

The Witnesses

(Part One)

by Tricia Berg

martyr (noun): a person who is willing to suffer death for their faith rather than: a) to renounce it, b) to keep silent instead of testifying, or c) to behave in such a way as to damage their witness to firmly-held beliefs.

Notice how the word "witness" is part of the definition of "martyr." If a person refuses to testify, then they will not suffer as a martyr since no one will even know what they believe. One must take a stand (the "witness stand," if you will) for or against something by word and/or deed (preferably "and") that make their beliefs known. (1John 3:16-18, Jam. 2:14-17) By doing so, they verify that they truly do hold these beliefs. Likewise, if a person is willing to modify their testimony to agree with those who oppose it, then they will not be persecuted any longer. Suffering is definitely part of martyrdom, but death does not always come at the end of it. (Rev. 3:10, 1Cor. 15:51-52, 1Thess. 4:16-18)

The first death of a martyr recorded in the New Testament was John the Baptizer. (John 1:6-8, Matt. 14:1-12), and the first after Pentecost was that of Stephen. (Acts 6:8-8:3) Their deaths were the direct result of their testimony to the truth. The next was James. (Acts 12:1-5) All of the apostles suffered greatly for Jesus' sake. (Acts 14:19, 16:22-24, 20:18-27, Col. 1:24, 2Cor. 11:23-30, 2Tim. 4:6-7, 2Pet. 1:14) Another martyr who died for his witness, Antipas, was given the honor of being named in Rev. 2:13. Many also suffered for Jesus' sake without dying. John was exiled to the island of Patmos for his witness to Christ, and that is where he received the book of Revelation, which is his testimony of what he was shown by Jesus. (Rev. 1:9, 1:1-2) Also see 1Thess. 2:14-15, 2Thess. 1:5, Phil. 1:27-30, Heb. 10:32-39.

*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. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses** [martyres] **to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.**" When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee in*

the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, and **when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.** Then they left the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.** And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. Acts 5:27-42 (Also see Rom. 12:14-21, 5:3-5, 1Pet. 1:6-7, 3:9-17, 4:13, Col. 1:24.)

Notice in the passage above how the Greek word for "witness" or "testimony" is "martyr" (in its various forms). Here is another example:

"Behold, I am sending you out as **sheep in the midst of wolves**, so be **wise as serpents and innocent as doves**. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings **for my sake**, to **bear witness** [martyrion] before them and the Gentiles." Matthew 10:16-18

Here is the rest of the passage:

"When they deliver you over, **do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.** Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be **hated by all for my name's sake**. But the one who **endures to the end** will be saved. When they **persecute** you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they **malign those of his household**. So **have no fear of them**, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not

*be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And **do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.** Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. **Fear not**, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So **everyone who confesses me before men, I also will confess before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.** Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is **not worthy of me**, and whoever loves son or daughter **more than me is not worthy of me.** And whoever does not take his cross and **follow me is not worthy of me.** Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever **loses his life for my sake will find it.**" Matthew 10:19-39 (Also see Rom. 10:8-10, Isa. 44:23.)*

The word "confess" above is sometimes translated as "acknowledge." To my mind, that takes away some of the seriousness of it. When one is in a court of law, confessions are made to the truth, determining innocence or guilt. When we "confess" (Greek: homologéó - "speak the same") our sins to God, we agree with Him that what we did was wrong. Whoever will not admit that they have sinned is disagreeing with God, in which case those "non-existent" sins are NOT forgiven. (1John 1:5-10) We will all give an account for ourselves in God's court. (Rev. 20:11-15, Dan. 7:9-10, Rom. 2:6-11, 1Pet. 4:3-5, Rom. 14:12, Gal. 6:4-5, 1Cor. 4:4-5, Matt. 12:35-37, Heb. 10:30, 13:4, 1Pet. 4:17)

