

Suffer for His Sake **by Tricia Berg**

For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. Philippians 1:29-30

I apologize in advance if this article offends anyone. My motivation and priority is to declare the full counsel of God, so I can't tiptoe around the Bible in such a way that no one's feelings are hurt—rendering the remaining, partial truth ineffective for God's intended purpose. He gifted us with His word of truth to show all people what stands between Him and us (sin), along with ONE remedy for the problem (Jesus). I have taken my comments on how I believe God would respond to this issue from the Bible. God does not need to send apparitions, visions or dreams; and we do not need to "empty our mind" or go through any rituals to hear from Him. The Bible is sufficient in itself. He speaks through it clearly for those who are willing to listen (for those "with ears to hear" - Mark 4:9, 23-25, Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22 - which also means to HEED - Matt. 7:21-27, Luke 6:46-49, Jam. 1:22-25). As I normally do, I will include many pertinent Bible verses for the reader's convenient reference.

*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. Acts 20:26-30*

*For **the wages of sin is death**, but the **gift** of God is **eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**. Romans 6:23*

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a **gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received **by faith**. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. Romans 3:23-25*

***He is the propitiation for our sins**, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:2*

*But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people **longed to see what you see**, and did not see it, and to **hear what you hear**, and did not hear it. Matthew 13:16-17*

Due to the "canonization" (but there is no such thing in the Bible) of Mother Theresa today (Sept. 4, 2016), I feel the need to clarify that the "suffering" called for in the Bible is not what we bring on ourselves as a way to try to earn our way to heaven. In the passage at the top of this article, Paul's sufferings that the Philippians were sharing in was not self-deprivation. Their suffering was due to persecution for the sake of the Gospel. The suffering was brought on by unbelievers who treated the believers at Philippi unjustly out of antagonism towards God. The previous two verses of the above passage say: "*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.*" Philippians 1:27-28 So they were to live a life that glorified God, preaching the gospel and obeying God, not men, despite opposition from people who were trying to frighten them—people whom Paul said were destined for destruction.

*For this is a gracious thing, when, **mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly**. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 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. 1 Peter 2:19-23*

*And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must **obey God rather than men**. Acts 5:27-29*

*"Blessed are those who are **persecuted for righteousness' sake**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others **revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my***

account. *Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.* Matthew 5:10-12

In the Old Testament, the prophets often went through periods of extreme physical suffering. However, these times were specifically brought on them by God for a purpose, regarding Israel and the nations surrounding her. They might fast prior to receiving a great revelation. Sometimes they were instructed to suffer in a specific way, often for a specific amount of time, which would demonstrate to Israel the sins they were committing, or the physical suffering that would be coming due to the disobedience and idolatry. (See Ezekiel 4, Jeremiah 16, as well as the Book of Job.)

*In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision. At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. **I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.*** Daniel 10:1-3

*In the year that the commander in chief, who was sent by Sargon the king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and fought against it and captured it—at that time the LORD spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and loose the sackcloth from your waist and take off your sandals from your feet," and he did so, walking naked and barefoot. Then the LORD said, "As my servant Isaiah has **walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign** and a portent against Egypt and Cush, **so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptian captives and the Cushite exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, the nakedness of Egypt.*** Isaiah 20:1-4

Jesus Himself fasted during His temptation in the wilderness for a specified time period:

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after **fasting forty days and forty nights**, He was hungry.* Matthew 4:1-2

There is a place for self-denial when it comes to ceasing to indulge ourselves with sinful behaviors and even fasting for limited periods in order to devote ourselves wholly to prayer to God (and to NO ONE else, EVER), but it is not sinful indulging of the flesh to have our basic needs met, as provided by God through His various ways and means. (1Tim. 6:8) We are free from trying to

work to appease God—Jesus finished all that was necessary. (He didn't just make a start and we have to do the rest—God doesn't say "finished" unless He means it.) We can serve Him better by utilizing what He gives us for our needs and work. This is not to say that there is no such thing as an acceptable offering to the Lord of suffering, such as fasting—but no one should be required to give or do more (including self-sacrifice) than is in their hearts. God is pleased with voluntary offerings, and resources that have been given for God's work should be used for God's work! (2Cor. 9:7, Eph. 3:20-21)

