to enter the kingdom. (2Cor. 5:2-5, Rev. 16:15) The way is NARROW and HARD. (Matt. 7:13-27, Luke 13:23-30, Jude 1:17-23, Rom. 13:11-14, 2Tim. 2:19-26, Gal. 6:7-9)

*And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The **one who conquers will have this heritage**, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But **as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.**" Revelation 21:6-8*

*"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." **Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.** "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." Revelation 22:12-16*

Everyone who enters the Kingdom must be born again of the Spirit. No false confession of faith, being baptized in water, or taking the Lord's Supper will regenerate a person. (John 6:63, Rom. 14:17) Some of the Pharisees were baptized, but John the Baptist criticized them for it. (Matt. 3:7-10) They viewed it as just another ritual to save themselves by works. (Rom. 9:30-33) Their hearts were not circumcised over their sin. (Jer. 4:3-4, Luke 8:14, Jam. 4:8-10) They rejected Jesus, the ONLY one who could wash away their sins. (John 8:24)

ONLY true faith from the heart saves, and there will be EVIDENCE of it because of the presence of the indwelling Spirit. We can't physically SEE the Spirit, but like the wind, we can see the EFFECTS of His residence in a person. (John 3:3-8, Jam. 2:14-26) Those effects include repentance of sin and desire to please God instead of self. (1Pet. 4:1-5) This does NOT include living in the same sins that Jesus suffered and died to save us from.

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will **not gratify the desires of the flesh.** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. **I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And **those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:16-25*

We are called OUT of the world, to be a LIGHT to a dark, lost, forsaken world (John 15:18-19, 2Cor. 6:14-18, Matt. 5:14-16, Phil. 2:14-16)—not to reassure people that God loves them despite their willful refusal to repent of

their sins! The first sin we must repent of is unbelief—when we do that, we receive forgiveness for ALL of our previous sins as well. At that point, we are empowered by the Spirit to “fight the good fight” and “run the good race”. (Mark 16:16, John 3:18, 1Cor. 9:24-27, Heb. 12:1-4, Eph. 6:10-20) There is still maturing to do, but we make a new start, which involves TURNING from the sins we lived in up until then and FOLLOWING Jesus instead. The more we learn of our Lord, the more useful to Him we will be.

The fact is that Jesus said the ones who LOVE Him will OBEY Him by keeping His commands (plural). It is not only “believe,” but as I said, that is the FIRST step—no one can keep His words unless they believe. He summarized His commands into TWO, as stated previously. (Matt. 22:37-40, Mark 12:28-34, Luke 10:25-28) Those who have TRUE faith in their hearts will OBEY, and THEY are the ones in whom the Spirit will make His home. (John 14:15-24) He also said to count the cost of being His disciple, because it costs ALL we have. If we refuse to take up our cross and follow Him, or we turn back, then we’re not worthy of Him or the Kingdom. (Luke 14:25-30, Matt. 19:16-30, Luke 12:31-48, Luke 9:57-62, Acts 14:22)

*“So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. **He who has ears to hear, let him hear.**” Luke 14:33-35*

*“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:13-16*

Did you know that the name Simon means “hearing”? One of the names Peter was known by was Simon, and he was the first to profess that Jesus was the Christ. (Matt. 16:13-17) Another Simon was from Cyrene, and he carried Jesus’ cross behind Him when He could not physically go on—up hill, after having been tortured for hours prior to that point. **This is a picture of our despising the shame, taking up our cross and following Jesus OUTSIDE the city/camp (world)!**

*And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to **carry it behind Jesus.** Luke 23:26*

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. Hebrews 13:12-14

For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. **For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps**. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might **die to sin and live to righteousness**. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. 1 Peter 2:19-25 (Notice that the healing is clarified to be from our spiritual sickness.)

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

Like the wind, we can't physically see the shackles that tie us to sin. However, we can see the effects of the shackles: continued, unrestrained sinning. To say that we have been set FREE by Jesus and yet we continue MAKING A PRACTICE of sin, enslaved to it the same as before, is absurd. No one is perfect except God. We slip; we get back up. We resolve anew to love Jesus with our actions, from the heart, and not merely with empty words (and perhaps good intentions). (John 4:23, John 14:15-24, John 15:1-17, Rom. 12:1-2) The more we know Him from His word and appreciating all He has done (both as recorded in the Bible, and what we can observe around us), the more we will love Him.

