

## Press On

by Tricia Berg

*Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain [in]to the resurrection [out] from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you**. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Philippians 3:8-16*

What's up with Paul? If we didn't know that he also wrote Galatians, someone might accuse him of not knowing that salvation is a free gift, right? He believes and so that's all he has to do, right? "By any means attain to 'the resurrection'"? The word "because" is a clue, since we obey out of LOVE, gratitude and respect, and we know our faithfulness will be rewarded. (Col. 3:23-25) But also notice that he says, "let those who are mature think this way" and "God will reveal it" (i.e. help them understand correctly). So in other words, immature Christians might not understand what he's saying, or why. He says a similar thing to Timothy (who was most certainly well on his way to maturity) below:

*Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the **first share of the crops**. **Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything**. 2 Timothy 2:3-7*

"Think it over and ask Jesus for understanding." Paul is certain that if Timothy prays on it and asks God for guidance, He will reach understanding. (Jam. 1:-8) Timothy was not like those who were told the following in Hebrews (which I believe there is ample reason to believe was written by Paul):

About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. Hebrews 5:11-14

Paul also referenced childhood and milk when writing to the Corinthians, and maturity in his letter to the Ephesians:

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 1 Corinthians 13:11

I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. 1 Corinthians 3:2-3

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Ephesians 4:11-14

So going back to the top passage, I believe the following passages correlate with it (but you should study for yourself, with the help of the Holy Spirit - John 14:26, 1John 2:27):

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so

that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Hebrews 12:1-24

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. Romans 8:22-23

Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the

*sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless. Revelation 14:1-5*

*"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*

My personal studies have brought me to the conclusion that Paul was talking about the resurrection OUT OF/FROM the dead, the FIRST resurrection, to rule with Jesus during His millennial reign. Whoever says that there is no literal, thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth is rejecting what is taught plainly in both the Old and New Testaments. (See some of my other articles for more on the millennium—[Jars of Clay](#), for one.)

*Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the **first** resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but*

they will be **priests** of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. Revelation 20:4-6

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:9-12

The judgment of the dead, and rewarding of Jesus' servants in the passage below refers to the FIRST resurrection, PRIOR to the millennial reign.

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to **reign**. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth." Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. Revelation 11:15-19

As I understand it, AFTER the earthly millennial reign of Jesus comes the judgment of all of those who were not part of the first resurrection. ALL of the dead will be raised and judged. However, the sons of God (referred to in Heb. 12 above) are special—they are resurrected OUT from the rest of the dead (the Greek word is "ek"). The teaching that there is only ONE resurrection stems from a tradition of men, not from the Bible.

And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection [out] from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. Luke 20:34-36

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

*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. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. Romans 8:16-19*

*For to this you have been called, because Christ also **suffered for you**, leaving you an **example**, so that you might **follow in his steps**. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. 1 Peter 2:21-25 (Also see Luke 23:26, Luke 9:23, Heb. 13:12-13)*

*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. Hebrews 10:32-35*

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

*They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and*

charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12

*This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-8*

*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 1:10-11*

*They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful. Revelation 17:14*

*And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:7-15*

Notice the text above doesn't say "and NO names of all those resurrected at that time were found written in the book of life, and so they were ALL thrown in the Lake of Fire"? I believe that is for good reason. Some enter the kingdom

"as through the fire," having had all of their "works" burned up on Judgment Day. "The Day" discloses the kind of work they have done—giving Jesus their best, faithfully, or giving Him leftover crumbs of the resources He gave them the opportunity to be stewards over for His glory. (Luke 19:11-27, Matt. 25:14-30) (As we know, EVERYTHING and EVERYONE belongs to God, but only those who are born again are His children. Psa. 24:1, John 1:12-13) This is the "last day" when Jesus said He would raise to eternal life ALL who believed in Him. (John 6:40) This "day" will NEVER end. (Rev. 22:5) Hallelujah! (Praise God!)

