

One Lawgiver and Judge

by Tricia Berg

Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, He who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor? James 4:11-12

As with the rest of Scripture, we need to look at the surrounding text and the rest of the Bible to properly understand any passage. When doing so, we will find that in his letter, James quotes from the following Old Testament passage:

*"You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD. You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. **You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people**, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. Leviticus 19:11-18 (Also see Jam. 2:1-7, 2:8, 5:1-6, Eph. 4:25-32, Col. 3:5-17, 1Pet. 2:1, Rom. 12:9-21, Prov. 20:22.)*

When I was studying this topic, I learned that the word for "devil" (used in James 4:7) means "slanderer" or "accuser." (Rev. 12:7-12, Zech. 3:1) So that sheds a LOT of light on the severity of the sin of slandering and accusing our fellow believers ("brothers"). John tells us in 1John 3:4-10 that children of God do not behave like children of the devil. In 1John 1:5-10 and 1John 2:3-6, John reminds us that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and darkness - so believers must NOT continue walking in those old, unenlightened ways. (Eph. 4:17-32, 5:7-14)

In the following chapter, Paul gives us many examples of how we are not to judge the way that our fellow believers exercise their liberty in living out their Christian lives for the glory of God.

*As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. **Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. **Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."** So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore **let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.** I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. **Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.*****

This is actually what James is talking about when he says we are not to "judge the law." We are not UNDER the law in the new covenant. Jesus fulfilled the law, and His righteousness covers those who are IN Him. (Matt. 5:17, Rom. 8:9-17, 10:4, 7:6, 8:2, 8:4, 1Cor. 9:21, Gal. 2:16, 6:2, John 14:20-21, 15:1-8, 15:13-14, 17:23, 26, Rom. 13:14, Gal. 3:27-29, 5:24) We are under the ROYAL law, as James states more than once. (Jam. 1:25, 2:8, 2:12) It is by this law that we will be judged by Jesus in the future, as His servants. (Rev. 11:18, Rom. 14:, Matt. 25:14-30, Luke 19:11-27, 1Cor. 3:10-18, Jam. 2:12) In Jam. 2:8, James refers to "the royal law," which was first given in Lev. 19:18—God does not change. (Mal. 3:6, Heb. 13:8) Jesus explained it as "the Golden Rule" in Mark 12:12-34 and Matt. 7:12, and another explanation was given by Paul in Rom. 13:8-14 and Gal. 5:13-14 (also see Gal. 5:16-25). (Also see 1Pet. 2:15-16 and Titus 2:7-8.)

*So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. **Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.** It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. **The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves.** But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. Romans 14:1-23*

*So **put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.** Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may **grow up into salvation**—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. 1 Peter 2:1-3*

We are not to decide whether someone else's service to Christ is acceptable to US or not. We are not to ADD to what is written for our instruction - that's what the Pharisees did when they enforced minute details (which were never specified by God) on the people. (Matt. 23:1-4, also see the rest of Matt. 23; Luke 11:37-54 and Prov. 30:6.) God wants obedience from the HEART to the SPIRIT of the law, out of LOVE for Him. He doesn't force us to love or obey Him (and the two go hand-in-hand)—that would be FAKE, not GENUINE. (John 4:23-24, Rom. 6:17-23, 7:4-6, 2Cor. 5:14-15, 1John 5:3) Neither should we force each other to observe man-made rituals or live up to our own standards that God hasn't spelled out in His word. (Matt. 15:1-20, Mark 7:1-23, Luke 11:37-41, Col. 2:16-23, Titus 1:15-16)

*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. **It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.** I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? 1 Corinthians 4:1-7*

With all of that said, it's very important to realize, nevertheless, that we ARE to judge SIN inside of the Church. (1Cor. 5:9-13, Matt. 7:3-5, 18:15-17, John 7:24) This is for the health of the Body of Christ. (1Cor. 5:6-8) However, we are warned against being hypocrites while doing so.

*Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because **you, the judge, practice the very same things**. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that **God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance**? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. 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 2:1-11

*The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to **stone** such women. So what do you say?" This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to **throw a stone at her**." And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; **go, and from now on sin no more**." John 8:3-11*

Notice that Jesus said "go and sin no more." Also note that we can't obey the following passage if we interpret "throwing stones" as being the SAME as speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15-32). Does God contradict Himself? No, God is LOVE and God is TRUTH. (1John 4:8-21, 5:20, John 14:6) It was LITERAL stones they were going to KILL the woman with, despite their own sins

that they had done but hadn't been caught—or perhaps they were looking past each other's sins in an interpretation of "do unto others as you would like done to you," but not doing the same in regard to this woman's sins. If we look in the OT, we can see that the man she was caught with should also have been stoned, according to the law. (Deu. 22:22)

