

My Song

by Tricia Berg

The LORD is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him. Exodus 15:2

In God's great concert, there are no soloists. Even when only a single violin is heard, there is an amazing ensemble playing if you consider it like this: The Word of God is the violin, the believer is the bow and the musician is the Holy Spirit. A beautiful song will only be played if all of these three precious parts is present. A violin doesn't make sound without the bow--if we refuse to participate, there will be no song. If the "instrument" played is something other than the Word of God, then the song is not what the world needs to hear, and it is not pleasing to God. If we tell the world the message they prefer to hear instead of the truth, or one that we invented ourselves instead of what the Word of God says, then we are playing a different instrument than God intended, which will result in a different tune. They will not hear the song He wanted us to play.

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love. 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you. 1 Timothy 6:18-21

Therefore, dear friends, since you know this in advance, be on your guard, so that you are not led away by the error of lawless people and fall from your own stability. 2 Peter 3:17

I solemnly 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, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 2 Timothy 4:1-5

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or

an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. Galatians 1:6-10

And no violin ever played itself--the violin and bow can sit there all day, just existing, but no song will be heard until someone plays it. We are meant to be used by God (who is Spirit) to share His message of love and hope with the world. If we know the Word of God but don't share it, there is no "song" at all--what a waste of a good violin and bow! If we have faith, but refuse to be led by the Spirit and act upon it, then God's work that He prepared for us to do before the world began will not be done. If we have these three elements necessary to produce the song, but don't put them together so that God's "song" can be heard, then the world will remain in darkness.

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Romans 8:9-14

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

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

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 3:8

We were told to make disciples, not believers who make a profession of faith one time and then go on as before. ONLY God can grant someone faith, and so we can't "make"

believers even if we try. Disciples FOLLOW Jesus. Disciples make disciples. If we truly love people, then we will want to warn them to take refuge in our God--the ONLY God there is, the ONLY One who saves.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

Then Jesus told His disciples, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. Matthew 16:24

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. Revelation 22:17

"For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them. If they were wise, they would understand this; they would discern their latter end! How could one have chased a thousand, and two have put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had given them up? For their rock is not as our Rock; our enemies are by themselves. For their vine comes from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorraah; their grapes are grapes of poison; their clusters are bitter; their wine is the poison of serpents and the cruel venom of asps." Deuteronomy 32:28-33

The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!" Ruth 2:12

So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 6:17-20

No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. 1 John 2:23

Paul said that if we have knowledge, faith and hope, but not love, then we are like a gong--motive matters. James said that we need to put our faith into practice--true saving faith will be evidenced by our behavior. John said if we see our brother in need and don't help them, we don't have the love of God in us. We need to love in deed not only with words. We need to love even our enemies--enough to warn them of what's

coming for unbelievers and enough to share with them what we've received from God so that they can see His goodness. Jesus said that if we love one another, then people will know we are His disciples. So if we don't do that, but keep our faith to ourselves, hiding our light under a bushel, we haven't "played God's song" for the world to hear. We haven't done as He asked—we haven't loved HIM as He told us to do. How sad is that after all He did for us and that's how we show our gratitude?

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. James 2:14-17

Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that He laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. 1 John 3:15-18

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:9-21

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

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you." John 15:12-14

"Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." Luke 6:46-49

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." John 14:15

By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. John 15:8-10

"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

Jesus instructed the disciples to tell the people they preached the good news to that the kingdom of God had come near them. Why is that? Because the kingdom is within us--when we come near someone, they should hear God's "song" played by the Holy Spirit within us. It should be obvious to observers that we are different, set apart for God. Jesus was our example of enduring suffering for the glory of God. We're not here to please ourselves, but God.

"Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town." Luke 10:8-12

Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." Luke 17:20-21

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." John 3:8

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. 1 Peter 2:21

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 1:29-30

Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. Acts 5:41

"But those who are counted worthy to take part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage." Luke 20:35

When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:21-22

"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." Matthew 7:21

"If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. Mark 9:47-48

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. Romans 8:16-17

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. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Galatians 5:19-26

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. 2 Timothy 3:12-13

And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" 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. "Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.'" Luke 13:23-25

As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4-5

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

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if

anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:4-9

"The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 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 13:41-52

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 2 Corinthians 4:7

Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 2 Timothy 2:20-22

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 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. 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. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes

visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." 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 5:1-21

One final thought: If we "play a song" our way, just because we like to play or we like the attention from playing, or other people we respect or like to be around are doing it, or we think it's expected of us even though we're not sincere, or we make good money from doing so, then our motives are not right. The song will not be as pleasing to God and it is less likely that He will bless it. The goal is that the world may know Him and not perish. Anyone who truly KNOWS God LOVES Him. Anyone who claims to know Him but doesn't love Him or their brothers in Christ does NOT actually know Him. Let's not forget that every good thing we have is a gift from God, including our faith (Eph. 2:8-10) and the love we have for anyone. Let's not break His heart with our faithlessness, but serve Him with our whole heart.