When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished," and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. John 19:30

*The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. **Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that **having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.** As it is written, "He has distributed freely, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." **He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce **thanksgiving to God.**** For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! 2 Corinthians 9:6-15*

On the other hand, Mother Theresa suffered much by her own choice (as well as forcing those under her authority to do so as well). My observations in this article are drawn from her comments to interviewers, her own writings, and the reports of people who worked directly with her. Despite receiving millions of dollars in donations, she deposited most of those funds in an account for the Vatican's use rather than spending them to meet the needs of herself and her staff, as well as those of the poor. She wanted her organization (and even the recipients of her charity) kept poor as a "good work" to try to earn salvation, not because it pleased God. God is NEVER pleased if we think that Jesus has not done enough to ransom us from hell. We could NEVER add to it. We live to please Him as our Lord AFTER we are saved (Rom. 10:9-10), NOT in order TO BE saved (and pleasing Him includes using common sense).

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. Ephesians 2:8-9

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having **canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us**, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. Colossians 2:13-15

When Mother Theresa tells God that she and her nuns served Him faithfully by using a bucket of water to hand-wash their habits (even in modern times), perhaps He might say something like this: "Why didn't you buy a washer and dryer with the funds with which you received from compassionate believers who were trying to lessen your burden by sharing the financial blessings they received from Me? But if you didn't want to be more efficient so you would have more time and energy to serve the poor, then why didn't you at least use that money to relieve the suffering of more of the sick and to a greater degree? Why did you take donations that were sent to you to care for the poor and to feed and clothe yourselves and deposit them in an account instead of using them for the purpose for which they were donated? MY people do not need to beg for bread. I provide for their needs. When you failed to use funds provided to relieve suffering, you withheld the honor and glory that it would have brought Me. The only glory I receive from poverty is when people put their trust in Me to provide. When you claimed to belong to Me and yet pretended to be in need even though you had been abundantly provided for, it was as though My promises were not true. You were meant to serve ME, not an institution." (Col. 3:23-24)

*I have been young, and now am old, yet I have **not seen the righteous forsaken or His children** begging for bread. Psalm 37:25*

*Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints, for **those who fear Him have no lack!** The young lions suffer want and hunger; but **those who seek the LORD lack no good thing**. Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. **The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears toward their cry**. The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the*

earth. When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. Psalm 34:9-17

He might possibly add: “The reason the poor are so poor is that they do not KNOW Me. The most important thing any missionary can do is to introduce them to Me by sharing My word with them. What good is it to ONLY save their physical bodies so that they can go to hell when they die? Their suffering provides you with a way into their hearts by providing for their physical needs while attending to their souls by sharing the LIGHT of the Gospel. The body is temporary and perishes, but the soul is precious and eternal. Mark these words—anyone who suffers even unto death, not knowing my Son, or rejecting Him, will NOT earn their way into heaven. That kind of suffering does NOT glorify Me in the least. How could you say that you’re not sure if I even exist (because of the suffering allowed) and yet use only a small percentage of funds received to relieve that suffering?”

*Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or His ear dull, that it cannot hear; but **your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you** so that He does not hear. Isaiah 59:1-2*

*Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His steadfast love, that He may **deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine**. Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in Him, because we trust in His holy name. Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in You. Psalm 33:18-22*

*The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; they are not put to shame in evil times; **in the days of famine they have abundance**. Psalm 37:18-19*

*Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer **for righteousness’ sake**, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who **revile** your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil. 1 Peter 3:13-17*

*“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and **glorify your Father who is in heaven**.” Matthew 5:16*

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and **proclaim the gospel** to the whole creation." Mark 16:15

He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for **unless you believe that I am He you will die in your sins.**" John 8:23-24

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the **fragrance of the knowledge of Him** everywhere. For **we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing**, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; **whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.** John 3:35-36

