

Revel in the Daytime

by Tricia Berg

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. 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! 2 Peter 2:4-14

The "men" that the men of Sodom wanted to victimize were actually angels. "Know" in the following context means physical intimacy, but is meant only to be between a man and his wife. (Gen. 4:1, Lev. 18:20-30)

But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." Genesis 19:4-5

Whoever wants to lead others astray, or because of their own preferences, to blindly follow those who do so, should think again. God will judge, and He doesn't like being called a liar. (1Pet. 4:3-5) He made TWO genders, male and female. He made them to be complementary physically to one another, both for reproduction (which is fruitfulness) and support (help). This is a physical reality that also teaches us a spiritual lesson. The Holy Spirit is the HELPER of believers

and He produces good FRUIT. (John 14:15-17, Gal. 5:22-25) The male (husband) "goes into" the female (wife) physically and the two are as one flesh (Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:5-6); and the Holy Spirit dwells inside of believers spiritually and the two are as one spirit. (1Cor. 6:17-20) No "fruit" is produced by same-sex "marriage," because that is NOT God's design. God designed the male and female body to fit together as He chose, for the purpose that He chose, and this is NOT negotiable. (Gen. 2:18-25, Isa. 29:16)

The fact that He is extremely displeased with married men who chase after younger women (or perhaps desire to "upgrade" the attributes of their wives) provides us with valuable insight. We can be sure that He is even MORE disapproving to those who REJECT His design and purpose for marriage altogether and pursue their own.

And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless." Malachi 2:13-16

God's faithfulness to us is to be mirrored by the husband's faithfulness to his wife, just as the wife's respect for and obedience to her husband is a mirror of the Church's respect for and obedience to Christ (and that obedience and respect includes faithfulness). (Eph. 5:22-33)

And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." Mark 10:2-12

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Hebrews 13:4

People try to say the above passages are irrelevant, because they're not about homosexuality—but that's not because God approves of homosexuality. It's because it's not even in the picture of anything that could possibly EVER be acceptable to Him! There was no need to discuss it, because the Jews already KNEW this from when He explained that was among the reasons the people who possessed the promised land before them were being evicted! (Lev. 18) They wouldn't ask such a ridiculous question or need to be reproved for it. They wanted permission for "no-fault divorce" (like we have) and were rebuked (except in cases of sexual immorality). It's the GENTILES who didn't know better, and so they were told in no uncertain terms that all forms of sexual immorality are abhorrent to God. (Acts 15:19-20, 1Thess. 4:1-8, 1Pet. 1:14-19, 4:1-7, Titus 3:3) During this age when Jesus is building His Church, the bodies of both believing Jews and Gentiles are His temple, and therefore, must NOT be defiled. (1Cor. 6:9-20, 3:16-17, Eph. 5:1-23, Rom. 8:9-11, 1John 3:24, Col. 1:18, 1Pet. 2:4-5)

Another reminder: Believing Gentiles in this age are being grafted IN to Israel. There is ONE God, and He is making ONE people from the two. (Rom. 11:17-24, John 10:16, Rom. 2:28-29, Gal. 3:28-29, Isa. 45:22-25, Heb. 3:5-14) There is a "fullness of Gentiles" yet to come in to the Body of Christ (the "wild olive branches" being grafted into Israel's "cultivated tree"), after which the "blinded of sight/hardened of heart" Jews will again "see" and be given a "heart of flesh instead of stone." (Rom. 11:25, Ezek. 11:19, 36:26)

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision"

by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Ephesians 2:1-22

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. Colossians 1:15-23

Those who are IN Christ Jesus will not be condemned (found guilty), but they will be judged for how they used their freedom. (Rom. 8:1, Jam. 1:21-27, 2:12) However, we need to bear in mind that no one who knows that God has called their behavior sin and still makes a PRACTICE of it (refusing to repent) KNOWS Him. (1John 3:8-10, 1John 2:3-6, Phil. 3:17-19) (See some of my other articles, such as "[To Inherit or Not Inherit](#)" for an explanation of why shellfish and textiles are irrelevant to the topic of this article.)