*This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants **all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth**. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. 1 Timothy 2:3-6*

*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. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace. 2 Peter 3:5-14*

*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. 2 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. Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 1 John 2:1-11*

*And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure. 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. 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. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 1 John 3:3-11*

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 1 John 4:7-13

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. 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. James 1:17-22

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:8

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:13-25 (Isaiah 40:6-8)

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 1:5-11

I am adding the introduction I posted with this devotional on my other blog (<http://clotheyourselves.blogspot.com/>):

I would like to be sure we all realize that none of us are going to be perfect until the moment Jesus has finished His perfect work in us. (Philip. 1:6) He told us not to worry. (Matt. 6:34) We can only live one day at a time. If we try to relive the past or

handle tomorrow in advance, it will only result in frustration and stress, which is not helpful at all, but detrimental. We need to deal with one moment at a time, always keeping the goal in mind. (Philip. 3:12-15) So I hope that when I am trying to encourage people (including myself) to live for Christ, whole-heartedly devoted to Him, that the message being received is just that—encouragement. If anyone is convicted by the Holy Spirit of changes they need to make, I hope they will feel relieved to have "woken up" from that slumber in time to make changes—but not scared. He knows us better than we know ourselves. His timing is perfect, and He loves us. My point is that we should love Him back with our whole heart, not that we should be afraid.

All we really need to do is abide in Him (John 15) and He will do the rest. 🌹 The reason for my blog is that the distractions of the world are so overwhelming that most people don't stop and think about whether or not they ARE abiding. (Matt. 13:18-23) Ruth is one of our best examples of the bride of Christ. Her mother-in-law Naomi during parts of the story appears to represent the Holy Spirit. Ruth pledges her faithfulness and devotion to her and her God. (Ruth 1:16-17) Ruth didn't say this and then turn back to Moab. She continued on with Naomi to Bethlehem, lived with her there and ended up working faithfully in Boaz' field. (Ruth 2:23) She followed the advice of Naomi. (Ruth 3:5) As we know, she ended up marrying Boaz, who was a type of Christ. (Ruth 4:10, 13) Notice Ruth was "purchased" by Boaz, as Jesus bought us with His precious blood. (1 Cor. 6:19-20, 1Pet. 1:17-19)

Boaz "went into" Ruth (often referred to as "knowing" in the Bible - Gen. 4:1, 25), which is what the Holy Spirit does with us (*spiritually*, of course—this is why our bodies are *temples* of the Lord—our spirits are contained in our bodies - Eph. 2:19-22). (John 14:15-16, 20-21, John 15:1-8, Rom. 8:9-11) Remember, Jesus doesn't *know* the five foolish virgins who were *not ready* to go in to the wedding and realized it too late (Matt. 25:10-13, Rom. 8:16-17). The foolish virgins *thought* they were ready. They thought the bridegroom knew them, but he didn't. Their lamps went out due to neglect—they thought one "filling with oil" (a one-time profession of faith, not backed up by works, which are the fruit of the Spirit and evidence of saving faith) was all they needed. *Faith comes from hearing the word.* (Rom. 10:17) It's also how we come to KNOW our Lord and how to please Him. (Matt. 25:3-4, 8, 1Thess. 5:14-24, Col. 1:9-12, Heb. 2:1) The foolish virgins were *justified* (declared innocent) when they believed, but they didn't *pursue holiness* (sanctification) without which no one will see the Lord. (Heb. 12:14-28, Eph. 5:1-12)

We were told to hold fast our confidence and persevere in our faith. (Luke 8:15, Rom. 5:3-5, 1Cor. 13:6-7, 1Cor. 15:1-2, 2Thess. 1:3-5, 1Tim. 6:11-12, 2Tim. 3:10-17, Heb. 3:5-6, 14, Heb. 10:35-39, Heb. 12, James 1, 2Pet. 1:5-12, Rev. 2:2-3, 3:2-3, 2:19, 3:10, 14:12-13) Our relationship with our Lord is like a marriage, which was intended to last forever, in faithfulness. (Eph. 5:22-32, 1Cor. 6:12-20, 2Cor. 11:2-4, Rev. 19:7-8, Mal. 2:13-16, Matt. 19:8) In our earthly physical examples, does it bode

well for the marriage if a couple has no relationship after the ceremony or is unfaithful to one another? God does surely sanctify us and is the only one who can, but our part is to love and serve Him until the end, which includes obeying. (Luke 6:46-49, John 14:15-18, Rev. 2:4) When He tells us to love one another with our deeds not only our words, would He expect anything less from us toward Him? Let's repent of being lukewarm and return to our first love! (1John 3:16-18, James 2:14-17, Rev. 2:4-5, 3:15-17)