As the saying goes, we need to be sure that during our lives there is enough "evidence" that we are followers of Christ in order to "convict" us. God knows what's in our hearts, but unlike us, He can't be fooled into thinking that it's good if it isn't. (Heb. 4:12-13, Jer. 17:9-10, Mark 7:21-23, Psa. 139:23-24, Luke 6:43-49) We're to be the light of the world and salt of the earth. If say we believe, but we're not doing those things, then we're doing it wrong. (Matt. 5:13-16, 25:24-30, Luke 19:20-27, John 15:8, 13:35, 1John 4:17) If everyone likes us (including those who oppose God), there's something wrong. (Luke 6:26, 22-23, Matt. 14:3-4, John 7:7) If anything evil is said about us, it shouldn't be TRUE. (Titus 2:7-8, Phil. 1:27-30, 1Pet. 2:12, 15-16, 19-21, 3:13-17, 1Pet. 4:12-19)

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the **souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness [martyrian] they had**. Revelation 6:9

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And **they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony [martyrias], for they loved not their lives even unto death**. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" Revelation 12:10-12

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the **souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony [martyrian] of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands**. They came to **life and reigned with Christ** for a thousand years. Revelation 20:4

It is not necessarily required of each person to die for the sake of Jesus, but all must be willing to do so. If we truly KNOW Him, then we know that nothing in this world, not even our lives, could ever be as valuable as the inheritance that is kept for us in heaven. (Rom. 8:16-19, 1Pet. 1:3-7, Matt. 6:19-21, Luke 12:32-34) Once Esau saw that he had foolishly lost both his firstborn inheritance and blessing in order to satisfy his earthly hunger, he wept bitterly. The prodigal son who came to his senses and returned home had still spent his inheritance on the worthless "pleasures and treasures" of the world. (Gen. 27:34, 38, Heb. 12:15-17, Luke 15:11-13) We have come to the Church of the firstborn (this Greek word is plural, and Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, is Master of His Father's household as our Lord and High Priest - the Greek word translated "assembly" in the ESV is "ekklesia" (church - the gathering of called-out believers - 2Cor. 6:12-7:1), and are His house (in both the sense of members of His household - Matt. 10:25, 24:45, Luke 12:42, Gal. 6:10 - and of the temple of God being built without human hands) if we hold fast until the end. (Heb. 12:22-24, Luke 10:20, Heb. 3:5-6, 3:12-14, 4:13-14, 1Pet. 2:4-5, 9-12, 15-16, Phil. 2:14-16, 1Cor. 15:1-2, 33-34, Rev. 2:25, 3:11)

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

There was a little "courtroom scene" when Jesus healed a man born blind on the Sabbath. The Pharisees called the formerly blind (adult) man in to be questioned, along with his parents! This is where we get the famous hymn lyric "I was blind, but now I see." The Pharisees were told by Jesus that their guilt remained, because they claimed to see though they were still blind. They wanted to have it both ways—the healed man must be lying that he was ever blind, AND Jesus did wrong to heal him on the Sabbath. (How could Jesus have healed him if he was never blind?) They said they wanted a sign from Him, but rejected all of the miracles He performed. (Matt. 12:22-42, John 10:32, 14:11) They wanted to enforce the letter of the law on others, but not to observe either the letter OR the spirit of it themselves. (Matt. 23, Luke 11:37-54)

*As he passed by, he saw a man **blind from birth**. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that **the works of God might be displayed in him**. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back **seeing**. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." **He kept saying, "I am the man."** So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know." **They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.** Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." **Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."** But others said, "**How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?**" And there was a division among them. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." The Jews did not **believe that he had been blind** and had received his sight, until they **called the parents** of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we*

know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. **He will speak for himself.**" (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that **though I was blind, now I see.**" They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "**I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?**" And they **reviled** him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Why, this is an **amazing** thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. **We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.** Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. **If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.**" They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they **cast him out.** Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "**Do you believe in the Son of Man?**" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." He said, "**Lord, I believe,**" and he **worshiped** him. Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." **Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?"** Jesus said to them, "**If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.** John 9:1-41 (Also see Isa. 66:5, John 16:2, John 5:39-47—quoted below—and Luke 13:25-30.)