Neither is it "wrongly judging" to help one another (particularly those who are new to saving faith) grow in knowledge, grace (which carries with it POWER from the Holy Spirit to overcome this world), and discernment. But our purpose should be to build up, not to condemn or control, or tear down their faith. (Titus 2:1-3:11) Make no mistake, though—it is NOT "building up" to encourage sin or to be their companion in it. We're each to examine ourselves according to the Scriptures. (2Cor. 13:5)

*We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, **to build him up**. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such **harmony with one another**, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with **one voice** glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. Romans 15:1-7*

*"All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," **but not all things build up**. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. 1 Corinthians 10:23-24*

*So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, **strive to excel in building up the church**. 1 Corinthians 14:12*

*Therefore **encourage one another and build one another up**, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11*

*Brothers, if anyone is **caught in any transgression**, you who are spiritual should **restore him in a spirit of gentleness**. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so **fulfill the law of Christ**. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But **let each one test his own work**, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load. Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one*

who teaches. **Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.** For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:1-10

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

But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "**The Lord knows those who are his,**" and, "**Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.**" 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.** Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. **God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.** 2 Timothy 2:19-26

The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that **those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.** These things are excellent and profitable for people. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned. Titus 3:8-11

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. But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For **you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.** For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. Hebrews 10:24-39

What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. **Let all things be done for building up.** 1 Corinthians 14:26

Notice above that the stated purpose of gathering together in this context is to encourage one another in our godly walk, both in resisting the temptation to sin and in doing good deeds for the glory of God. Our daily lives are a form of spiritual worship. (Rom. 12:1-2, 1Cor. 6:17-20, 1John 2:3-6, 1Thess. 4:1-8, Col. 3:5-17) The early disciples also gathered to obey Jesus' instructions to observe the Lord's Supper in memory of Him, and they cared for the poor. (1Cor. 11:23-26, Acts 20:7, 6:1-7, Gal. 2:9-10)

Paul also laid out other guidelines for gatherings of the Church in 1Cor. 14:26-35. He expected there would be multiple members sharing with the others, as led by the Holy Spirit, in an orderly manner. However, there is no reference to what Paul considered a "proper" liturgy. I submit that the reason for this might point back to God's displeasure with the rote and ritual "worship" prescribed and overseen by the Pharisees. (Matt. 6:7, 15:7-9, Mark 7:6-8) If we merely recite someone else's words, then how will that express our own heart toward God? For that matter, how does an infant who doesn't even know their own name yet (or how to speak) call on Jesus? And does God grant the

gift of faith to children at a certain age, on our man-made schedule? Just some things to think about.

Another important point is that we should know who our brothers and sisters are. Jesus defined "neighbor" as being whoever we come into contact with when He told the Parable of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:25-37) He also defined "brother" (and mother, sister) for us. Paul, Peter, John and Jude expounded on the topic somewhat as well.

*While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For **whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.**"* Matthew 12:46-50 (Also Mark 3:31-35.)

*I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father. And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. And **this is love, that we walk according to his commandments**; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it. For **many deceivers have gone out into the world**, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. **Watch yourselves**, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. **If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.** 2 John 1:4-11*

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

*For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to **show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises**. Hebrews 6:4-12*

There was NEVER to have been division in the Body of Christ (i.e. "denominations"). Those divisions were the result of failing in BOTH of the points previously discussed. One, people who did not hold to the true gospel were recognized as "Christians" who held to a different "flavor" of beliefs (splitting into a new "denomination"). Two, true believers discontinued fellowship with other believers who were exercising God-given FREEDOMS in their walk with Christ. They wanted power to force everyone into their mold.

*The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that **they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one**, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. John 17:22-23*

*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as **in one body we have many members**, and the members do not all have the same function, so **we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another**. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Romans 12:3-8*

*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For **in one Spirit we***

were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, **God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.** If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be **no division in the body**, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 1 Corinthians 12:12-28 (Also see 1Cor. 12:4-11; Col. 3:11-17, Eph. 4:11-32.)

The problem NOW is that the dangerous times of deception we were warned about are here. We can be sure of this by comparing the conditions of the current time with those listed by Paul in 2Tim. 3:1-5. The wolves in sheep's clothing who were predicted in the Scriptures (and who have been present to some extent at various times in this entire age) have arrived in full force. They have infiltrated the Church (which is the BODY OF CHRIST - NOT an institution, worship service or physical building - 1Pet. 2:4-5, Eph. 1:22-23, Col. 1:24) and actively promote false teachings, leading unsuspecting Christians astray.

Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I **did not shrink** from declaring to you the **whole counsel of God.** Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure **fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.** Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to

the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:26-35 (Also see Matt. 7:15-29.)

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for **many false prophets have gone out into the world**. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and **now is in the world already**. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. **They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.** 1 John 4:1-6

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.** As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 2 Timothy 4:1-5

But **false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies**, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And **many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed**. And in their greed they will **exploit you with false words**. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. 2 Peter 2:1-3

But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. **They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime.** They are blots

and blemishes, **reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.** They have eyes **full of adultery, insatiable for sin.** They entice unsteady souls. They have **hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray.** They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them **the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.** For, **speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.** For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire." 2 Peter 2:12-22

It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to **convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way,** and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." These are grumblers, malcontents, **following their own sinful desires;** they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, **devoid of the Spirit.** But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; **save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.** Jude 1:14-23

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. "'I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. But **I have this against you, that you**

tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' 3:1 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "'I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but **you are dead.** Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and **repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.** Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have **not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.** The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' Revelation 2:18-3:6

What to do then? Know God—for ourselves. How do we do that? By reading our Bibles regularly and earnestly, desiring that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all understanding. He has promised to do that. (John 14:26) We don't need worldly, greedy "teachers" to twist the Scriptures for us to say what serves their purpose, even if our old nature would LOVE for them to say those things. Paul said that it's better to be "hurt" temporarily than to have our feelings spared and continue being deceived. (1Cor. 5:5, 2Cor. 7:8-10)

When the **Spirit of truth** comes, he will **guide you into all the truth,** for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. John 16:13

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 3:14-17

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. James 1:5-8

For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might **understand the things freely given us by God**. And we impart this in words **not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual**. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:11-16

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. **By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.** 2 Timothy 1:13-14

Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who **seek him with their whole heart**, who also do no wrong, but **walk in his ways!** Psalm 119:2-3

"I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. The **fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate**. I have counsel and sound wisdom; I have insight; I have strength. By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me princes rule, and nobles, all who govern justly. I love those who love me, and **those who seek me diligently find me**. Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths

of justice, granting an inheritance to those who love me, and filling their treasuries. Proverbs 8:12-21

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. **With my whole heart I seek you**; let me not wander from your commandments! **I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.** Blessed are you, O LORD; **teach me** your statutes! With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; **I will not forget your word.** Psalm 119:9-16

Remember, we believers obey Jesus' command to love, which frees us from the law and is even said to fulfill it, but that doesn't give us a license to sin. "Love does no harm" INCLUDES not sinning against anyone, which also includes not causing them to stumble. (John 13:35, 15:12, 17, Rom. 13:8-14, Rom. 6, Gal. 5:13-25, 1Thess. 4:3-8, Luke 17:1-4)

We can already see in today's society the fruits of those who have refused to humble themselves, but prefer to exert their own will over that of God. Everything happens again. (Ecc. 1:9, 1Cor. 10:1-14, also see the passage just prior to it: 1Cor. 9:24-27.) Many prosperous ancient cultures fell once they reached the point where they destroyed themselves with their ungodly definition of "liberty" (i.e. freedom from morals, indulgence of wickedness—see John 8:31-36). God will only put up with so much. (Gen. 15:16, Amos 2:9, Deu. 9:4-5, 18:12-14)

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven **against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.** For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are **without excuse.** For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became **futile in their thinking**, and their **foolish hearts were darkened.** Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore **God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie** and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to **dishonorable passions.** For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men*

*likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And **since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.** Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, **they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.** Romans 1:18-32*

*For the look on their faces bears witness against them; **they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it.** Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves. Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds. **Woe to the wicked!** It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have dealt out shall be done to him. My people—**infants are their oppressors, and women rule over them.** O my people, your guides mislead you and they have swallowed up the course of your paths. Isaiah 3:9-12 (Also see Matt. 15:13-14, Luke 6:39-40, Jer. 23:21-22.)*

*"For **my people are foolish; they know me not;** they are stupid children; they have **no understanding. They are 'wise'—in doing evil! But how to do good they know not.**" Jeremiah 4:22*

This is the passage just before the one at the top of this article:

***You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.** Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." **Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.** James 4:4-10 (Also see 1John 2:15-17, Psa. 50:16-23, Heb. 6:4-12, Heb. 12.)*

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

profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. Titus 1:15-16

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 6:20-21

Our battle is against the unseen forces of evil (which are also working through people who cooperate with them), and the ONLY way to overcome is by the power of the Holy Spirit, making the best use of His gifts during these dangerous times. (Eph. 5:5-21, Col. 4:5-6, Matt. 25:1-13, Matt. 5:13-16, 7:13-29)

For though we walk in the flesh, **we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.** We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For **we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.** Therefore **take up the whole armor of God**, that you may be able to stand firm in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can **extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one**; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. Ephesians 6:10-20 (Also see Eph. 4:27, 1Pet. 5:6-11, 2Cor. 2:11.)