*For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." 1 Corinthians 3:11-20*

Despite popular teachings these days, several passages in the Bible teach that it IS possible for an insincere "believer" to build on another foundation that is NOT Christ (such as teaching that everyone goes to heaven even if they don't believe; that there are other ways than the ONE Way). (John 14:6, Eph. 2:19-22) It is also possible to harden our hearts against the Holy Spirit to such a degree and for so long that our faith dies, and we DENY Christ—usually starting with doubting our need for a Savior (i.e. Is there such a thing as sin? Who is anyone to tell me what to do?) Such people will NOT enter the kingdom at all, let alone receive any sort of other reward.

*But to the wicked God says: "**What right** have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you **hate discipline**, and you **cast my words behind you**." Psalm 50:16-17 (Also see Heb. 12:5-11.)*

*Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are*

**worthy.** The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Revelation 3:3-6

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. Hebrews 6:4-8

If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. John 15:6

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? Hebrews 10:29 (Unsaved people have not been sanctified. Also see Jude 1:4.)

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. Hebrews 3:12-14

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

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who

shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. Hebrews 10:36-39

The passage at the top of this article continues on as follows:

*Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. Philippians 3:17-19*

We know that all things have been GIVEN into Jesus' hands and He is sitting at the right hand of His Father now, but we can easily see with our own eyes that not everything is in submission to Him as yet. That will not happen until the seven trumpets sound at the opening of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal (which it would seem is a deed to the earth, His "inheritance.") (Also notice the correlation between the blowing of seven trumpets and shouting at Jericho. Rev. 11:15-19, Josh. 6:15-16) During His earthly ministry, Jesus did everything according to the perfect time, and that is what He is doing now. (Matt. 26:18, John 12:23, John 13:1, John 17:1, 2Pet. 3:8-18) Our job is to be READY, no matter WHEN that time arrives. (Matt. 25:1-13, Matt. 24:42-44, Mark 13:32-37, Luke 21:36, 1Thess. 5:6, 1Cor. 15:34, Rev. 3:2-3) He explained what it means that He is with us always in John 14. He explains what it is to abide in Him in John 15 - both are necessary to "belong to Him" (and thus have good reason to look forward to His return rather than dread it). We have been advised to examine ourselves. (2Cor. 13:5)

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 28:18-20*

*Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. Hebrews 2:8*

*Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." **He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.** Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his*

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

*The LORD says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand **until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.**" The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, "**Rule in the midst of your enemies!**" Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy splendor, your young men will come to you like dew from the morning's womb. The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." The Lord is at your right hand; **he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.** He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth. Psalm 110:1-6*

*And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and **in righteousness He judges and wages war.** His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may **strike down the nations,** and He will **rule them with a rod of iron;** and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Revelation 19:11-16*

We know from Matt. 24:29 and Joel 2:31 that this next point marks the end of "tribulation" (for the purification and refinement of God's people - Isa. 48:10-11, Jam. 1:2-4) and the beginning of God's wrath. (Isa. 26:20-21, Zeph. 2:3, Rev. 15:5-8) Just as when Satan thought he was winning when Jesus suffered horrifically and died on the cross, he will again erroneously think he's winning against the saints (all faithful believers dwelling on earth at that time - Rev. 12:12, Rev. 13:9-10, Rev. 14:12-13).

*When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like*

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

Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light, as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? Amos 5:18-20

As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom. Daniel 7:21-22

Just as it was not spelled out for the disciples that there would be a two thousand-year period between Jesus' victory on the cross and His reign on earth (Acts 1:6-7), it is not spelled out in the following passage that there is a thousand-year period between the time when Jesus returns for those who died abiding IN Him and those who are His (as evidenced by His Spirit in them—history shows us that if God's temple is defiled long enough and severely enough, He judge His people's sin and will leave it - Ezek. 8-10, 1Cor. 3:17) and are still living, and the "end." (John 11:25-26) But we know from MANY yet unfulfilled passages in the Old Testament that there is going to be a time period of unprecedented peace and worship of the one, true God, but there will still be SOME death. (Isa. 65:20, 25, Zeph. 3:9-20, Zech. 8:20-23, Isa. 2:2-5, Zech. 14:16-21)