Notice how the Pharisees felt that the blind man was born more sinful than they (most likely as "evidenced" by his being born blind. John 9:2-3, Jer. 31:29-34) They didn't want to accept his very sound wisdom (that Jesus couldn't do genuine miracles of God if He were a sinner as the Pharisees claimed) because they felt they were more educated than he was. (Also see Acts 4:13.) Please also note that God was glorified when His Son, Jesus healed the man. The man's suffering wasn't what pleased God—it was His testimony after being healed that did. The concept of "giving testimony" of our faith is common among some believers and utterly foreign among others. It refers to exactly what the blind man did in the passage above—telling of the wonderful works of God in our lives.

Often people think that only those extreme circumstances where a person was miraculously healed (like the blind man), saved by God out of a life of addiction or other some other dire situation makes a worthwhile testimony, but we each witness to what we ourselves know—just like the blind man—just like the apostles who were eyewitnesses to the transfiguration and Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. (Luke 24:48, John 21:24, Acts 1:8) We know what we were like before His Spirit regenerated ours and gave us new life—we know what a difference His presence in us makes. (Titus 3:3-8, Gal. 5:19-24) We know that after OUR eyes were opened, our priorities changed and we desired to do God’s will instead of our own—to seek to glorify HIM instead of ourselves in all we do. (Phil. 2:12-13, 3:8-14, Rom. 6:20-23, Rom. 13:14, 2Tim. 2:4, 2Cor. 5:14-15, Matt. 6:21, Rev. 12:11)

*For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were **eyewitnesses** of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” **we ourselves heard** this very voice borne from heaven, for we were **with him on the holy mountain**. 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 Peter 1:16-21*

*I have been crucified with Christ. **It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me**. And the life I **now live in the flesh** I live **by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20*

However, our testimony (through that of the Holy Spirit IN us) is not God’s only witness. All creation gives witness to the existence and glory of God. (Rom. 1:18-21, Psa. 19, Psa. 104) The beauty of a sunrise or sunset is a small taste of His beauty. The intricate, complex design of everything that lives speaks of His unfathomable wisdom and awesome power. The scent of the forest and the songs of the birds in it are among the gifts from Him for us to enjoy. The entire Bible testifies that there is only one God and Savior, and He teaches us in a multitude of different ways what He is like and what pleases Him, day after day.

*“And we are **witnesses** [martyres] to these things, and **so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.**” Acts 5:32*

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.** Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. If I alone bear witness [martyrō] about myself, my testimony [martyria] is not true. There is another who bears witness [martyrōn] about me, and I know that the testimony [martyrei] that he bears about me is true. You sent to John, and he has borne witness [memartyrēken] to the truth. Not that the testimony [martyrian] that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony [martyrian] that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, **the very works that I am doing, bear witness** [martyrounai] **about me that the Father has sent me.** And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness [memartyrēken] about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You **search the Scriptures** because you think that in them you have **eternal life**; and it is they that **bear witness** [martyrounai] **about me**, yet you refuse to come to me that you **may have life.** I do not receive glory from people. But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? **Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"** John 5:22-47

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have **seen and testify** [martyroumen] **that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.** Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 1 John 4:13-15

If we receive the testimony [martyrian] of men, the testimony [martyria] of God is greater, for this is the testimony [martyria] of God that he has borne [memartyrēken] concerning his Son. **Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony [martyrian] in himself.** Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony [martyrian] that God has borne [memartyrēken] concerning his Son. And this is the testimony [martyria], 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.** 1 John 5:9-12 (This goes along with the passages about the Holy Spirit sealing those who believe, including the one above this one.)

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.**" So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. **I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.**" John 8:23-26

And he said to them, "**O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!** Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And **beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.** Luke 24:25-27

Also see Heb. 1:1-2, 2Tim. 3:14-17, Isa. 45:21-23, John 10:30, 14:6, 1John 2:23, Acts 4:11-12. Those who genuinely believe those testimonies will not try to fool God with empty words, but will act upon their confession of faith. (1John 1:5-2:6, Gal. 6:7-9, Titus 1:16, Phil. 3:18-19) Jesus came to set us free from both the penalty of our sins (death) and also the enslavement to them. (John 8:31-36, Rom. 6, 8:13-14) Read Isa. 52:13-53:12, Matt. 26:36-27:54, Mark 14:32-15:39, Luke 22:39-23:49 and John 18:1-19:37 if you need a refresher about what it cost Jesus to save us.