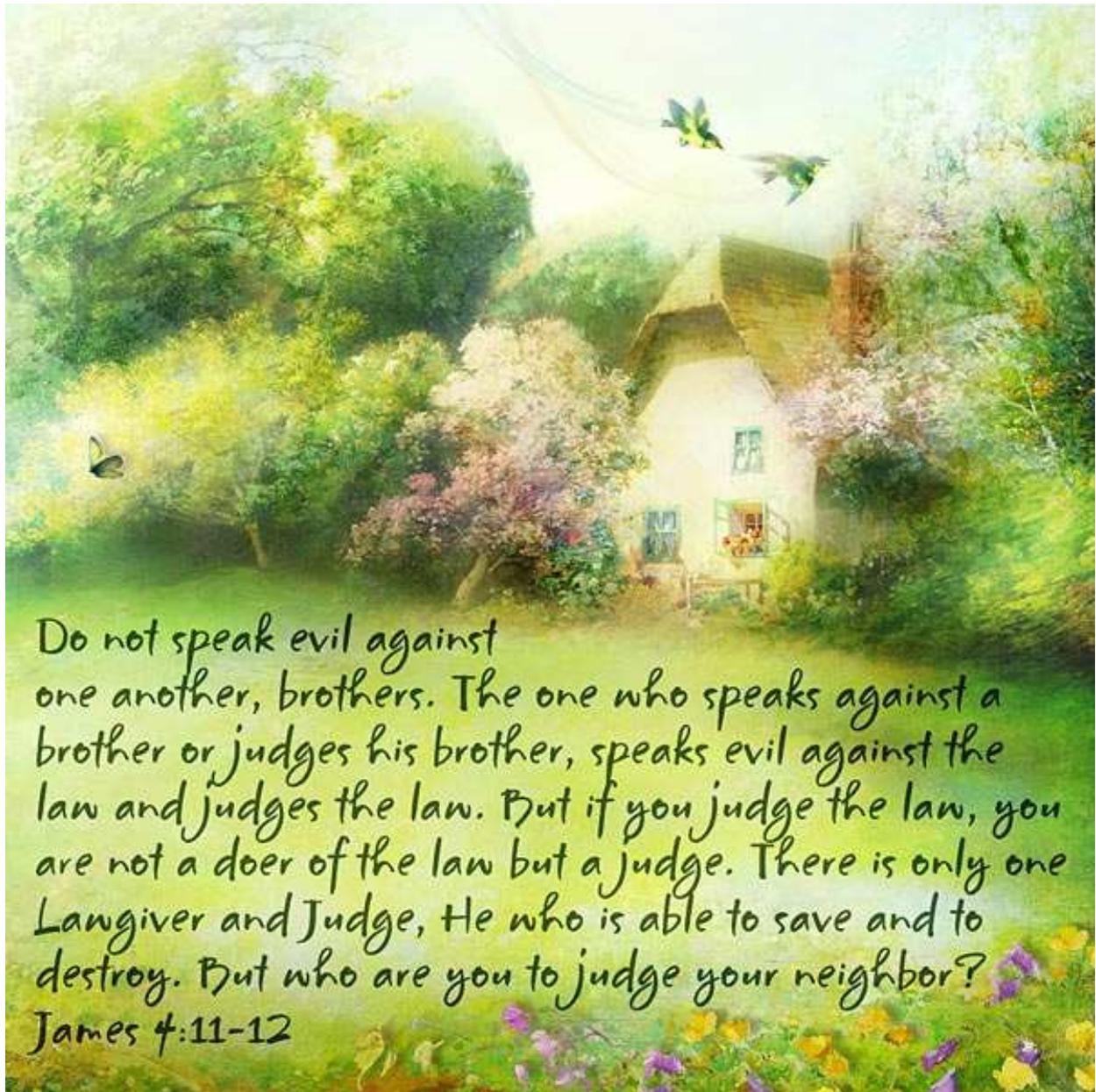
Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, **what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness**, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and

*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.** And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. **There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.** You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.** But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 3:11-18*

*I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles **contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.** For **such persons do not serve our Lord Christ,** but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they **deceive the hearts of the naive.** For your **obedience** is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be **wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.** Romans 16:17-19*

*Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. **Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.** 1 Corinthians 14:20*

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Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, He who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?
James 4:11-12

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