The ritual cleanliness that was demanded of the Levitical priesthood was a foreshadow of how Jesus would wash and sanctify us (set us apart - 2Cor. 6:14-

7:1) by "the water of the Word" and His precious blood. (John 15:3, Titus 3:3-8, Eph. 5:26-27, 1John 1:9, 1Pet. 1:14-25, 2:4-5, Heb. 9:13-14) We are a royal priesthood of which Jesus is both King and High Priest in the order of Melchizedek (King of Righteousness). (1Pet. 2:9-12, Rev. 5:9-10, Heb. 5:9-10) At NO TIME EVER were we intended to deliberately soil our pure white garments that cost Him His LIFE to clothe us in. (2Pet. 2:20-22, Jam. 1:27, Rev. 3:4, Heb. 10:29-31, Isa. 52:13-53:12, John 10:14-15, Rom. 13:14, Gal. 3:27, 5:16, 24)

Unfruitful branches (Gal. 5:22-24, John 15:8, 16, Rom. 6:20-23, 7:4-6) are CUT OFF by the Father and burned. (John 15:1-17, Heb. 6:4-8, Matt. 3:7-12, 13:36-43, Heb. 12:14) The "bad fish" caught in the net of the kingdom of God are thrown out. (Matt. 13:47-50) This is why Jesus used such stern language in Matt. 5:13, 29-30, 7:21-23, 13:36-43, 25:11-13 and Luke 13:23-30. The Father is giving His Son a bride who loves Him and shows it by respecting/obeying Him. (Matt. 22:8-14, John 14:15-26, 17:6-26, Rev. 19:6-16, 17:14) She has been purchased/redeemed from the death sentence for her sins by His precious blood. (Col. 2:13-15) He indwells her—the two are one spirit. If we believers are "unable" to give up our favorite sins, not only don't we truly love Jesus, but we are making Him an unwilling participant in our sin. (John 14:24, 1Cor. 6:15-20)

One of the words often heard in connection with sexual immorality is "pride," which God HATES. (2Pet. 2:17-22, Jude 1:12-22) The world is deceived. (1Cor. 2:14, Rom. 8:7-8, 1:18-32, 1John 4:5-6, 5:19, 2Tim. 3:12-13) And just because someone we like, trust, respect or love does these things, that doesn't make it right. (Matt. 10:34-39, 1Cor. 5:9-13) Those who think that God "made" people in such a way that they are unable to resist the temptation to do something He hates do not know Him as He is—He doesn't change. (Heb. 13:8, Mal. 3:6, 3:14-4:3, 1Cor. 9:24-10:13, Psa. 50:16-23, Num. 23:19) Perhaps they're worshiping a God who changes with the times according to their desires, but that would be idolatry, not saving faith. (2Cor. 13:5, Eph. 2:10, Titus 3:8, Jam. 2:17-26 - our "works" of faith include repenting of the dead works of our sinful flesh, not only "doing good deeds." We follow Jesus with our steps because of the faith in our hearts—merely being his "fan" will not take us into the "promised land" of the kingdom of God. Rom. 4:12, John 10:27, Matt. 7:13-14, 1Pet. 2:21)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were

evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.” John 3:16-21 (Also see Eph. 4-5)

