

Examine the Scriptures

by Tricia Berg

*Now these Jews [in Berea] were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, **examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.** Acts 17:11*

It is not our place to pick and choose which Scriptures we "like" and which ones we don't. God is not a God of confusion or contradiction. If there seems to be such a thing, then we need to compare the context and other Scriptures so that we can come to a correct understanding. (1Tim. 1:3-7, 2Tim. 3:16-17, 2Tim. 2:15, Jam. 3:3, Titus 1:9-16)

*"Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes." And he said to them, "Therefore **every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who **brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.**" Matthew 13:51-52 (So much for tossing out the Old Testament as "irrelevant," huh? It's quoted too many times to count in the New Testament, making it extremely relevant.)***

The LAST thing we would want to do when it comes to a matter of (eternal) life and (spiritual) death would be to listen to someone who is just telling us what they think that we want to hear instead of the truth (and sadly, too often they may be right—that might very well be what we want, in our foolishness and blindness). That's profitable (financially) for them, but VERY costly for us (in terms of damage to our souls - 1Tim. 4:16, Jam. 5:19-20).

*Teach and urge these things. If anyone teaches a **different** doctrine and does not agree with the **sound words** of our Lord Jesus Christ and the **teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.** He has **an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.** But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and **harmful desires** that plunge people into **ruin and destruction.** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have **wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.** 1 Timothy 6:2b-10*

*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 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 4:1-4*

Command and teach these things. *Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. **Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.** Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. **Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.** 1 Timothy 4:11-16*

The God of the Old Testament is the same God as the New Testament, and He does not change. (Mal. 3:6, Heb. 13:8) Therefore, we know that since He has always hated sin, He always will. (Mal. 3:5, Jer. 44:22, Zeph. 1:12-18, Psa. 50:16-23) Jesus did NOT suffer and die for OUR sins so that we could CONTINUE sinning, but to cleanse us with His precious blood from the filth that we wallowed in when we were ignorant, and to give new life to us who were spiritually dead due to our sin. (Heb. 9:21-28)

*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.** Ephesians 2:1-3*

*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.** Titus 3:3*

*Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the **futility** of their minds. They are **darkened** in their understanding, **alienated** from the life of God because of the **ignorance** that is in them, due to their **hardness of heart**. They have become **callous** and have **given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.** Ephesians 4:17-19 (Also see Eph. 5:6-12, 15-17)*

As **obedient children**, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, **you also be holy in all your conduct**, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:14-19

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." Acts 17:30-31

For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, **not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.** 1 Peter 2:15-16

Indeed, **all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the **sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:12-17

Anyone who says that in their arrogant or uninformed opinion, God "understands how the times change" (and accommodates OUR wishes) has a serious problem—PRIDE. Just remember that God OPPOSES the proud and gives grace to the HUMBLE. (Jam. 4:6-10, 1Pet. 5:5-11) How reliable would God be if He changed over time? Not very, right? Thankfully, He is the SAME, always. (Again—Mal. 3:6, Heb. 13:8, also Jam. 1:17)

When **pride** comes, then comes **disgrace**, but with the **humble** is **wisdom**. Proverbs 11:2

*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.*** Isaiah 66:2

*Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. **He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way**. All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies. Psalm 25:8-10*

*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*

*Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and **those who walk in pride he is able to humble**. Daniel 4:37*

*The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. **Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate**. Proverbs 8:13*

*"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**." Malachi 3:13-18*

We don't obey God in order to try to "get on His good side" so that He'll forgive our sins. The ONLY way to be forgiven is to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord so that His righteousness will be applied to OUR life. However, those who reject the free gift of salvation pay the penalty for their OWN sins, having refused to humble themselves—being too proud to admit they're sinners and that God's ways are right—being too wise in their own eyes to believe and place their trust in Jesus, the ONLY Way to be saved. (John 3:36) Often, they don't want to have to answer to anyone but themselves—if there is "no God," that is "no problem." The first sin we must repent of is unbelief. If we won't repent of that sin, then no other sins are forgiven us. If we DO believe in our hearts, then all other sins are forgiven us, AND we will want to obey God (as obedient children should - 1Pet. 1:14-19) out of gratitude, love and respect for our Holy and merciful God,

who has made us a NEW creation in Christ, rather than living as we did when we were DEAD in our sins. (Rom. 6, 8, 1John 4:9-10, Rom. 5:6-8)

