

Law of Liberty

by Tricia Berg

But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. James 1:25

Notice what "law" we believers are under - "the PERFECT law of liberty" - under which we will be judged and rewarded according to our faithful service. (Jam. 2:12, Gal. 5:13-16, 24, 6:2, John 15:12-17, Mark 12:28-34, Matt. 22:40, 7:12, Rom. 13:8-10 - but don't forget Rom. 13:11-14 - 1Pet. 2:16, Matt. 25:14-30, 1Cor. 3:12-18, Rev. 11:18.) Judgment begins at the house of God and then works its way outward. (1Pet. 4:17-19, Heb. 4:12-13, 10:29-39, Rev. 22:11-15, 2Cor. 5:9-10, Rom. 2:6-11, Ezek. 9:4-6, Mal. 3:13-4:3 - also see 1Pet. 2:9.)

Here is the context of the above passage:

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. James 1:19-27 (Also see Jam. 1:2-4, 12-16, 2:14-26, Gal. 6:1-10, Jam. 5:19-20, 2Tim. 2:22-26.)

Notice the similarity between what James (the brother of Jesus) said above, and what Jesus said below:

"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." And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. Matthew 7:21-29 (Also see 1Cor. 3:10-18, Matt. 25:1-13, 1John 3:4-10.)

That last sentence is also a good lesson for us today. We need to listen to JESUS, through the Bible, not to people who put the teachings and traditions of men equal to or worse yet, above the word of God. We have access to the original Hebrew and Greek to clarify the meaning in cases where there is uncertainty. Scripture interprets Scripture. If someone teaches any interpretation that contradicts other teachings in the Bible, then it is to be rejected (even if it has been accepted by many, even if it's a long-standing tradition). (Acts 17:11, 2Tim. 3:14-17, John 5:39, Luke 24:25-27, 44, Mark 7:6-9, 2Pet. 2, 3:15-18, Jude 1:4-23, Matt. 7:15-27, 1Tim. 1:5-11, Titus 1:16, Jam. 3:1)

When we "rightly divide" the word, we bear in mind that some requirements of the Old Testament were foreshadows that have now been fulfilled, and some of them are still in effect, because they are STILL being fulfilled in Jesus. (2Tim. 2:15, Heb. 8:5-6, Col. 2:16-23) If we're WISE, we'll obey our Lord during this lifetime in order to have no need to be ashamed of how we used our FREEDOM when He returns. (1Thess. 4:1-8, 1Cor. 5:7-13, 6:18-20, Heb. 12:14, 28-29, 10:26-31, 12:15-17, 6:8-9, John 15:1-10, Matt. 13:40-42, 47-50, note these next two consecutive passages cited are in the same "conversation" - Matt. 24:36-51, 25:1-13, Mark 13:32-37, 2Pet. 2:18-22, Eph. 5:25-27, 31-32, Rev. 19:7-8, 21:7-8, Jude 1:24-25, Eph. 6:10-20, 1John 1:5-2:6, 2:28-29, Rom. 6, Col. 3:5-17, Eph. 4:17-5:33, 1Pet. 4:3-5, 1Thess. 5:4-11)

I have written many devotionals clarifying that obedience from the heart is a work of the Spirit in us, not something we WORK for, but YIELD to and submit to HIS doing works (bearing fruit) THROUGH us. (Gal. 5:19-24, Rom. 8:13-19, 7:4-6, 6:17-22, 16:19, 8:7-9, Jam. 4:4-10, 1John 2:15-17) It's revealing outwardly the true regeneration of our spirit by the Holy Spirit and the reality that we have been adopted as children of God. (Titus 2:11-3:8, Phil. 2:12-16, Rom. 12:1-2, 1John 3:1-10, note that this immediately follows 1John 2:28-29.) My point is to encourage myself and all who love Christ to hold fast to Him, examining themselves as we were told to do (2Cor. 13:5, 12:20-13:2)—not to join the crowd on the broad road, but to stick to the narrow road. (John