This is a WAKE UP CALL, out of LOVE, so that people who "have an ear to hear" will not PERISH. (2Pet. 3:9-12, 1Tim. 2:3-6) In the letters to the Churches given by JESUS, He tells us to REPENT, or He will come AGAINST us. (Rev. 2-3, esp. 2:5, 2:14-16, 2:21-23, 3:3, 3:18-19, 21:7-8, Heb. 4:12-13, 2Cor. 5:10, 1Pet. 4:17-19, Acts 10:42, Rom. 2:6-11, Jer. 17:10, Rev. 22:11-15) Those churches were not buildings or institutions, but gatherings of believers. Each letter was to have been read in each of the seven churches. (Rev. 1:11) The rewards promised apply to all believers and so do the warnings. Let's not play games. Let's do as our LORD and Savior tells us to do. (Rom. 10:8-10, Acts 2:36, Matt. 7:21-27, Luke 6:46-49) That is not "keeping the law," but showing that we love our Savior and that we understand the great privilege it is to be a child of God. (1John 3:1-10, John 1:12-13, Rom. 8:13-19, Eph. 5:3, 1Pet. 1:8-9)

This next passage does NOT mean never speaking against sin! That would contradict other passages. (Jam. 5:19-20, Gal. 6:1, Eph. 4:15-5:21, Jude 1:22-23, 1Cor. 5:2 - being accepting of sin is a cause for being reprimanded.) Jesus goes on to say that we need to deal with our own sin first, before we can see clearly to help our brother with theirs.

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.” Matthew 7:1-6

The POINT is that we do not CONDEMN others (at all, let alone all the while giving ourselves a free pass Rom. 2:1-10), but our goal in speaking the truth in LOVE is that they can repent and be restored to fellowship - that they won't be deceived into thinking that intentional sin is a fruit of the Spirit. (1Cor. 5, 2Cor. 2:6-8, Eph. 4:15-24, 1Tim. 1:5) God disciplines His children. (Rev. 3:19, 1Cor. 11:30-32, Heb. 12:5-11) If a person claims to be a believer (and thus, His child) and yet indulges in frequent or prolonged disobedience towards Him without consequences, they are NOT His (but rather, "illegitimate"). Those who belong to Him bear fruit of His indwelling Holy Spirit, or they do NOT have His

Spirit. (Heb. 12:4-8, Rom. 8:9, 2Cor. 13:5) If we LOVE Him, we will OBEY Him. (John 14:15-26, 1Cor. 2:9, Jam. 1:12, Heb. 6:11-12)

Let's listen to Jesus and keep HIS words and ways, not those of this fallen, deceived world. (John 15:18-21, Isa. 29:15-16, 55:8-9, Rom. 11:33-36) We have been warned multiple times in the Bible that "times of difficulty" would come when people would try to deceive us, and our current time fits the description perfectly. (2Tim. 3:1-5, 4:1-5, Acts 20:28-35) Jesus said the broad path is easy and popular, but it leads to destruction. (Matt. 7:13-14, Gal. 6:7-9) We will each answer for ourselves. (Rom. 14:12, 2:6-11, Heb. 4:12-13, Gal. 6:4-5, 1John 2:28-29, Rev. 20:11-15, 22:10-16)

And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2:1 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 1:19-2:3 (continued in the passage at the top, then as follows)

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

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. 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 3:1-18

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation,

I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. 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. Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Jude 1:3-25

There is HOPE! If you are struggling with the temptation of sexual sin, the only way to overcome it (as with ALL sins) is to fully submit to God. (1Pet. 5:6-11, Jam. 4:4-10) Seek Him FIRST, for Himself—not just as an easy way out, as though if He doesn't prevent you from sinning then it's somehow His "fault" that you continue sinning. Read the Bible for yourself instead of listening to false preachers and teachers tell you what is popular and profitable to them. He DOES love you, but He doesn't love ANYONE'S sin. The more we know Him, the more we LOVE Him. That love is what enables us to obey Him. (John 14:15-26, 15:8-10, 2Cor. 5:14-15, 1John 5:3, 4:18-19, 3:23-24 - but don't embrace the command to love and disregard 1Thess. 4:4-8 and 1Cor. 6:9-20, nor quote Rom. 13:8-10, but leave off Rom. 13:11-14.)