*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then*

*the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. 1 Corinthians 15:22-28*

There will be some survivors of the great tribulation and God's wrath who will enter the millennial kingdom in natural bodies and repopulate the earth. (Joel 2:32) The LAST enemy to be destroyed is death. We know that prior to this time will come the worst tribulation ever on the whole earth (or ever will be, and this has not YET happened), followed by the wrath of God on unbelievers who are still alive. (Mark 13:19, Matt. 24:29, Joel 2:31, Rev. 16:1-21, 1Thess. 5:9-10) Jesus slays the enemies who have gathered against Him at His second coming. (Rev. 17:14, Rev. 19:21) However, Satan's attack on the holy city after the millennium will be stopped by fire from heaven. (Rev. 20:7-10)

Jesus never misled anyone by leaving them with the FALSE hope that He is satisfied with EMPTY words of "faith." (Luke 14:25-35, John 15:2, 6, Eph. 2:10, John 15:8, Jam. 2:26) The servant who knew better but didn't prepare will receive harsher treatment than the one who didn't know better. (Luke 12:47-48 - Note that no one is His servant who does not believe in Jesus...) Our HOPE of glory is Christ IN us. His Spirit testifies that we belong to Him. (Rom. 8:9-17) Every wonderful thing that has been prepared is for those who LOVE God. (John 14:1-3, 1Cor. 2:9, Jam. 1:12, 2:5) Does anyone think that the Father is giving His Son a bride who doesn't love Him, or a bunch of hypocrites who give Him lip service, but don't even respect Him? How unthinkable! (Matt. 22:1-14, John 17:6, 2Cor. 11:2, Eph. 5:22-32, Matt. 7:6-9) We know that the Father knows how to give GOOD gifts to us, then He certainly will not give His Son less than the best, which is always the firstfruits. (Matt. 7:11, Luke 11:13, John 6:65, John 3:27, Jam. 1:17-18, 2Thess. 2:13, Ex. 23:19, Num. 18:12)

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. Colossians 1:24-29*

*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 3:20-21*

*Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2*

*Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 1 Corinthians 15:49-53*

Toward the end of his ministry and life, Paul says the following:

*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:6-8*

(Also see Rev. 3:11 - as Paul said, it is necessary to finish well, and we do that by HIS power IN us, NOT by grieving or quenching His Spirit - Col. 1:9-12, 1Thess. 5:19-24, Eph 4:30 - read the whole chapter.)

"Those who love His appearing" in the passage above are those who have no reason to "shrink back from Him in shame at His coming." They are also waiting for Him to return (to save them from the ongoing tribulation allowed by God, but not His "wrath"), not waiting for the millennial reign to end and for the rest of the dead to be resurrected.

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

*And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a*

second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. Hebrews 9:27-28

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

Note: The Church at Philadelphia was promised to be kept OUT of the "hour of trial," having already endured severe persecution for Jesus' sake. (Rev. 3:8-10, Rev. 17:12) How this is accomplished is not made crystal clear, but it reminds me of Peter being chained for the Gospel, under sentence of death, and being set free by the angel in Acts 12 (which also contains a "type" of the antichrist in Herod's making treaties with people in exchange for food, and his accepting their worship.) Possibly there is a clue in that Enoch pleased God and was taken by Him (Heb. 11:5), at an unspecified time before the worldwide flood (representing worldwide trouble and tribulation among the nations, which are symbolized by the waters - Rev. 17:15, Gen. 7:18-20, 24, Rev. 9:4-11).