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."** They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and

*have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.** The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8:31-36*

The Church is the Body of Christ and His Bride. This is because the two become one in marriage. (Eph. 5:29-32, 1Cor. 6:15-20) We don't physically marry Him in these bodies, but we become one with Him spiritually. In earthly marriage, the groom comes inside of the Bride, joining their bodies as one—whereas, the Holy Spirit comes inside of believers and joins with their spirits as one. His presence testifies that we belong to God. (Rom. 8:16-17) (We are also sometimes referred to as siblings of Jesus, because He is the Son of God and we are adopted as children of God. Rom. 8:23, John 1:12-13, Rom. 8:29) If we are one with Him, then we WILL want to KNOW Him, personally—not just learn only from someone else's account. In the love letters (of the Bible) He left for us to learn more about Him while He's gone to receive His kingdom (Luke 19:11-12), He tells us that BOTH the extreme teaching of "law-keeping" and that of "freedom to sin" are WRONG. (1John 2:24-29)

*The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. **You worship what you do not know**; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must **worship in spirit and truth.**" The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." John 4:19-26*

*And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, "'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.' You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men." And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! Mark 7:6-9*

*In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an **open ear.** Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said,*

*"Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: **I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.**" Psalm 40:6-8*

Jesus said repeatedly in the letters to the churches in the Book of Revelation that we must hold fast until the end (of our life or of the age, whichever comes first) in order to receive what is promised. (Rev. 21:7-8) (Each letter was to be read in ALL SEVEN churches.)

*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Revelation 1:2*

*"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. **7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers** I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.' Revelation 2:1, 7*

*"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. **11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers** will not be hurt by the second death.' Revelation 2:8, 11*

*"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. **16 Therefore repent**. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers** I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.' Revelation 2:12, 16-17*

*"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. **26 The one who conquers** and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. And I will give him the morning star. **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**' Revelation 2:26-29*

*"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "I know your works. You have the*

reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. **The one who conquers** will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. **He who has an ear, let him hear** what the Spirit says **to the churches**.' Revelation 3:1-6 (Also see Matt. 10:32-33, Luke 12:8-9, 2Tim. 2:12, Rev. 3:8)

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. 11 I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. **The one who conquers**, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. **He who has an ear, let him hear** what the Spirit says **to the churches**.' Revelation 3:7, 11-13

"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the Originator of God's creation. "'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone **hears** my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. **The one who conquers**, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. **He who has an ear, let him hear** what the Spirit says **to the churches**.'" Revelation 3:14-22

This was confirmed in the rest of the New Testament.

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 6:11-12

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. Colossians 3:23-24

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. Hebrews 3:5-6

For you have need of **endurance**, so that **when you have done the will of God** you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. Hebrews 10:36-39 (Also see 1John 2:17.)

We mustn't be ashamed of the things Jesus said that were not warm and fluffy. (Mark 8:38) He is returning as the King of kings and Lord of lords, to RULE (more about that later in this article)—not as our "buddy" who "understands" why we "can't" give up our sins and why we love the world more than Him. (Acts 2:34-36, 1Cor. 15:25, 2Cor. 5:16)

*For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the **knowledge of him**, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, **far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.** Ephesians 1:15-23*

We do not have the authority to go against our Lord and give permission to people to enter the kingdom if they refuse to comply with His conditions. They are more than reasonable expectations, since He does ALL of the work—our

part is to humble ourselves and SUBMIT to His power. (Luke 6:43-49, Phil. 4:13, 1Pet. 5:5-11) And our part is also to willingly make the most of what He gifts us with for His glory. (Matt. 25:14-30, Luke 19:11-27, 1Cor. 12:4-28, Rom. 12:6-8)

**"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.** On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' Everyone then who **hears** these words of mine and **does** them will be like a **wise** man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and **does not** do them will be like a **foolish** man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." Matthew 7:21-27 (Also see 1Cor. 3:10-15, Matt. 25:1-13, Luke 14:25-33)

And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." Luke 13:23-30 (Also see Rev. 3:7-8, Matt. 25:10-11)

There are many interpretations of the Parable of the Ten Virgins, but one detail that stands out for me as being important is that all ten virgins started out with lamps AND oil. They were ALL waiting for the Bridegroom to come for them. How could it be, then, that only half went in and He told the others that He didn't KNOW them? If this doesn't make you cry, I don't know what would. How much more tragic could it turn out? Unlike the Church of Philadelphia in Rev. 3:7-13, but like those in the passage above, they are on the outside of the closed door to the Kingdom, asking to be let in.