Ruth bore a son who was King David's grandfather (Obed, father of Jesse, who was the father of David). We bear *fruit of the Spirit*. (Matt. 13:23, John 15:16) We later hear Jesus say similar words as Ruth said to Naomi, in a reversal of roles, to Mary of Magdalene--the first to see Him after He rose from the dead. (John 20:17-18) In case you're interested, there are other similar "mirrors" in the Bible as well. The bride in Psalm 45 is wearing a colorful robe, bringing to mind Joseph's coat. (Psa. 45:13-15, Gen. 37:3) I'll write about Joseph being a type of Jesus in a future devotional. In Revelation 22:17, both the Spirit and the bride invite people to come and drink of the free water of life, as Jesus does more than once. (John 4:13-14, John 7:37-39, Rev. 21:6)

We have another good example in Rebekah, who was invited by Abraham's servant to come follow Him to go and be Isaac's wife (sight unseen--sound familiar? John 20:29, Luke 10:23-24) Another picture of the Holy Spirit doing the work of the Father to obtain a bride for His Son. (Genesis 24) Please read it all--it's so beautiful! Remember, we already know that Isaac is a type of Jesus from when Abraham's faith was tested. (Genesis 22) Please read it to refresh your memory of this amazing event. I would like to point out that Rebekah is even mentioned in Genesis 22:23. Abraham told the servant NOT to bring Isaac to where Rebekah lived, but to go and get her (and he didn't force her, just as we also have a choice). (Gen. 24:8, Josh. 24:15, Matt. 6:24, John 12:26) Her family wanted her to stay another ten days, but she agreed to go right away. She didn't just SAY she would go--she left her family and went. She followed the servant representing the Holy Spirit. (Gen. 24:55-58, 67) That's what we're supposed to do--follow and heed the Holy Spirit's guiding as we serve and obey our Lord and Savior, which is what He became to us when we drank of the cup of the new covenant. (Matt. 10:37-39, Matt. 26:26-28, Rom. 10:8-10, 1Cor. 11:23-32) Many people say that you don't have to serve Jesus to believe in Him, but I think that anyone who calls Him Lord but does not obey Him is a liar--in other words, do they really believe? (1John 2:4-6) Is He the Son of God, deserving of all of our allegiance, devotion and love, the One who died to save us, or not?

We are not all called to physically leave our families as Rebekah was, but we are not to put ANYONE or ANYTHING before God. (Matt. 22:36-38) It's not popular to say today, but that DOES include our families if they would come between us and God. The bride in Psalm 45:10-11 is told to forget her family. You will love Psalm 45, which is about Jesus and his bride, if you haven't read it before. We have verification that

it IS about Jesus in Hebrews 1:8-9. (Ps. 45:6-7) Nevertheless, the point is not that we should neglect our families (1Tim. 5:8), but to be careful just as in everything else that they don't take God's place in our lives or hearts. Jesus said His family is the one who does the will of His Father. (Matt. 12:46-50, Mark 3:31-35, Luke 11:27-28, John 15:14)

Saying we will go with someone or "have their back" but not actually doing so shows a lack of integrity doesn't it? Regardless, it's not the kind of loyalty God deserves from us. (Luke 9:62, John 6:66-69) Saying we love someone but not showing it is pretty useless, isn't it? Some people grow up without hearing the words "I love you," but their parents or other caretakers do things for them that show it. We would all like to hear those precious words often, but the truth is that if we hear them constantly and yet our basic needs are not taken care of, or we are physically mistreated, then what good are those words? Could they even be TRUE in that case? So also with Christ, professions of faith and adoration are nice, but if they're not backed up with our actions and attitudes, then what good are they? (John 14:21) We are the salt of the earth, which is a preservative. (Mark 9:49-50, Ex. 30:34-37, Lev. 2:13) Sugar can be used as a preservative as well (anyone who makes jams and jellies out of fruit knows this), but Jesus didn't use that example. Probably because He didn't want us sugar-coating the truth to the point that it rots people's teeth (or souls). Let's encourage each other even if it seems as though most people don't care. (Matt. 24:12-13, 2Cor. 13:11, 1Thess. 5:11, Heb. 3:13, Ezek. 3:21)

Written by Tricia Berg, December 2016, added last section January 2017, edited May 2017 (14pp. + digital scrapbook layout) *If this article has blessed you, please feel free to share it without modifications (and of course, don't claim it as your own or sell it).*



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