*I told you that you would **die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he** [the Son of God] **you will die in your sins.**" John 8:24*

Jesus offers forgiveness for any sin that we confess to Him and repent from (which includes sins after coming to faith—because we slipped or didn't know better). When we confess our sins (to Him directly, even in our thoughts, or to each other, for accountability and owning up to what we have done), we are agreeing with Him that we have disobeyed Him. He already knows it and we already know it, but it's important that we acknowledge it and let Him cleanse us with His blood so that we can continue in fellowship with Him and each other.

*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.****** 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 1:5-2:6*

People often refer the God "knowing what's in their hearts." This is a way of resting on "good intentions" without having to follow through on them with actions (like repenting of their sins). They want others to think what's in their hearts is good, but the Bible teaches that our hearts are NOT naturally good inside. (Mark 7:21-23) The Holy Spirit, who is IN our "jars of clay" (for born-again believers) both renews and produces fruit in those who yield to Him and are led by Him. (Titus 3:5, Gal. 5:16-25, Rom. 8:13-14) He gives light to the world through us. (Matt. 5:14-16) The list of difficulties faced by believers in the following passage, which we must persevere through by the power of God, are the often the result of our following in the steps of Jesus—things like

persecution caused by refusing to go along with the flow, and also other trials wherein our faith is tested. (Matt. 5:14-16, 1Pet. 1:6-7, 3:14-17, Heb. 13:13, Phil. 1:29-30, Acts 5:41, Jam. 1:12, Rev. 2:9, 3:9) God does also help us with all of our problems (Matt. 6, Phil. 4:4-9), but we are not rewarded for enduring any suffering that we caused ourselves.

*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*

*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**. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are **afflicted** in every way, but not crushed; **perplexed**, but not driven to despair; **persecuted**, but not forsaken; **struck down**, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 2 Corinthians 4:4-11 (Also see Rom. 8:35-39.)*

The indwelling HOLY Spirit leads us to behave in a godly, righteous way. (Gal. 5:22-25, Rom. 8:13-14, Titus 2:11-15, 2Tim. 1:7, Col. 1:11, Eph. 5:8-10) We can exercise our free will to quench and grieve Him, but that is NOT a wise thing to do. (Eph. 4:30, 1Thess. 5:19) If we don't feel Him prompting us to repent and walk in a manner worthy of the Gospel (Eph. 4:1, Phil. 1:27, Col. 1:10, 1Thess. 2:12), then perhaps we have become very adept at stifling Him OR He is just NOT IN US. (Rom.8:9) The reason I write these articles is to strongly encourage every believer (and this applies to me as well) to examine ourselves and our walk with Christ NOW. (2Cor. 13:5)

*Strive for peace with everyone, and for the **holiness** without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that **afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears**. Hebrews 12:14-17 (Gen. 25:29-34, 27:34-38; also see Heb. 12:22-24, 28, and my article "[God's House](#)".)*

We're SET APART if we're redeemed. "Church" (ekklesia in Greek) means "called out"—believers are the Church (not a physical building, institution or worship service). We're not meant to blend in with the world or love its evil ways anymore once we've come to the knowledge of the truth and been washed clean. (2Cor. 6:14-7:1, 1Cor. 15:33-34, 1Cor. 6:9-20, 1John 2:15-17, Jam. 4:4, John 15:19, 2Pet. 2:19-22, John 8:34-36) So if we think that giving up our sin is too much to ask of children of God, then we clearly do not understand what it MEANS to be a child of God. It's no small thing! Don't wait until you see with your eyes what you gave up, like Esau did. Don't be a foolish virgin with no oil in your lamp to see your way to the Bridegroom when He returns. (Matt. 25:1-13, also see my article "[Buy Wisdom](#)".)