*"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were **foolish**, and five were **wise**. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was **delayed**, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were **ready** went in with him to the marriage feast, and **the door was shut**. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." Matthew 25:1-13*

The foolish virgins were careless in their preparations. It didn't occur to them that the initial light they had might not last long enough without any refilling so that they could see their way to the Beloved when He arrived (quite suddenly, just as He said would happen). (Eph. 5:17-21) His word is a light for our path and lamp for our feet (Psa. 119:105) Faith comes from hearing the word. (Rom. 10:17) How can we keep Jesus' words and "see where we're going" if we don't know them? Jesus called the Pharisees "blind guides." (Matt. 15:14, Matt. 23:16, Matt. 23:25, but read all of Matt. 23, Mark 7:8-9) Whenever one of their traditions conflicted with God's word, they sided with tradition every time. There are two kinds of erroneous traditions: those that add to and those that take away from what God said. (1Cor. 4:6, Prov. 30:6, Rev. 22:18-19) Both are WRONG.

*Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come **like a thief in the night**. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then **sudden destruction will come upon them** as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will **not escape**. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all **children of light, children of the day**. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us **keep awake and be sober**. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11*

Pretty much everyone agrees that the oil in the lamps represents the Holy Spirit. It would appear that the five foolish ones quenched Him such that the flame went out. (1Thess. 5:19-28) The eye is the lamp of the body. (Matt. 6:22-23) If we don't guard our hearts and minds by putting on the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10-20), then the light that gets in through the eyes may dim. Also, we're not meant to hide our light under a bushel (Matt. 5:15)—we know that a flame hidden under something (hopefully fireproof) is at risk of being snuffed out for lack of oxygen. (Whereas, Jesus is the breath of life. Acts 17:24-25, John 20:22, Job 34:13-14, Rom. 8:1-17)

Apparently, the salt inside of them lost its saltiness, so they were left outside to be trampled rather than entering through the door ONLY Jesus can open (John 10:7-9, Mark 9:50) with those who were ready. (Matt. 5:13, Heb. 10:19-31, Heb. 6:4-12, John 15:6) Jesus cautions us repeatedly to remain alert instead of slumbering. (Matt. 26:41, Mark 13:48, Matt. 24:36-44, Mark 13:32-37, Luke 12:35-40, Luke 21:34-36, Rev. 3:2-3, Rev. 16:15) This involves ABIDING in Him. (John 15:1-14) Remember, Jesus said there is no love greater than someone laying down their life for a friend, AND we are His friends IF we keep His commandments. (John 15:12-17)

Insincere confessions of faith are meaningless. True faith from the heart, lived out in spirit and truth, is required. (Jam. 2:14-26, John 4:23) Our thoughts, words and actions reveal the true condition of our hearts—are they regenerated or not? (Matt. 7:14-23, John 6:63, John 13:6-11, John 15:3, Jer. 17:9-10, Psa. 50:14-16) Jesus enables us to obey Him by His Spirit, but just as with believing, He doesn't FORCE us to do His will. Forced love is not genuine. We're not robots—God gave us free will. This is how it comes to be that even though Jesus died for all sins and wants ALL to be saved, not everyone IS saved. (Acts 7:51) It is not EITHER "He will complete the work He began in us; He is faithful" OR "be diligent to confirm your calling and election; be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish." It's BOTH. (Phil. 1:6, 1Thess. 5:23-24, 2Pet. 1:10-11, 2Pet. 3:14-18) This is why Paul said He hadn't yet attained what He sought, since His end had not yet come. (Phil. 3:8-21) But he was assured of it before he died. (2Tim. 4:6-8) Note when Paul refers to "those who love His appearing," they are the same people John advises to abide in Jesus, practicing righteousness, so as not to "shrink back from Him in shame at His coming." (1John 2:28-29) God knows we are weak, but He provides everything we need. (2Cor. 12:9-10, Eph. 3:20-21, Matt. 11:28-30, Col. 1:9-12, 2Thess. 1:11-12, 2Pet. 1:3-4)

*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 **tested genuineness of your faith**—more precious than gold, that instead of being destroyed by fire, is refined—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*