Perhaps God might continue along these lines: "When anyone says they are Mine and yet refuses My assistance, it appears to the world as though I am a negligent Father who does not take care of His children—it takes the focus off of Me and puts it onto the poverty. I will ALWAYS provide for the needs of My children (those whom I adopted when they were born again by My Spirit when they believed on My Son for salvation) in My perfect timing and way. They believe and know that I will answer when they call on Me (Mark 11:24-25), and they are thankful when I answer their prayers (usually through others who belong to Me, but nothing is beyond My ability to control). (Phil. 4:6-7, Col. 4:2-6, 3:17 - in Jesus' name, not ANY other.) It's true that I dislike excessively luxurious living, but this does not include basic food, clothing and shelter. There is a big difference between genuine needs and frivolous wants."

But **to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name**, He gave the right to become **children of God**, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12-13

"And when you pray, **do not heap up empty phrases** as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for **your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.**" Matthew 6:7-8

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and

your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:31-33

*The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. **Is anything too hard for Me?**" Jeremiah 32:26-27*

He might then say something like: "If you really understood how I detest wasteful, ostentatious shows of wealth, then you would have rather used the funds to reach far and wide with My message of love by salvation ONLY in My Son Jesus, evidenced by caring WELL for the needs of as MANY as possible. Instead, you encouraged idolaters to be "good" idolaters and the dying to pray to "their god." Refusing to speak the truth that there is ONE way to heaven will protect believers from being persecuted for My sake, but don't you remember that this earthly life is only temporary and NOTHING in it is worth the forfeiting of a soul? Further, the needs of many went unmet while the Roman Catholic Church kept the majority of the donations, even though they are extremely wealthy and have absolutely NO need of it. Among other things, they use it to build shamefully extravagant buildings containing hoards of trappings (including graven images which cause people to commit idolatry) that are neither useful nor pleasing to Me. I consider this misdirection and poor stewardship of MY riches (ALL of the gold and silver are MINE) as storing treasure on earth instead of in heaven at best and robbery at worst. The tabernacle and temple were copies and shadows of the Old Covenant of heavenly things, as was the priesthood and jubilee (as I prescribed it, not the way it has been modified by tradition of the Roman Catholic Church). All of these find their fulfillment in, through and by Jesus. There are no more sacrifices to make on any altar, but instead, the remembrance and honor of what He has DONE."

*So these nations feared the LORD and also served their carved images. Their children did likewise, and their children's children—as their fathers did, **so they do to this day**. 2 Kings 17:41*

My glory I will not give to another. Isaiah 48:11b

*But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone **to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more**. Luke 12:48*

The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, declares the LORD of hosts. Haggai 2:8

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*
Matthew 6:19-21

*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*

*Now the point in what we are saying is this: **we have such a High Priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man**. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They **serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things**. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. Hebrews 8:1-6*

*Thus it was necessary for the **copies of the heavenly things** to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. **For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly**, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, **for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world**. But as it is, He has appeared **once for all** at the end of the ages **to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself**. 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 9:23-28*

*Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, **how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once***

more? You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain. Galatians 4:8-11

*"It is the Spirit who gives life; **the flesh is no help at all.** The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." John 6:63*

*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body which is for you. Do this **in remembrance of Me.**" In the same way also He took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of Me.**" For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you **proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.** 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

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

*But you [genuine believers/followers of Jesus] 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. 1 Peter 2:9-10*

And maybe He would say: "My temple is now inside of each believer in Christ—I never asked anyone to construct any building and call it My house or a 'church' during this age. (Isa. 66) The Church is the assembly of all those who are sealed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and I MYSELF am building it. It is NOT a physical structure made of building materials or an institution—it is spiritual, because I am Spirit. The early disciples met in homes and were called the Church not because of any building or "non-profit business," but because they WERE the Church when gathered, just as believers today ARE the Church, members of the Body of Jesus Christ. (1Cor. 12:12, 27) I desire to be worshiped by each believer in spirit and truth, not merely with ritual and traditions established by men. Be sure to understand this: There is no intermediary required between Myself and My people except My Son. NONE."