14:15-26, 1Pet. 1:6-9, 1John 3:23-24, 5:3, 2Cor. 5:14-15, Heb. 10:24-39, Matt. 7:13-27, Luke 6:46-49, Mark 3:35, 1Cor. 16:22)

Brothers, join in imitating me [Paul], and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Philippians 3:17-21

*"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. "'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. 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 3:7-13 (Also see Mark 8:34-38, Heb. 12:3-13, 10:32-39, 2Tim. 2:3-7, Phil. 1:29-30, 1Pet. 2:19-21, 4:12-19, Matt. 5:10-16, Luke 6:22-23)*

James spoke again about the "law of liberty" in the next "chapter" (but there were no chapter divisions in his original letter):

So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. James 2:12-13

The above passage is quite popular among the "don't judge" crowd. It goes along with this other one they love to quote out of context:

"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into

*your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? **You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.**" Luke 6:37-42 (The way that it continues is also important: Luke 6:43-49)*

In God's sight, judgment is related to but inferior to mercy, which is defined as follows:

mer-cy \ 'mər-sē \ noun: compassionate treatment, especially of those under one's power; clemency; a disposition to be kind and forgiving

So according to the dictionary, being merciful is being compassionate, kind and forgiving. I think we all know that, but the question is what does it mean to be those things? Does it mean that if it makes someone uncomfortable to call their sin "sin," then we should refrain from doing so? No, it doesn't. We don't have to "pick" between truth and love (nor SHOULD we). (Rom. 1:18, Eph. 4:15-16 - also see Eph. 4:13-14 - we need knowledge to grow mature in Christ so that we're not tossed to and fro by doctrine craftily twisted by deceitful humans; also see Heb. 5:11-14.) We're not meant to criticize others to death and pretend that we ourselves are perfect. (Gal. 6:3-5, Rom. 12:3-9, Phil. 3:13-14, Heb. 10:24-27, 1Cor. 14:12, 26, Eph. 4:29-32, Jude 1:20-23, Rom. 14 - that discussion pertains to matters of freedom, not sin.) When speaking about sin, our motive is LOVE. (1Tim. 1:5, Eph. 4:15-25) We want people to repent and be restored to fellowship with the Body of Christ. (2Cor. 7:8-10, 1John 1:6-10) It's important not to be a "gong," but letting someone remain in a deceived state of believing that the behaviors they make a practice of are acceptable to God (or not "seen" by Him - but see Acts. 5:1-12, 1Cor. 11:29-32) is NOT merciful. It's actually the opposite. (2Tim. 2:19-23, 24-26, 2Pet. 2:18-22, 1Cor. 13:1-3, Jam. 5:19-20, Gal. 6:1, Jude 1:23)

Denying that sin is SIN is the kind of thing that someone who doesn't actually KNOW God or BELIEVE what He said about what IS sin and how His wrath is going to come on the earth because of people who refuse to turn from it (repent). (Rom. 2:5-11, Eph. 5:5-6, Col. 3:5-10, 1Thess. 4:3-8, 1John 1:6, 2:4-6, 3:6-10 - when John says in ONE letter THREE times that people who do not obey God are lying when they claim to know Him, we should take notice - remember, there is ONE God, NOT an Old Testament and New Testament God - Heb. 13:8, Mal. 3:6, 1Cor. 10:4, Isa. 44:8, Heb. 6:19-20, 7:3, Matt. 14:33 -

and NOT a Son who is opposed to His Father - John 10:30, 8:29, Titus 1:16, 1John 3:12-13)