Paul spelled out in detail the kinds of behaviors that would prevent someone, even if they claimed to be saved/born again, from entering the Kingdom. Instead of reassuring ourselves that these warnings don't apply to us, because Jesus covers us with His righteousness and so God doesn't "see" our sins, we ALL need to examine ourselves to see if we are actually IN Him (especially if we love the ways of the world). (1John 2:15, Jam. 4:4, Acts 5:1-11)

*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? **Do not be deceived:** neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. "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.** 1 Corinthians 6:9-13*

*For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. **I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced.** 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again **I will not spare them**—since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. 2 Corinthians 12:20-13:3*

*But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness **must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.** Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are **out of place**, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has **no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words**, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 5:3-6*

***Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him.** And by this we know that **he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.** 1 John 3:24*

***Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.** Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that **Jesus Christ is in you?**—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! 2 Corinthians 13:5*

Now pay close attention to this. Jesus said to cut off any part of our bodies that cause us to sin. (Mark 9:43-50) We can relate to the concept that sometimes amputation is necessary to save the rest of the body from disease that might otherwise lead to death, right? Entering the kingdom is more important than the condition our body is in. Jesus used this drastic example not expecting we would actually mutilate ourselves, but to illustrate how utterly important it is to STOP sinning. Even so, we should hold the view that our bodies are mere tents during this earthly sojourn. (2Cor. 5:1-10, 2Pet. 1:10-15, 1Pet. 2:11-12, 2Cor. 4:11-18) (This goes directly AGAINST the mind-set of our culture, where appearances and comfort are everything. Matt. 8:18-22, Matt. 6:19-34) We are to fear God, who can throw the soul into hell, more than anyone who can harm our physical bodies. (Luke 12:4-5) Do you think that Jesus would tell US that this should be our attitude toward sin in our bodies if He were going to allow His pure, spotless Bride, the Church, which IS HIS BODY, to be corrupted? (Eph. 5:23, Col. 1:18, Col. 1:24) He washed her clean and expects her to desire to remain that way. If she has no such desire, then she does NOT have His Spirit working in her, because He bears GOOD fruit. (Phil. 2:12-16, Rom. 8:9, 2Cor. 13:5, Rev. 3:18-20, Mark 9:49, Dan. 11:31-36, Isa. 48:10) Saying that we're born again and yet still have no desire to quit sinning is like blaming God for our sin—like He's not doing His part to help us stop. What a sickening thought!

*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***

What Jesus has offered us is free, but it didn't come cheap. It cost Him unimaginable suffering, even unto death. (Isa. 52:13-53:12) Those who truly believe and understand WHO they worship will have great admiration, a healthy respect, and immeasurable appreciation for Him. If we love the world more than the inheritance we have been offered, then we CAN give it up of our own selfishness and foolishness. (Heb. 6:4-12, Heb. 10:26-39, Heb. 12:1-29, Rev. 3:11, Matt. 7:26-27, Matt. 25:2-4) Our old self is meant to DIE when we are baptized by the Spirit through faith into Him. (Rom. 6:1-23, Col. 3:3) We must stop rebelling against Him and refrain from grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:30, 1Thess. 5:19, Rom. 2:1-11) Every sin can be washed away, but we are NOT clean if we insist upon soiling ourselves again and again with the evil of the world deliberately each time we have confessed our sins to Him, repented, been forgiven and washed. (Luke 12:45-48) Note: We don't "earn" forgiveness by saying repetitive prayers or doing good works. (Matt. 6:7, Luke 18:9-14, Rom. 4:5-8)

***Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Ephesians 5:15-21***

Jesus is going to DESTROY His enemies. (Zeph. 3:8-13) We who BELONG to Him, as His POSSESSION, must not join sides with His enemies! If this thought embarrasses you and does not agree with your beliefs, then you are not worshiping the Jesus of the Bible. My point in including the following passages isn't to shock anyone, but to enlighten the foggy-headed about what we are escaping when we are IN Christ. (Rom. 8:1, 1Thess. 1:9-10, 1Thess. 5:9-11, Isa. 26:20-21, Rev. 15:5-8) Anyone who refuses to humble themselves and admit that God is sovereign will NOT win against Him. (Heb. 2:5-13, Isa.

29:15-16) Better to wake up now. This life is short. Eternity is not. (Rom. 1:18-20)

*The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are **given by one Shepherd**. My son, **beware of anything beyond these**. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. 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 12:11-14*

*Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh. Revelation 19:11-21*

*And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. 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 17:12-14*

*Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and*

against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Now therefore, O kings, **be wise; be warned,** O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. **Blessed are all who take refuge in him.** Psalm 2:1-12

Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But **this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.** "He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations; I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them, because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight." Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: "Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but **it is they who shall be put to shame.** "The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple! The sound of the LORD, rendering recompense to his enemies! Isaiah 66:1-6 (Also see Heb. 3:7-15.)

Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth." Isaiah 63:1-6

*When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"* Revelation 6:12-17

*Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And **there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me.** "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For **I am God, and there is no other.** By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: '**To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.**'* Isaiah 45:21-23

*But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me."* Luke 19:27

*"Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, 'How have we spoken against you?' You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.'"* Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him **of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name.** "They shall be **mine**, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my **treasured possession**, and **I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.** Then once more you shall see the **distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.** For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act," says the LORD of hosts. Malachi 3:13-4:3

In His great mercy, God grants repentance to weak sinners, giving them a reprieve from the power of the sinful nature they were born with. But there does come a time when a person's heart is so hard that He will not continue striving with them anymore. Pharaoh was a good example of this. (Exo. 7:13-14) Also notice that eventually during the great tribulation, everyone who is left will curse God rather than repent. (Rev. 16:8-21) This is why we are cautioned so strongly NOT to harden our hearts (which is the same as turning a deaf ear or a blind eye).

*And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps **grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth**, and they may **come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.** 2 Timothy 2:24-26*

*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 3:12-15*

Read the Bible for yourself. Don't trust others who pick verses supporting their position, but cut them short, take them out of context, twist them, etc. Would you rather be comforted now and reassured that all is well even if it isn't, or would you rather be prepared to meet your King? The world loves its own and doesn't like hearing any message that disagrees with them, even calling undiluted/unpolluted messages from the Bible "hate speech." (But does your smoke alarm "hate you" for warning you about danger?) "Tolerance" is only extended in this culture to those who approve of sin and will compromise on biblical truth, but if we're persecuted because we did something to deserve it (like being dishonest, or like Westboro Baptist Church picketing funerals, telling people God hates them), that is our fault. If we are persecuted for speaking the TRUTH, in LOVE, not as a gong, but out of sincere desire for all men to come to repentance and be saved (Eph. 4:15-32), then we are BLESSED. (Matt. 5:10-11)

*This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.*

They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word **the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.** But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. **Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,** waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 2 Peter 3:1-13

Only **let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ,** so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. Philippians 1:27-30

And now, little children, **abide in him,** so that when he appears we may have confidence and **not shrink from him in shame at his coming.** If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who **practices righteousness has been born of him.** 1 John 2:28-29

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

Can anyone honestly stand before Jesus in a filthy garment, which was white when He clothed them in it, but they rolled in the mud of the world without a care for what it cost Him to provide it, never having even bothered to ask Him to cleanse it again, and tell Him that they didn't think He would notice the difference or that it MATTERED? What excuse will anyone have? He offered to cleanse EVERY sin that we confess to Him, without limit as to how many times (Matt. 18:21-35, Luke 17:3-4, 1John 1:9) - but He's not blind. He can see right into our hearts as to whether we ever had any intention of turning from our sins or if we were using His grace as a license to do whatever pleased US instead of Him. (2Tim. 2:3-7, 1Pet. 2:15-16, Jam. 1:25, Gal. 5:13, Psa. 139:23)

*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.*** Hebrews 4:12-13

*Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were **designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality** and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in **sexual immorality** and pursued **unnatural desire**, serve as an **example** by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.* Jude 1:3-7

*But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And **many will follow their sensuality, and because of them***

***the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, **making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;** and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the **sensual conduct** of the **wicked** (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who **indulge in the lust of defiling passion** and despise authority. 2 Peter 2:1-10***

***Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight! Isaiah 5:20-21***

*And he said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but **woe to the one through whom they come!** It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. Luke 17:1-2*

If entering the kingdom of God were as simple as saying some words and then continuing on as before, then the gate and path would not be narrow. (Matt. 7:13-14) Probably everyone who heard the offer would be saved. No, it requires that we DIE to self and LIVE to Christ—taking up our crosses and FOLLOWING Him, abiding in Him, keeping His words, remaining in His love. (Gal. 2:20, Col. 3:1-17, Rom. 6:1-4, Matt. 16:24-27, Mark 8:34-37, Luke 9:23-26, John 15:1-17) Love NOTHING more than Him, including worldly goods, esteem, pleasures, etc. Jesus said that His disciples were fishers of men and that the kingdom of God would "catch" all kinds of "fish," but the bad ones would be THROWN OUT. (Matt. 13:47-50) He said that the weeds planted by the enemy would be burned, just like the unfruitful branches will be cut off by His Father, and the trees bearing bad fruit were cut down at the root. (Matt. 13:24-30, John 15:6, Matt. 3:10) Remember, the fruit is produced by the Holy Spirit inside of a born-again person. It starts INSIDE and works OUT. (Rom. 12:1-2, Matt. 12:33-37)