We are to love Him and abide in Him and His love, which includes OBEYING Him. (John 14, John 15—these two chapters are CRUCIAL for believers to read and understand.) We are not meant to do whatever we please and just assume that God doesn't even "see" us sinning anymore (but see Acts. 5:1-11), or that we are automatically forgiven despite our failure to repent or even acknowledge our sin and ask God for forgiveness—but that is exactly the attitude of a great many people today. What it shows when we do that is that we love ourselves and our sin more than Jesus. (Matt. 10:37-39)

*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*

We are justified apart from works, but our works SHOW that we ARE justified—we are NEW creations, regenerated by the Holy Spirit and no longer enslaved to the sins that once held us prisoner. (Rom. 6, Rom. 7:4-7, Jam. 1:22-25, Jam. 2:1-26, Titus 3:3-11, Eph. 2:8-10)

*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**. 34 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 8:31-32, 34-36

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. For sin will have **no dominion over you**, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? **Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!** Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were **once slaves of sin** have become **obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed**, and, having been set free from sin, have become **slaves of righteousness**. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For **just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.** Romans 6:12-19

If we are not free from the power sin previously had over us, then we need to examine ourselves to find out why. (Romans 8, 2Cor. 13:5) Do we really believe in the one true God who is all powerful, all knowing, all seeing, and yet think nothing of disobeying Him AFTER we have become one of His dear children? (John 1:12-13, Rom. 8:23, Gal. 4:4-7, Heb. 10:26-39, 2Tim. 2:19) Do we really understand the pain and anguish Jesus suffered to set us FREE and yet still love our sins more than Him? That is not a saving faith, according to the Bible. (Jam. 2:17, 26, 1John 3:1-10) Salvation is free, but it costs us our life. We belong to Jesus from then on, having been redeemed with His precious blood, and we will all answer to Him. (Mark 8:34-38, Matt. 12:36-37, 1Pet. 4:5, 1Cor. 6:9-20, John 12:25-26, Col. 3, 1Thess. 4:1-8, Acts 10:42, 17:30-31, Rom. 14:9, 2Tim. 4:1, Phil. 2:9-11, Rev. 11:18, 20:11-15)

For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." So then **each one of us will give an account of himself to God.** Romans 14:11-12

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

He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. **There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.** For God shows no partiality. Romans 2:6-11

Those getting rich and famous by telling the masses that God feels honored that we would accept His offer of salvation ON OUR OWN TERMS should cease and desist. The Bible warns us NOT to love money, and NOT to tell the people what they want to hear for a profit, but to be willing to SUFFER for holding fast to the TRUTH. (See 1Tim. 6:2b-10 above.)

As for you, always be sober-minded, **endure suffering**, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 2 Timothy 4:5

*You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. **Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.** No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.* 2 Timothy 2:1-7

Jesus told the Pharisees that God knew their hearts (which were wicked), despite their trying to justify themselves by acting outwardly righteous while being filthy inside. They loved money and exerting power over the people. (Matt. 23:1-28) If they really believed in God, would they have put Him to the test with their evil deeds (or be so foolish as to think that He didn't know)?

*"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? **No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.**" The Pharisees, who*

*were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but **God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.**" Luke 16:10-15*

Where else besides the last verse in the passage above have we heard that term "abomination"? (Lev. 18:22, also 2Pet. 2:13, 18-19, Jude 1:7, 10, 16) For those who like to argue about other Old Testament prohibitions, Jesus said that food (which goes inside of a person and is then expelled) does not defile people. However, the rest of the New Testament has numerous warnings against sexual immorality. (Matt. 7:14-23—in this one passage, Jesus actually explains that foods are all clean for us now - also see Acts 15:9-11, 19-20, 28, 21:25, Col. 2:16-23, Rom. 14:14, 17, 20, AND that we are still to refrain from defiling our bodies sexually - also see Matt. 5:32, Matt. 15:18-20, Matt. 19:9, Mark 7:18-23, Acts 15:19-20, Acts 15:28-29, Acts 21:25, Rom. 13:13, 1Cor. 5, 1Cor. 6:9-20, 1Cor. 10:8, 2Cor. 12:21, Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:3-12, Col. 3:5-7, 1Thess. 4:2-8, 1Tim. 1:8-11, Heb. 12:15-17, Heb. 13:4, 2Pet. 2:6-10, Jude 1:6-8, Rev. 2:14, 2:21, 9:20-21, 21:8, 22:15.)