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of

truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for **He dwells with you and will be in you.** John 14:15-17

Or do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,** whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact **the Spirit of God dwells in you.** Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. Romans 8:9

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.** 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

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 2:19-22

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the **true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth,** for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. **God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**" John 4:23-24

"This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me; **in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**" Matthew 15:8-9

For there is one God, and there is **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all,** which is the testimony given at the proper time. 1 Timothy 2:5-6

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an **advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.** 1 John 2:1

To my thinking, God might say: "Vast wisdom and instruction has been recorded in the Bible by My inspiration that could help Catholics (and Mormons,

Jehovah Witnesses and others) so they can see and understand the discrepancies between their traditions and My word, as well as conflicts between other writings they esteem and what I have said, but for now the main topic is wealth, poverty and suffering. The kind of suffering that honors Me is caused by preaching My message of salvation ONLY through Jesus and obeying His commands. People need to hear this message or they will surely perish. That suffering is caused by persecution, not by refusing to purchase food or other necessities when money has been provided to buy it. The kind of self-imposed affliction that I desire is sorrow for, and repentance from sins, not "working" for salvation by self-deprivation and/or physically punishing oneself." (John 6:63, Col. 2:16-23, 2Cor. 7:8-10)

*We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith **in all your persecutions** and in the afflictions that you are enduring. 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 1:3-8*

*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 10:32-34*

*I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made **sorrowful to the point of repentance**; for you were made **sorrowful according to the will of God**, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the **sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance** without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10*

I think God might remind us (and us): "I haven't changed. I still see and hear everything, including your very thoughts. (Heb. 4:12-13) I am still able to provide all that is ever needed, including forgiveness and salvation. The ONLY way to Me (i.e. to be saved—to be made righteous), is through My Son, Jesus.

He is the Head of the Church. He does not need a human representative to guard the entrance of the door to the kingdom of heaven. He IS the Door and all judgment has been given to Him." (Rev. 3:7)

*And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with **the knowledge of His will** in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and **increasing in the knowledge of God**. May you be strengthened with all power, according to **His** glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of **His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins**. 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*

*Now you are the **body of Christ** and individually members of it. 1 Corinthians 12:27*

*For the husband is the head of the wife even as **Christ is the head of the church, His body**, and is Himself its Savior. Ephesians 5:23*

*The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but **He holds His priesthood permanently**, because He continues **forever**. Consequently, **He is able to save** to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since **He always lives to make intercession for them**. Hebrews 7:23-25*

*For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from **dead works** to serve the living God. Therefore **He is the mediator** of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. Hebrews 9:13-15*

*"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is **no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**" Acts 4:12*

*For freedom **Christ has set us free**; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1*

*"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for **you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.**" Matthew 23:13*

*"**I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved** and will go in and out and find pasture." John 10:9*

*"Enter by the **narrow gate**. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves." Matthew 7:13-15*

*The Father judges no one, but **has given all judgment to the Son**, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, **whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.** John 5:22-24*

I believe God wants everyone to know: "I do not delight in punishing anyone, but I am holy and My word stands. (Ezek. 18:23, Psa. 33:11-22, Isa. 40:8) Either put ALL of your faith in Jesus, being cleansed of your sins by His precious blood, and live, or reject Him and perish away from My presence forever. Those are the ONLY two possible outcomes. (Rev. 5:9-10, 22:14-15, John 3:36, 1John 2:23-27) Anyone who tells you there are other alternatives is a liar and is working for Satan, not Me. (Matt. 12:30-32) The exhortations in the Scriptures

to obey Me are for the instruction of those who have become My children through belief in My Son, NOT as a 'prescription' for how to be saved." (2Cor. 5:14-15, Eph. 2:8-10, Titus 2:11-15)

*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.** 2 Peter 3:9*

*This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who **desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.** For there is one God, and **one mediator** also between God and men, the man **Christ Jesus**, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. 1 Timothy 2:3-6*