God IS able to take away the desire to sin, but the way it works is that the old desire of the sinful flesh gets replaced with the desire of the new creation (which was given new LIFE) to please HIM. (Phil. 2:12-16) HIS Spirit IN us is how we overcome, but we must yield to His control—that is the ONLY way to keep the old self DEAD where it belongs. (Rom. 6, 7:4-6, Eph. 4:30, 1Thess. 5:19, Eph. 6:10-20) When we were baptized in water (by immersion) upon first believing (which is when the Holy Spirit saved us by grace through faith - Eph. 2:8-10, John 6:63, Rom. 10:17), that represented the death of our old self and "resurrection" (coming up out of the water) into new life in Christ as a new creation in Him. (Rom. 8) It's a beautiful, memorable event!

Our water baptism also represents our placing our trust in Him to save us "through the waters," just like when Israel crossed through the Red Sea and when Noah built the ark. (1Pet. 3:18-22) Large bodies of water in the Bible represent peoples and nations. (Isa. 17:12-13, Rev. 17:15) We are in the "wilderness" like the Israelites were, following Jesus just like they followed the cloud by day and the pillar by night. (Ex. 13:21, Matt. 10:38-39, 7:13-14, John 10:27, 14:4-6) We must FOLLOW to reach the promised land, not turn back or refuse to go in like they did. (Heb. 12, 10:26-39) What happened to them is an example to us. See how Paul explained it below:

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. For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and

all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 9:24-10:13

I believe that our water baptism also symbolizes our cleansing as a member of the royal priesthood. Jesus was baptized as our High Priest (prior to His temptation in the wilderness and beginning His ministry where He forgave sins), to fulfill all righteousness. (Matt. 3:13-17)

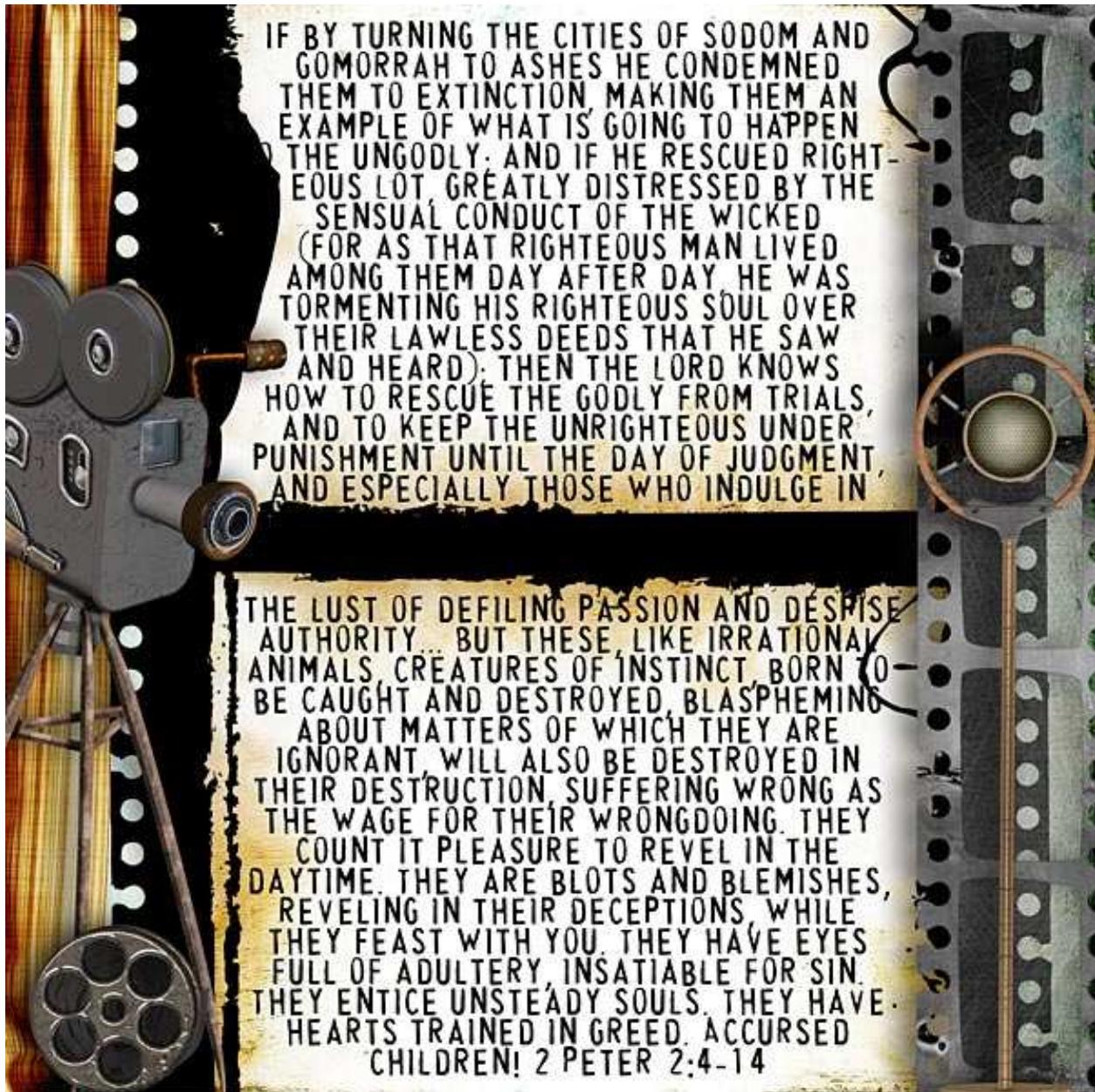
As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 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 2:4-12