As for people who are determined to reassure people that God loves sin and will not reject anyone no matter how many times he said in His word that He would NOT accept those who refuse to separate from the world, you sadden me beyond description. Jesus said to shake the dust off and take your blessing with you when you leave if people reject His message. (Matt. 10:14, Mark 6:11, Luke 9:5) He did NOT say to make adjustments to it so that it would be more palatable to unbelievers, e.g. "You don't have to give anything up to be saved" instead of "it costs your life"—which was never really yours to begin with, since God owns the earth and everything, including everyone, in it. (Psalm 24:1, Mark 8:34-37, Matt. 16:24-27, Luke 9:23-27)

Don't call it a "kingdom of God" message if you are giving people permission to corrupt it with the filth of the world AFTER they claim to have entered in. (Col. 3:1-17) One of the main products sold by houseofbelonging features the theme "because Jesus ate with everyone." That is SUCH a wonderful thought, isn't it? He certainly did, and we are to invite the poor to our banquets. (Luke 14:12-14) Just as discussed previously, EVERYONE is invited to receive the free gift of salvation. (Matt. 22:8-10) That is WHY Jesus ate with everyone—because He came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10) Those with whom He ate were CHANGED after their encounter with Him. It should be NO DIFFERENT today.

Even the physical healings have added meaning in their symbolism of spiritual healing, because the people were ONLY healed if they had FAITH. (Matt. 13:57-58, Matt. 9:22, Mark 10:52, Luke 8:48, Luke 17:19, Luke 18:42) (Notice that Jesus forgave the man's sins prior to healing him in Matt. 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26) **Would we say those people Jesus healed of their ailments were healed if they still couldn't walk or see, etc.? No? Then why do we claim people who are still completely controlled by their sinful nature (even to the point of denying that what they do is sinful) are born again and set free?** Jesus taught in a parable that people who have been cleansed must fill their purified vessels with the Holy Spirit, or they will be targets for worse evil to overtake them than what gripped them before. (Matt. 12:43-45, Luke 11:24-26, 1John 5:18-21, also see 2Tim. 2:19-22, 2Pet. 2:20)

*Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! **Sin no more**, that nothing worse may happen to you." John 5:14*

*Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on **sin no more**." John 8:10-11*

Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, **great is your faith!** Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly. Matthew 15:28

And he said to her, "Daughter, **your faith has made you well;** go in peace, and be healed of your disease." Mark 5:34

Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and **seeing that he had faith to be made well,** said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. Acts 14:8-10

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.** 1 John 1:5-10

Note, the above passage does NOT continue on to say that we have no worries about our future sins once we have been cleansed. It says again that we are lying if we claim to belong to Jesus but continue sinning. We need to OBEY our Lord, with His help, and seek His intercession on our behalf (not an angel's, Mary's or any other dead person's - Heb. 1:1-14, 1Tim. 2:5-6, Luke 11:27-28, Mat. 12:46-50, Mark 3:31-35), including forgiveness and cleansing by His precious blood when we fall short (which was shed ONE time to pay for ALL sin). (Heb. 9:25-26, Rev. 7:14, Rev. 12:11) The passage continues as follows:

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may **not sin.** But **if** anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the **whole world.** And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. **Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.** 1 John 2:1-6

Paul said not to even eat with someone who claims to be a brother in Christ, but is practicing sexual immorality. (1Cor. 5:1-13) We are NOT to be proud

of being accepting of SIN. The goal is NOT exclusion, but the salvation of the soul that has been DECEIVED into thinking that willful sin is acceptable for children of God. (2Cor. 11:1-4, 2Tim. 3:12-17, Jam. 1:13-16, Jam. 1:22-25, 1John 3:4-10) The goal is restoration to fellowship after the sinner has been brought into repentance. (2Cor. 2:4-9, 2Cor. 13:10-11, 2Tim. 2:19-26, Jam. 5:19-20) True love cares more about the eternal soul than making a person who is lost in their sins feel more comfortable—that would be easier for us, but deadly to the one who remains in darkness. The Church is not a hospice providing palliative care to the dying. Jesus give NEW LIFE and HEALS.