*But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.** 1 John 1:7*

*But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion **to Christ.** For if someone comes and proclaims **another Jesus** than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different Spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a **different gospel** from the one you accepted, **you put up with it readily enough.** 2 Corinthians 11:3-4*

*You are of your father the **devil**, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is **no truth in him.** When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for **he is a liar and the father of lies.** John 8:44*

*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. 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10*

*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 20:14-15*

*As **obedient children**, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And **if you call***

on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that **you were ransomed** from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but **with the precious blood of Christ**, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:14-19 (Also see Matt. 23:9.)

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. See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be **called children of God**; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. 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. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him. **Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.** The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. **By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.** 1 John 2:28-3:10

Whoever has been deceived has two options. They can use their God-given free will to choose to continue to believe their deceiver (and thus rebel against God), or they can believe God. When put that way, the choice seems obvious, doesn't it? The reason the world is in the mess it is in today is that Eve believed Satan, and Adam trusted Eve's opinion instead of both of them remembering, believing and trusting in God alone. Deception began in the Garden of Eden and has continued nonstop since then—it's nothing new.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat

of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die." But **the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, **she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.** Genesis 3:1-6

What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and **there is nothing new under the sun.** Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us. Ecclesiastes 1:9-10

For **the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.** Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. 2 Thessalonians 2:7

Traditions that go back in time for what seems like forever are no more valid than modern traditions mixed with false teachings. We don't need a mystic, celebrity Bible teacher, famous pastor or renowned scholar to explain the Bible to us (and certainly we don't need them to get rich while doing so). Commentaries can be very helpful, but often they can be biased toward an unbiblical viewpoint. Neither do we need any further truth or revelation than what God has already provided in the Bible, but how will we get that wisdom unless we read it for ourselves? (Prov. 23:23, 1Cor. 2:14, John 14:26, 1Cor. 10:6-13.) You may be interested to know that William Tyndale and many others were burned at the stake by the Roman Catholic Church for daring to translate or even quote from the Bible in English instead of in Latin (whereas the original languages were Hebrew and Greek, as spoken by the common people of the times).

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be **persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.** 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 3:12-17

He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: " 'These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. **They worship Me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.**' **You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.**" And he continued, "**You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!** Mark 7:6-9

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that **You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;** yes, Father, for such was Your gracious will. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. **Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.** Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matthew 11:25-30

The labor that Jesus relieves us of is that of working for salvation and of our bondage to sin. When we are born again, we are freed from worry about the penalty for our sins, which He paid for us. Not only that, but we're also freed from the enslavement to our old desires to serve our flesh by sinning (and it is not sinful to take care of the basic needs of our bodies, such as food, rest, clothing and shelter). (John 8:31-36) Instead, we become "enslaved" to God and submit to His power IN us—His indwelling Spirit helps us to overcome. We become slaves to righteousness and can work in His vineyard joyfully, knowing that living in a way that glorifies our Lord is reward in itself, out of gratitude for what He did when He saved us.

*We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. So you also must **consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.** Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 16 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. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that **you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God**, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. Romans 6:9-13, 16-22

There is therefore now **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you **free in Christ Jesus** from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. **Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him**. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. **For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons**, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. Romans 8:1-4, 9-17

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, **not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior**, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that **those who have believed** in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. Titus 3:3-8

He will never leave nor forsake us, and so long as we abide in Him, we can be assured that our lives will be fruitful. In fact, UNLESS we abide in Him, we can be assured that our lives will NOT be fruitful. (Matt. 13:20-23, 2Pet. 1:3-7, 8-15, Rom. 7:4-6) He gives rest to His own.