Learn something new in the Bible each day, and then you won't be led astray. A new saying—I like it! Just make sure that what you learn is TRUE. False teachers like to say that "God never said [whatever they don't like]" and "what the Bible REALLY says is [whatever supports their agenda]." You can look up the original Hebrew and Greek for yourself at <http://www.biblehub.com>.

*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but **inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.** You blind Pharisee! First **clean the inside** of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but **within** are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also **outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**" Matthew 23:25-28*

We don't earn or make restitution for our salvation, but out of genuine love and respect for our Savior, we do His will instead of our own. If we REALLY love Him, the our desire will MATCH His because His Spirit inside of us gives us the desire to please Him. (Phil. 2:12-13) We don't instantly become perfect, but we improve as we grow in the knowledge of Him, and we are grieved by slipping, not content to continue as we were before. (2Pet. 1:5-11, Rom. 12:1-2, Eph. 4:1-5:21) Anyone who does not have this desire to please Him and to be conformed to His image is showing that at best, they are grieving and quenching His Spirit (Eph. 4:30, 1Thess. 5:19), and at worst, they DO NOT HAVE His

Spirit—which means they do NOT belong to Him. (Rom. 8:9, 1Thess. 4:8, 1John 3:24, 4:13)

WAKE UP! Get this right now while there is still time! Stop getting doctrine from Oprah and “spiritual but not religious” books she recommends, like “The Shack.” Stop admiring and supporting celebrities who are preying on you. Despite what they say, they do not love you OR God. These are the false teachers that God warned us about in His holy word. Deceived and deceiving, for a profit. (2Cor. 2:17, 4:2, 2Tim. 3:1-4:5, Acts 20:29-30, 33-35, Jude 1:11, Rev. 2:14 - see my article “[Vine of Sodom](#)” for more about Balaam’s sin of greed.)

Why would any child of God fall for lies, supporting causes and the people who promote them, AGAINST God? The answer is that if we have “oil in our lamps,” which is the Word of Truth (Spirit of Truth, the “anointing”), then we WON'T fall for these things. (Matt. 25:1-13) As we mature in Christ, we will come to know the difference between counterfeit and real doctrine. (Heb. 5:11-14, 1Cor. 14:20, Eph. 4:11-16, Phil. 3:15-16, Col. 1:28, 2Tim. 6:3-21)

*In him you also, when you heard the **word of truth, the gospel of your salvation**, and believed in him, were **sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:13-14*

*“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and **he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for **he dwells with you and will be in you**. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But **the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**” John 14:15-26*

*I write these things to you **about those who are trying to deceive you**. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. 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 2:26-29 (Please also see John 15:1-10.)*

How can we possibly claim to know and love God if we never read our Bibles? Faith comes from hearing the word. (Romans 10:17, Psalm 119:105, Matt. 6:21-23) Notice below how Jesus linked together in one discussion false prophets who bear bad fruit with the broad path that leads to destruction. These people claimed they were doing great things in Jesus' name. Peter and Jude also warned us that there would be people partaking of the Lord's Supper with us (i.e. eating at our "love feasts") who were imposters working against God rather than true believers. (2Pet. 2:1-22, Jude 1:3-23) Paul called them wolves not sparing the flock (Acts 20:26-35), and Jesus called them wolves in sheep's clothing:

*"Enter by the **narrow gate**. For **the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction**, and those who enter by it are **many**. For the gate is narrow and **the way is hard that leads to life**, and those who find it are **few**. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in **sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves**. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. **Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire**. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. 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 7:13-27*