God's children have a higher standard of behavior because we are His children (NOT in order to become or work to remain His children), but remember, the firstborn receives the best blessing and inheritance, which can be reversed if that child "despises" their birthright - Gen. 25:29-34, 27:34, 38, John 1:12-13, 3:16-21, Jam. 1:18, Heb. 12:15-17, 22-24) We are to be separate from the world because we have been called out of it and our bodies are His temple. (2Cor. 6:14-7:1, John 15:19, 1Pet. 2:4-5, Eph. 2:21-22, 1John 2:15-17) His Spirit dwelling in us enables us to desire to know and to do His will instead of indulging our old sinful flesh. (Gal. 5:16, 24, Rom. 13:12-13, 14, 8:13-14, 1John 3:24, 4:13) If there is no evidence whatsoever of our being a "new creation," then we have good reason to wonder why not? (2Cor. 13:5, Rom. 6:4, 7:4-6, 8:9, Gal. 3:27, 6:15, 2Cor. 5:17, 2Pet. 1:9) There should progress toward Christ-likeness, showing that the Spirit is at work in us. (Rom. 12:2, Col. 3, 2Pet. 1:5-15, Eph. 4:17-32, 5:15-21, John 8:29, 15:8-10)

Does showing mercy mean that because we are all sinners, that NO ONE can expose ANY sins, EVER? No. The result of that would be a defiled Body of Christ. (Eph. 5:11-12, 1Cor. 4:21-5:13, 1Thess. 4:7, 1Pet. 1:16-17) We're not to be hypocritical by picking at the sins of others and yet continuing in our own. (Rom. 2:1-11, Matt. 7:3-5, 18:15-17) Being merciful also involves being impartial, but in our culture FAVOR is actually being shown to those who persist in certain sins. (1Tim. 5:20-21, Psa. 50:16-23) The "Golden Rule" is NOT "you look the other way when I sin and I'll do the same for you." (Matt. 7:12, Rom. 13:8-10, AND Rom. 13:11-14, 16:19, 6:15-23, 1Pet. 1:14-19)