*When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, **so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good.** Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:4-6*

*My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. James 5:19-20*

*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. **Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.** Galatians 6:1*

***Let no one deceive you with empty words,** for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. **For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.** Ephesians 5:6-12*

*For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. For if, after they have **escaped the defilements of the world** through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are **again entangled** in them and **overcome**, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true*

proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire." 2 Peter 2:18-22

For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and **by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive**. For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be **wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil**. Romans 16:18-19

The answer to our not being "of the world" is NOT to bring the world into the Church and transform it to be LIKE (and liked by) the world! (Psa. 37, Psa. 73) And the answer is not more rules! (Rom. 14:1-23) The answer is transformation by the Holy Spirit from within. That is the ONLY way to be saved and the ONLY way to overcome this world. (John 16:33, Rom. 6:1-4) Love, respect and gratitude is our motive. (1John 5:3) The Holy Spirit is the only source of our power and only hope of our overcoming. (1John 4:4-6)

Do not be **deceived**: "Bad company ruins good morals." **Wake up** from your drunken stupor, as is right, and **do not go on sinning**. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. 1 Corinthians 15:33-34

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore **go out from their midst, and be separate from them**, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and **you shall be sons and daughters to me**, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "**Come out** of her [Babylon], **my people**, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Revelation 18:4-5

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. Philippians 3:17-19

*"I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. **I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.** Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that **I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.**" Revelation 2:19-23*

Remember these are Jesus' words in Revelation, which He sent to let His servants know what was to come. If you feel you can't understand it, then at least read Chapters 1 through 3 and 19 through 22. Also, be sure to understand NEVER to take the mark of the beast in order to buy and sell (Chapters 13-14). You will KNOW what it is when the time comes, because it will be accompanied with worship of the image of the beast. To take the mark is to officially (and irrevocably) become a child of the devil. Better to die for refusing, and live with God forever. Possibly the mode of execution at that time will be beheading, but remember this: Jesus is our eternal, spiritual head. (Eph. 1:22-23, Eph. 5:23-24, Col. 1:18) No one can take that away from us who FOLLOW Jesus, because we TRULY BELIEVE in Him—try as they might. (John 10:27-30) Remember how everything happens again. I am convinced that the following passage will have another fulfillment in the future:

*"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. **When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.** Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But **the one who endures to the end will be saved.** When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. **If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. So have no fear of them,** for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in*

the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And **do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.** Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but **whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.** Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. **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. The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward." Matthew 10:16-42

Severe persecution is also the theme of the following passage, which is often used to reassure wandering Christians that God still loves them despite their loving the world more than Him, and that God wants us to have all the same things of the world that unsaved people have. It's about external influences and attacks (driven by unseen forces- Eph. 6:12) trying to steal our crowns from us, not about our casting them aside—trading them in for "a bowl of soup." (Rev. 3:11, Heb. 12:15-17)

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? **Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?** As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, **in all these things** we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor

*rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:31-39*

Note: The mark of the beast is NOT "Sunday worship" as Jesus IS the Sabbath rest for those who abide IN Him. (Hebrews 4:8-10, Matt. 12:1-14, Mark 2:23-3:6, Luke 6:1-11) We no longer "work" in an effort to be justified before God, since Jesus has completed ALL of the work necessary. He has redeemed and purchased us with His precious blood. We are to do HIS will and make HIS good pleasure our #1 priority EVERY DAY. "Church" is NOT a worship service, building or institution. It is the gathering of called out true believers, 24/7/365.25, wherever they are. Wouldn't it be nice if we could all remember that and behave in such a way as to honor and glorify our Lord in everything we do, ALL of the time?

***If anyone has an ear, let him hear: If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. Revelation 13:9-10***

*And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name." **Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.** Revelation 14:9-12*

*And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy." Revelation 22:10-11*

Satan has been trying to destroy all of the good that God created practically from day one. He's already been defeated, but doesn't know it yet. Whose side are you on? Do you want to cooperate with the devil in defiling the Body of Christ so as to bring Jesus dishonor, or do you want to make sure that it is clear that you are a child of God who is controlled by the LOVE OF CHRIST and by His Spirit inside of you?