Stop listening to liars! Stop looking around at others, thinking it's okay to KEEP sinning as a child of God just because others who claim to be saved are doing the same thing! That doesn't make it okay. It just means that the people doing these things are all on the BROAD path instead of the narrow path that Jesus said leads to the kingdom of God. They are all DECEIVED by the same LIES. (1Cor. 6:9-10, 1Cor. 15:33-34, Gal. 6:7-8, Jam. 1:13-16, Eph. 5:5-6, 1John 2:26-29, 2Tim. 3:13, Matt. 24:24, 2Thess. 2:9-12, Rev. 13, Rev. 19:20, 20:10)

Let's review what is meant by "good fruit." Just prior to updating this article, I saw a video of someone saying that "bad fruit" is when people call some of the world's favorite sins "sin." That is incorrect. We can ALL agree that Westboro Baptist, with their hateful picketing of funerals, is NOT bearing good fruit. They would do well to read Jam. 2:8-17, especially v. 13, and also Matt. 7:2. However, the problem is not that they point out sin, but the way they do it. We're to speak the truth, out of LOVE. (Eph. 4:15, 1Tim. 1:5) Our goal is the repentance of the deceived and lost, NOT EVER to condemn anyone. (2Pet. 3:9-18, Rom. 2:4-11, 1Cor. 11:31-32) We know that everyone needs to understand that God detests sin—otherwise, why would Jesus have had to suffer and die to pay the penalty for ours? (Isa. 52:13-53:12)

*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***

*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**. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a **new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not*

*counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. **We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** 2 Corinthians 5:14-21*

The New Testament's many reassurances that we are "not under the law" are NOT meant to encourage us to sin, or even to assure us that it's fine if we "can't help it." Paul explains that the prohibitions of the law generally have the effect that people want to do things they know they're not supposed to do. (Rom. 7:7-13) When we're "not under the law, but grace," it means not only that we have been forgiven our sins, but also that we are no longer **controlled** by our **former** sinful desires. (1Cor. 6:12-13, Rom. 8:13, Rom. 6:11-12, Rom. 13:14, Eph. 5:24, 1Cor. 9:27, 1Thess. 4:4-5, Titus 3:3) When we're IN Christ means that He is also IN us. So if we still "walk as enemies of the cross," that's like saying that is how Jesus walked! Seriously? What a repulsive thought! (1John 2:1-6, Phil. 3:18-19)

We know that Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and we are to FOLLOW Him, to KNOW His voice. (John 10:27, Matt. 16:24-27, 1Pet. 2:21, Heb. 13:13)

*"I am the good shepherd. **I know my own and my own know me**, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and **I lay down my life for the sheep**. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will **listen to my voice**. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. **No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord**. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father." John 10:14-18*

*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. **You are my friends if you do what I command you.** John 15:13-14 (Also see Luke 7:23-30.)*

Note that Jesus' commands are to LOVE God and one another. (John 13:34-35, 15:12, 17, Mark 12:28-34, Rom. 13:8-10—but don't forget the rest of the counsel of God, such as the verses that directly follow in Rom. 13:11-14.) Many people these days think that we have to CHOOSE between speaking the truth OR being loving, but that's not what the Bible says. (Eph. 4:15-16) This fallen world does NOT know best, and perishing people do not understand the things of God. (1Cor. 2:14, Rom. 8:7-8, 1Cor. 1:18-31, 2Cor. 4:3-4, Eph. 4:17-19, 5:7-12, 1Thess. 5:3-7, 2Thess. 2:2:9-12) If we are "fitting in" with it just fine, then there is a problem with our walk with Jesus. BE READY for Jesus' return!