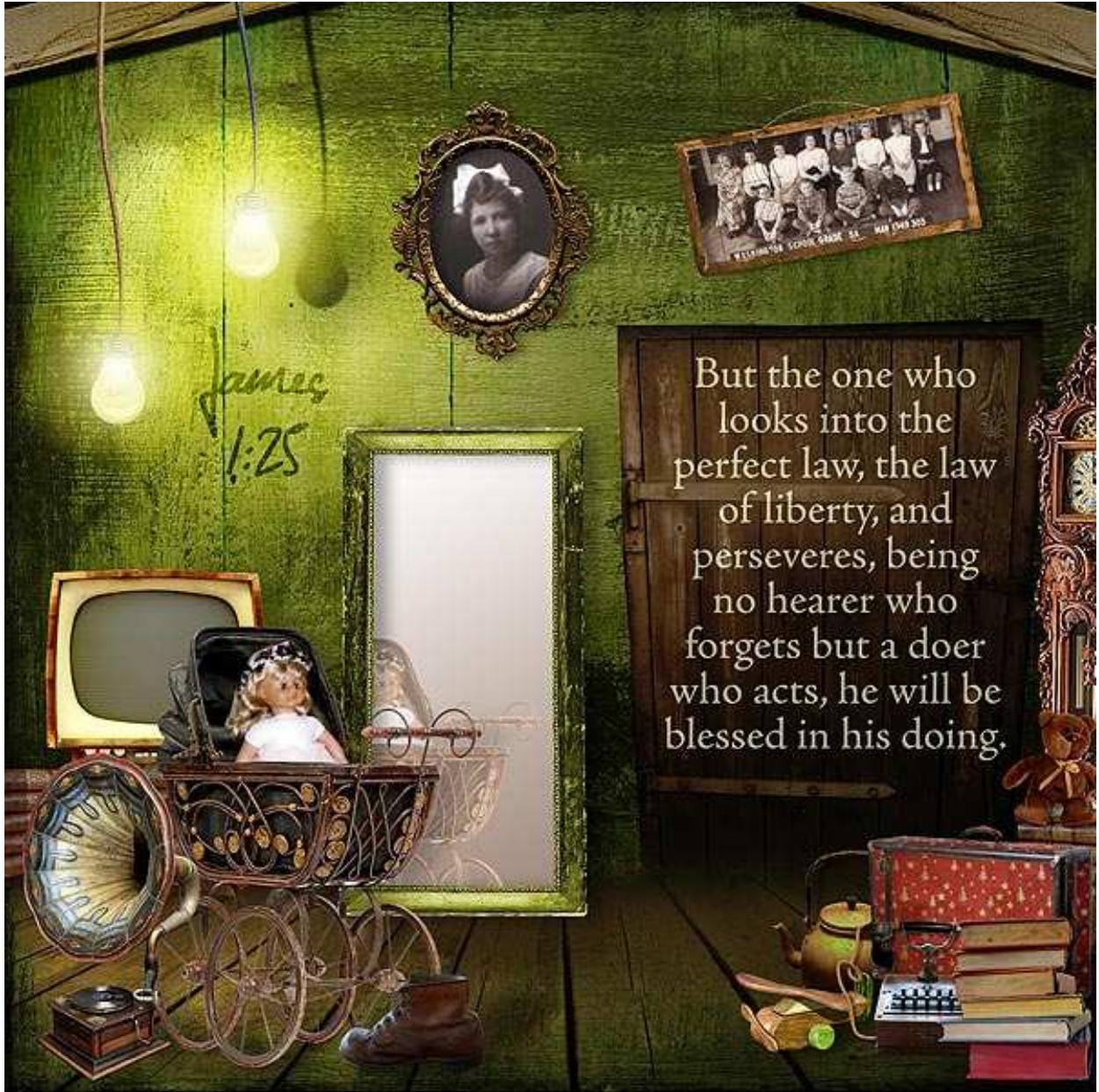
Why is it that many of the same people who shout the loudest for "mercy" and claim to be experts on what Jesus would have done often either accept "worship" (celebrity IDOLS, including some even in the church!) or they are among the adoring fans giving worship (adoration IS a form of worship) to their favorite, popular, rich celebrities, who are treated as if they can do no wrong (and even when caught in it, they are given a free pass by their "peeps")? (Jam. 2:5-7, 1Tim. 6:3-8, 9-11, 1John 4:5-6, Rom. 16:18, Rev. 2:20-23, Jude 1:4, 2Pet. 2:2-3)

Being loving and merciful doesn't mean affirming every behavior of a person, good or bad (or calling evil "good"). (Isa. 5:20-21, Luke 17:1-2, 3-4 - notice "rebuke" if your brother sins, and forgive him "IF he repents" - our brothers are the same as those of Jesus in Matt. 12:50 - the children of God - Heb. 2:11, 17, 3:1-15, Gal. 6:10, 4:31, 2Thess. 3:13-15, 1John 3:1.) Endorsing sin is NOT from the Bible (Rom. 1:32), but from our modern culture, which has been decaying for a LONG time now. If we saw that someone was doing something