*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.** I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for **apart from Me you can do nothing.**" John 15:1-5*

*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*

***Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.** Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for **He gives to His beloved sleep.** Psalm 127:1-2*

*In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that **God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and **sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.** 1 John 4:9-10*

*Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning His Son. And this is the testimony, that **God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.** 1 John 5:10-13*

*We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us **understanding, to know Him who is true; and we are in Him** who is true, **in His Son Jesus Christ.** This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, **keep yourselves from idols.** 1 John 5:19-21*

I will be writing another article with more about what kind of suffering honors God, so please check back for that. I am not trying to villainize Mother Theresa or deny she ever did any good. On the contrary—I'm sure that she did care for and help a great many. I am saying that we do NOT earn or keep salvation by our works, which includes suffering extreme poverty by our own choice. If she had chosen to honor God as His dear child (saved 100% by the finished work of Jesus) by choosing to suffer herself in order to use more of the funds for the sick and poor, that would have been a very noble cause. But "lining the coffers of the Vatican with gold" while making suffering into a work unto salvation for herself, her nuns, and the sick and poor—with whom the Good News of salvation through Jesus was not even shared—was misappropriation of God's provision and misrepresentation of the true Gospel.

We can EITHER "respect" the beliefs of those who worship idols and let them stay in the dark (which is to support the work of the evil one behind those idols), OR we can believe the one, true, living God (not just "a god," but YHVH, which is translated "the LORD" in the Bible, and means "I AM" - Ex. 3:14-15, John 8:58) and have mercy on their souls by telling them the TRUTH, even if it makes us unpopular. (Matt. 5:10-16, Luke 6:22-26, 14:34-35) We're not talking here about the bloody crusades once wrongly conducted by the Roman Catholic Church in the name of God, but about sharing enough information for people to make an informed decision of who to FOLLOW—in a similar way that Joshua did when leading the children of Israel into the promised land (which is a foreshadow of the Kingdom of God). We are either grafted into Israel (Rom. 11:17-25), or we are NOT God's children at all. (Rom. 2:28-29, Gal. 3:28-29)

*"Now therefore fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. **And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.** But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods, for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. And the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for He is our God." But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done*

*you good." And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD." Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses." He said, "**Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel.**" And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will **obey.**" Joshua 24:14-24*

Again, I realize that much of what I have said in this article goes against very popular, cherished, long-held and fervently-taught beliefs, but I can't stand by and keep quiet when this is a matter of eternal life or destruction. Hate me now if you must, but hopefully you'll thank me later. The Roman Catholic Church is capitalizing upon the popularity of Mother Theresa by using their unbiblical sainthood process to stir people up to devotion to their religious system. Someone needs to counteract the lies with truth. Some do try to do so, but many of them spew hatred along with it—calling names and deliberately being insulting—which causes more harm than good. I love you enough to tell you the truth with calmness and reason, backing it up Scripture so that you don't need to take my word for it.

The ENTIRE theme of the Bible is redemption through Jesus (Luke 24:27)—it's ALL about Him, not the Pope, Mary, angels or people the Roman Catholic Church has taken upon themselves to declare "saints." (Heb. 1) I take this very seriously and am hoping and praying that I have done what I set out to do to the glory of God. Time will tell, and God will be my judge. I pray that He will declare me a good and faithful servant who used His spiritual gifts and physical resources to proclaim the Good News in both word and deed, for HIS glory—that I didn't run from conflict but stood firm in the truth as Jesus did, out of love for the lost. (Eph. 4:15-32, Acts 20:26-35)

*Have I then become your enemy by telling you the **truth**? Galatians 4:16*

*For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If **I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.** Galatians 1:10*

*His master said to him, '**Well done, good and faithful servant.** You have been **faithful** over a little; I will set you over much. **Enter into the joy of your master.**' Matthew 25:23*