I dislike "canned" prayers, since God desires to be worshiped in spirit and truth, not by rote and ritual. (John 4:23-24, Matt. 6:7, Mark 7:6-9) However, I remember when I was new to the faith and there were so many things I didn't understand yet. (We should be learning and growing in our faith and knowledge

of God our whole lives. 2Tim. 3:14-16, Heb. 5:11-14, 2Pet. 3:18, Titus 2:11-15) My heart goes out to every single soul who is being ensnared by the current culture even in the Church that has perverted grace into permission to purposely sin. (2Pet. 2:18, Jam. 5:19-20, June 1:4, 23, 2Tim. 3:1-7, 4:1-5, Rev. 2:21-23, 3:4-6, 21:7-8, 22:14-15, 1John 1:9, 5:18, 2:15-17) Jesus said that where two or more agree, it will be done. (Matt. 18:19-20, but also remember Jam. 4:1-10.) With that in mind, I will stand in agreement with anyone who truly wants to be set free from enslavement to sin. (John 8:31-36, 2Pet. 2:19-22, Rom. 6:20-23, 8:13-14)

Father God, we humbly bow our hearts before you with deep reverence, in awe of all that you are, all you have done and are doing for your beloved creation. We love you! We are deeply distressed when we stumble and sin, soiling the pristine white garment that your only begotten Son, Jesus, shed His precious blood to clothe us in. We know that only He overcame the world, and only through abiding in Him do we overcome, by the power of the Spirit. You said that when you allow us to be tried and tested, that you would provide a way out by your grace, and we believe you. We place all of our trust and hope in you. We recognize that our old ways grieved and dishonored you and led to death. We desire to behave in a way that pleases you as our Father. As your dear children, we renounce our former ways and choose your ways instead. Please help us to know and do your will. Please help us to understand and always remember that you know best, and that your power is sufficient in every possible (and even "impossible") way. Please help us to set our minds on things above and to take our delight in you instead of in this temporary, passing world. Please fill us with your love so that we can love you with all of our hearts, minds, souls and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves. We ask these things in the name of our beautiful, beloved Savior, Jesus, our Lord and King forever. Amen.

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