Both Noah and Lot were also righteous, and are connected to the second coming. (Matt. 24:36-39, 2Pet. 2:5-10, 2Pet. 3:5-7) Noah was protected in the ark through the flood. Lot was kept safe in the house with God's two angels who appeared as men (while the BLIND sought entry for the purpose of EVIL) until morning, right before the destruction of Sodom. (Gen. 19:9-10, 15-16, 2Cor. 4:4, Matt. 15:14, John 9:39-41, 2Pet. 1:9, Rev. 3:17) Rahab was also protected while the walls of Jericho fell, but removed from the city by two men sent by Joshua (a "type" of Jesus) before its destruction by fire and the slaughter of the ungodly began. (Josh. 6:22-25) It may be significant that Paul says "the Lord Himself" will come for His bride (1Thess. 4:16-17, Matt. 25:6), whereas He sends His angels to retrieve the elect at His second coming. (Matt. 24:29-31, Mark 13:24-27, Mark 13:47-50) These are the same "elect" that were not able to be deceived along with the rest of those who dwell on earth during the reign of beast/hour of trial. (Matt. 24:24, Rev. 13:13-14)

Clearly the first resurrection includes those who lost their lives for Jesus' sake during the reign of the beast. (Rev. 6:9-11, 20:4) And we know that the dead in Christ rise BEFORE those who are still alive and LEFT. (1Thess. 4:17) Since it is not necessary for the dead in Christ to be spared from tribulation, possibly there is something more that Paul was not shown. We can't be sure. We know that the apostles and disciples believed the return of the Lord was imminent,

which they based on the information given to them by God in His infinite wisdom. (Rom. 13:11-12, 1Cor. 7:29, Jam. 5:8, 1John 2:8)

Regardless, our part is to remain faithful and to be READY. Jesus taught that the slave does not stay in the house forever—only the ones who have been set free by Him will do so, and those He has SET FREE are free from the sin that once enslaved them to make them do its will. Struggling against sin, slipping and then getting back up again is NOT the same as deliberately practicing sin, taking for granted that God "only sees" the righteousness of Jesus. (Acts 5:1-11, 1John 1:5-2:6, 1John 3:4-10, Psa. 94:6-11)

*Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8:34-36*

*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*

*What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were **once slaves of sin** have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to **impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness**, so now present your members as **slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification**. Romans 6:15-19*

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

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

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Jesus explained that even though you can't SEE wind any more than you can see the Spirit, you can observe the EVIDENCE of both.

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' **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 3:3-8

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh**. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits

*of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law. And **those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:13-25*

But really, is there anything that could be asked of those who love Jesus for His sake that would be too much? Have you ever noticed this beautiful statement made to Jonathan (the son of King Saul) by his armor bearer?

*Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the LORD will work for us, for nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few." And his armor-bearer said to him, "**Do all that is in your heart. Do as you wish. Behold, I am with you heart and soul.**" 1 Samuel 14:6-7*

I love Jonathan's confidence that the Lord would give them the victory even though there were only the two of them going. What I find interesting is that later, Jonathan gave David his robe and armor, including his sword, bow and belt. We believers in this age are given armor by God to wear in this battle we're in on earth. We're to put it on, "bear" it and go wherever God sends us into battle—even if that simply means standing FIRM right where we ARE at the moment (and of course, we're never alone).

*And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. 1 Samuel 18:4*

*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. Romans 13:14*

*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Galatians 3:27*

*I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. Isaiah 61:10*

*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 withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 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

*He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment. So they shall fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the LORD drives. "And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression," declares the LORD.* Isaiah 59:17-20

*Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6*

Jonathan's and David's souls were "knit together" in a similar way that we are one spirit with Jesus and fellow members of His Body. Beautiful, isn't it?