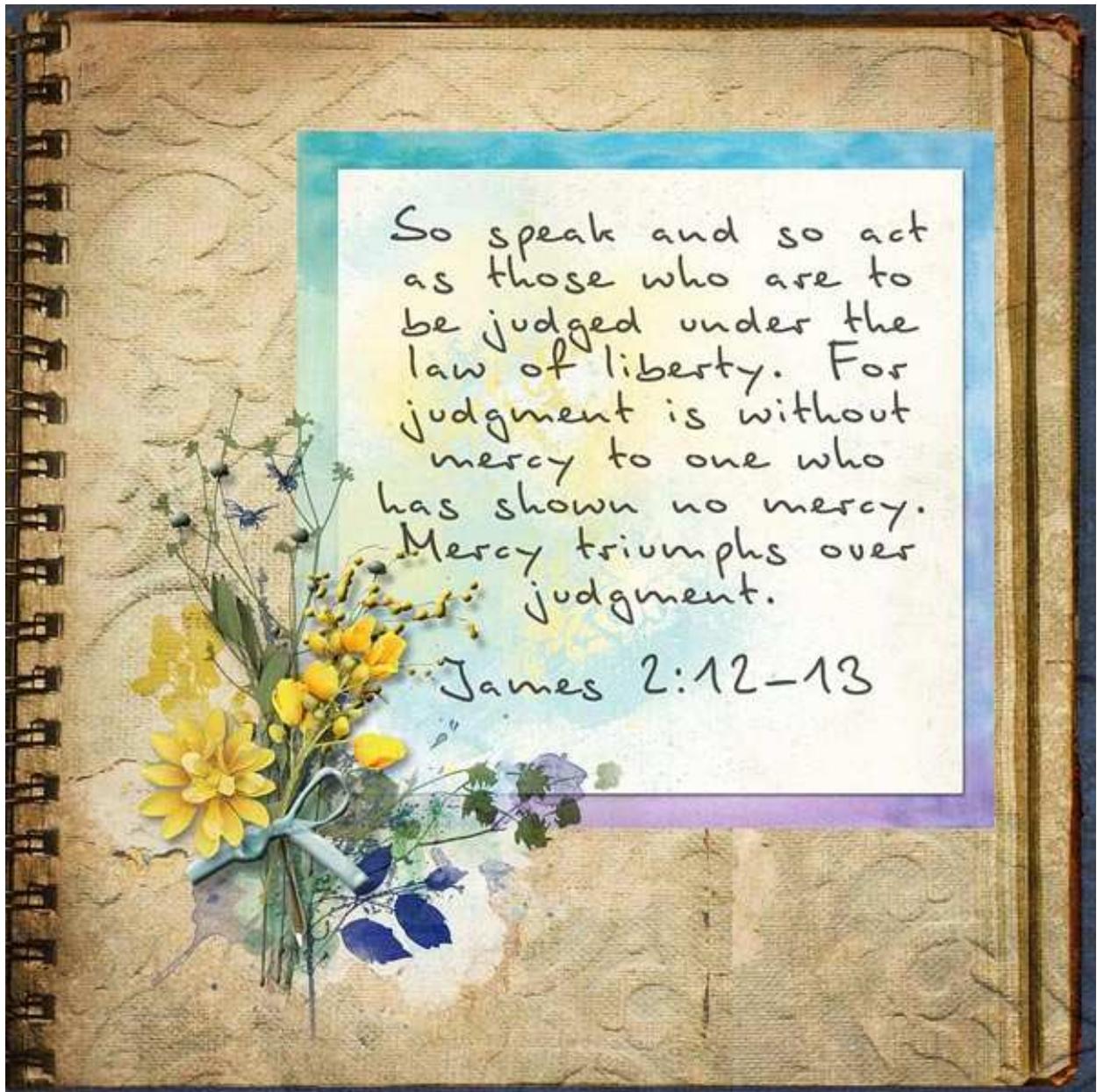
that will likely lead to their physical death, we would consider it loving to warn them, right? How much MORE so is that true, then, of behaviors that lead to spiritual, ETERNAL death? (Matt. 10:28, Rev. 21:7-8, 22:14-15, 1Cor. 6:9-20, Gal. 5:19-21) The fact is that if we stand for the truth (in LOVE), we will not be popular on this earth and will probably be persecuted—but it will be worth it to be able to hold our heads up, instead of hanging them down in shame, when we stand before Jesus as He judges our faithfulness to Him during this lifetime. (2Tim. 3:12-16, John 15:18-21, 1Cor. 3:12-18, Rom. 14:12, Rev. 11:18, 1Pet. 4:3-5, 1John 3:13)

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. **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 5:10-16 (Also see Matt. 25:10-13, 25:26-30.)

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