**You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.** John 8:44

**Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.** 1 John 3:8

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

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

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

As for me, I will continue to exhort people to LOVE God by OBEYING God. John 14:15-24) Not by going back to the law (Gal. 3:2-3, Gal. 5:4), or worrying about losing salvation for slipping (1John 4:17-19), but believing what He said instead of the wisdom of men, and acting accordingly. (Rom.

11:33-36) What He has prepared is for those who LOVE Him, not for those who love the wicked ways of the world (which is going to pass away). (1Cor. 2:3-14, 1Cor. 1:18-25, 1John 2:15-17)

***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. Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." 1 Corinthians 3:16-20***

*Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. **We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word,** but by the **open statement of the truth** we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case **the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers,** to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:1-6*

The reference to light towards the end of the above passage goes along with John 1:1-5, Eph. 5:13-14 and 1John 1:5-6. It's all the SAME light, Jesus. (John 8:12, Jam. 1:17-18) God DOES love everyone and sent His Son to pay for the sins of the whole world, but Jesus did NOT suffer and die in order that people could CONTINUE enjoying their sins. I wonder if we can truly sing and mean the words of the song "Even So, Come": "Like a bride waiting for her Groom, we'll be a church ready for You." Really? I pray that we will. Not because we're "all that," but because HE IS, and we love Him enough to care about His glory and honor. He came the FIRST time as a humble servant, but He is coming to REIGN the next time!

***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 14:24

***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.*** John 15:10

*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the **washing of water with the word**, so that he might present the church to himself in **splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing**, that she might be **holy and without blemish**. Ephesians 5:25-27*

*Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, **be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish**, and at peace. 2 Peter 3:14*

*Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with **fine linen, bright and pure**”—for the fine linen is the **righteous deeds**\* of the saints. Revelation 19:7-8*

\*This word in Greek is literally “righteousnesses” (plural). As we know, empty words are meaningless—we must put our faith into action.

A song by Jonny Diaz is particularly applicable to the times we live in (and so is “Basics of Life” by 4Him), where people want to “update” the Bible and God to match the times. We were warned that most people would cease to have any interest in knowing what God has said, but only what they want to hear.

*For the time is coming when people will **not endure sound teaching**, but having **itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions**, and will **turn away from listening to the truth** and wander off into myths. 2 Timothy 4:3-4*

*But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. **Avoid such people**. 2 Timothy 3:1-5*

Here are the “politically incorrect” lyrics to the song:

Stand For You by Jonny Diaz:

So long politics it's time to start being me  
Take the chains off my lips it's time to set my tongue free  
Some might just turn their heads but some will raise a fist  
And You told me to stand so I won't back down from this

They say there are no absolutes but are they absolutely sure

Refrain:

In a world that tries to water You down  
Where beliefs cannot be spoken to loud  
I'll stand for truth  
Where they claim Your way isn't wide enough  
And they do their best just to cover You up  
I'll stand for You

Hello reality it's time we embrace honesty  
Teach me to speak with truth and love and with humility  
You made a promise that You're coming back to earth  
So how selfish am I if I don't go tell the world  
They say just be sincere but could they all just be sincerely wrong

Refrain

They might remove Your name from money  
But You own it all the same  
They kicked You out of school that's funny  
Cause how could You go away  
In a land that's built upon Your word  
It's amazing You've been banned  
To think that we control You is absurd  
So for truth I'm here to stand

Refrain

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Here are the lyrics to the other video I mentioned (which was released in 1992!):

The Basics of Life by 4HIM:

We've turned the page, for a new day has dawned  
We've re-arranged what is right and what's wrong  
Somehow we've drifted so far from the truth  
That we can't get back home

Where are the virtues that once gave us light

Where are the morals that governed our lives  
Someday we all will awake and  
look back just to find what we've lost

Refrain:

We need to get back  
To the basics of life  
A heart that is pure  
And a love that is blind  
A faith that is fervently grounded in Christ  
The hope that endures for all times  
These are the basics, we need to get back  
To the basics of life

The newest rage is to reason it out  
Just meditate And you can overcome every doubt  
After all man is a God,  
they say God is no longer alive  
But I still believe in the old rugged cross  
And I still believe there is hope for the lost  
And I know the rock of all ages will stand  
Through changes of time

Refrain x2

As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 13:5, we EACH need to take a look at our OWN lives in light of the Scriptures. We then need to decide for OURSELVES how much we are willing to give up for Jesus and how much of His word we will believe (and thus act upon).

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