*As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.* 1 Samuel 18:1

*But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. 1 Corinthians 6:17*

*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. Romans 12:4-5*

*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. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13*

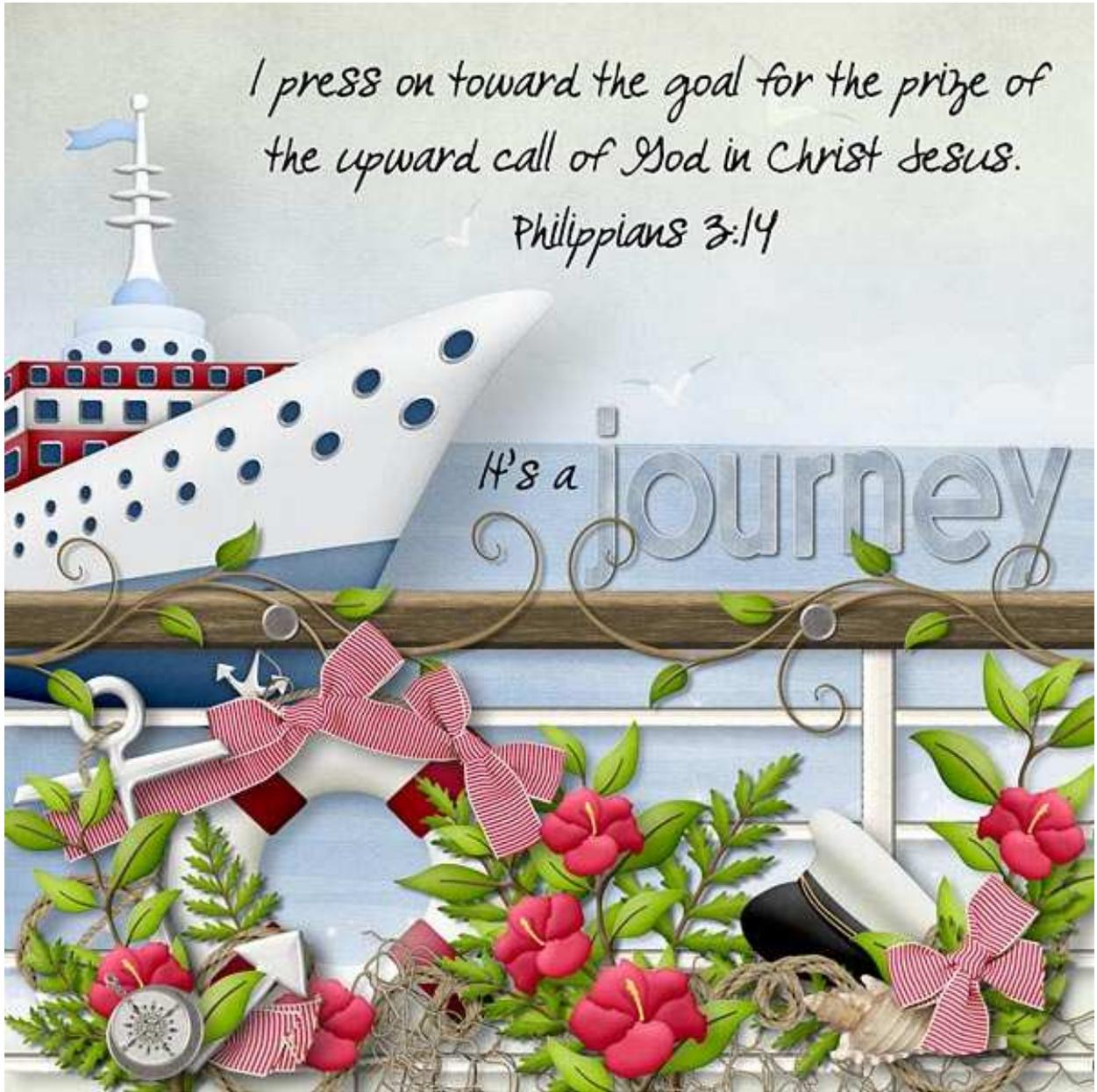
*If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 1 Corinthians 12:26-27*

*There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:4-6*

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:12-17*

Let's go forth and conquer the world by speaking the truth in love, followed up by our heartfelt actions. (1John 3:18, Titus 3:8-10, Titus 3:14) Let's press on toward the goal of the PRIZE—He's worth it!

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*I press on toward the goal for the prize of  
the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 3:14*

*It's a* Journey

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