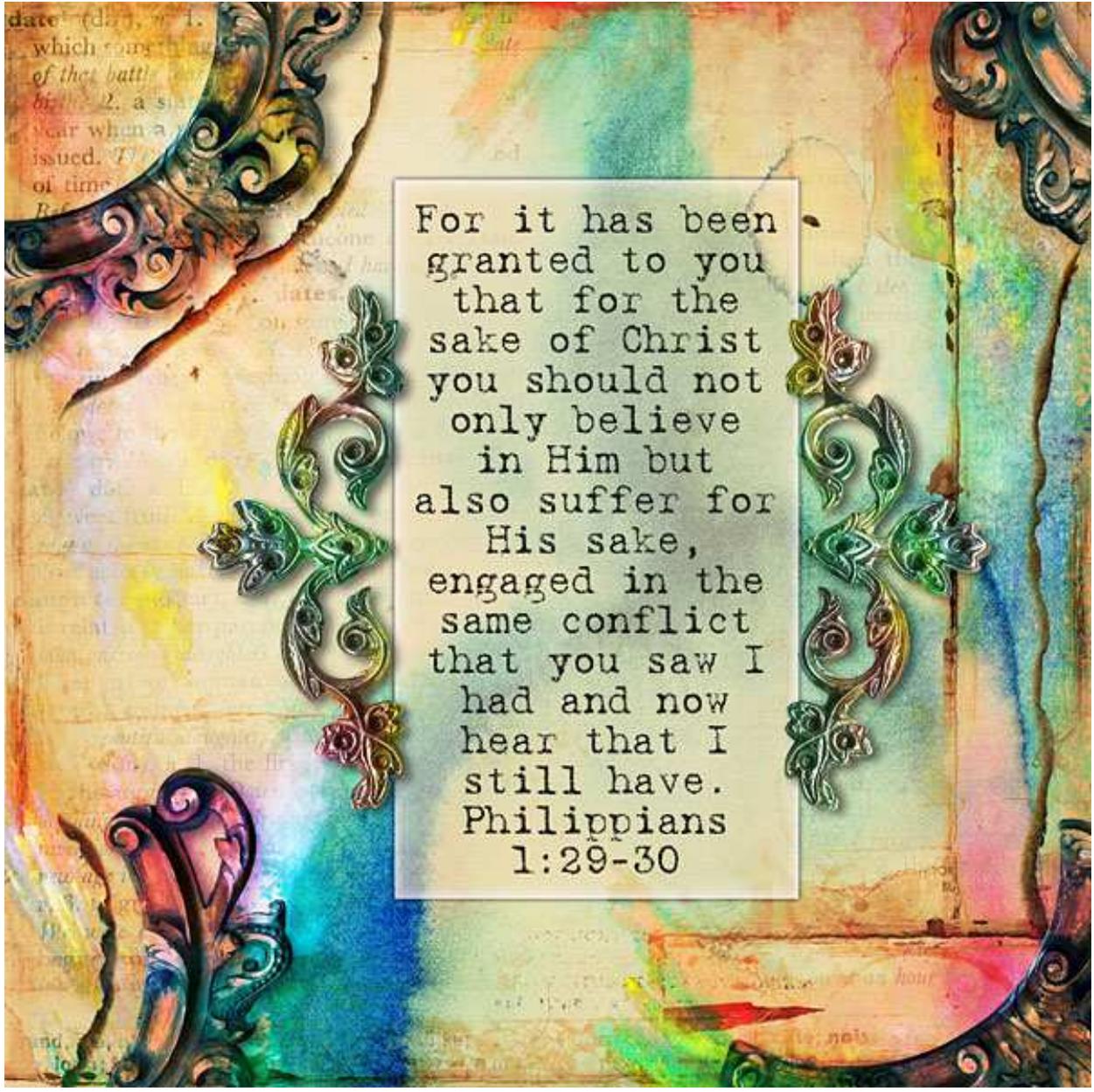
*"No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may **see the light.** For nothing is hidden*

*that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. **Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.*** Then His mother and His brothers came to him, but they could not reach Him because of the crowd. And He was told, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You." But He answered them, "**My mother and My brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.**" Luke 8:16-21 (Also see Matt. 25:1-13, 5:13-16, Psa. 111:10, 119:105)

*Be on guard. **Stand firm in the faith.** Be courageous. Be strong. 1 Corinthians 16:13*

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of **His** might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to **stand firm against the schemes of the devil.** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the **full** armor of God, so that you will be able **to stand firm in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand.** Ephesians 6:10-13*

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For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.
Philippians 1:29-30