Whoever is not ready will be terribly sorry once they realize it's too late. (Matthew 25, Heb. 12:14-17) Let's help each other "win this race" by caring more about the things of God than the things of this world. (1Cor. 9:24-27, Heb. 12, Rev. 2-3)

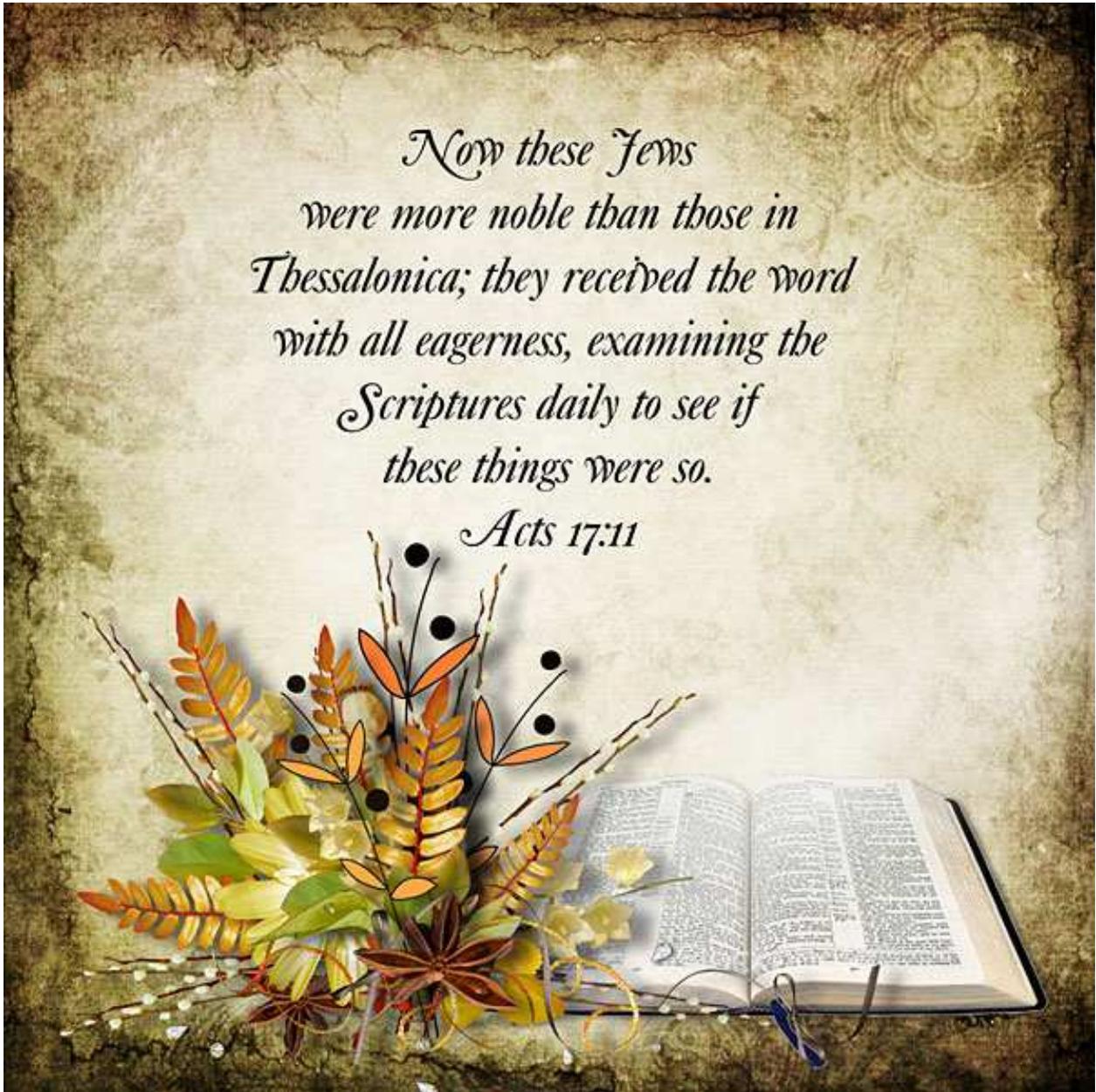
*Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. **Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Colossians 3:2-10***

*And let us consider how to **stir up one another to love and good works**, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near**. For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:24-31*

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*Now these Jews
were more noble than those in
Thessalonica; they received the word
with all eagerness, examining the
Scriptures daily to see if
these things were so.*

Acts 17:11



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