All believers should be testifying of the goodness and greatness of our God by both our words and the way we live our lives, out of LOVE, gratitude and respect for God. (1John 4:9-10, Rom. 5:6-8) It should show by our behavior that we know that God is all-powerful, all-knowing and perfect in all of His ways, such that we SUBMIT to Him in ALL things at ALL times, with HIS help. (2Tim. 2:19-26, Titus 3, Matt. 20:26-27, John 12:25-26, Rom. 8:5-8, Jam. 4:4-10, 1Pet. 5:6-11, Eph. 6:10-20, Titus 3:8-14, 2:11-15, Eph. 4:17-5:32, Col. 3) If the members of Jesus' Body (1Cor. 12:27, Col. 1:18) continue

intentionally practicing sin, then that makes it appear to the world as though He sins—but we know that’s not the case, ever at any time! (1John 3:5)

*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. **Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant**, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always **obeyed**, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure**. Do all things **without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.** Philippians 2:1-16*

*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. **For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin**, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:20-21*

The Holy Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirits that we are born-again children of God. (John 3:3-8, Rom. 8:16-19, 2Cor. 1:21-22, 5:5, Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30) Unless He is present in us, then we do not belong to Jesus. (Rom. 8:9, 1Cor. 15:22-23) If He IS dwelling in us, then there will be fruits borne by Him. (Gal. 5:13-25, Titus 2:11-15, John 15:1-10, Rom. 8:23) If we have no desire to please God or know His will for us (or simply “can’t” give up our favorite sins), then we need to examine ourselves to see if we really believe or not—whether or not we have saving faith in our hearts. (Rom. 10:10, 2Cor. 13:5, 5:14-15, 1John 5:3, 2Pet. 1:3-15, 1Thess. 4:2-8, 1John 3:4-10, 23-24, John 14:15-26, Rom. 12:1-2, 1Pet. 4:1-5, Heb. 10:36, 2Thess. 3:5, Jam. 1:21-27)

We **cannot** earn salvation, but that **doesn't** mean that God is angry with people who want to please Him (as though everyone who does so is trying to "earn" salvation). To the contrary, obedience is expected of His children. (1Pet. 1:14-19, Rom. 6:17-18, 16:19) God was delighted by Job's diligence to serve Him wholeheartedly. (Job 1:8, also see Num. 14:24, Psa. 91.) The devil was allowed to test him because he was living out his faith—to be sure it was genuine and not only the result of everything going his way. (Job. 1:9-12) Job's conscience was clear (Job 13:4-5, 19:25-27, 23:10), but his friends who accused him of secretly doing wrong and refusing to admit it were reprimanded by God in the end. (Job 42:7) Job's momentary failing was when he accused God of punishing him even though he had been careful not to sin instead of trusting in God's perfect nature and recognizing that his faith was merely being tested. (Job 16:9, 40:3-5) ALL of us must be tested in order to prove, like Job, that we're not just "fair weather believers." Job's endurance through undeserved suffering is an example to US who have entered into the New Covenant and have been grafted into Israel. (Jer. 31:31-37, Heb. 8:6-13, 1Cor. 11:23-26, Rom. 11:17-25) (See more about this further below.)

*Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. **Establish your hearts**, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. **As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast.** You have heard of the **steadfastness of Job**, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. James 5:7-11*

*Count it all **joy**, my brothers, when you **meet trials of various kinds**, for you know that the **testing of your faith produces steadfastness**. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4*

*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**. For I consider that **the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.** For*

the creation waits with eager longing for the **revealing of the sons of God**. Romans 8:13-19 (Just remember what the fruits of the Spirit, and thus, the visible fruit of those who are LED by Him, are—Gal. 5:22-24)

The topic of suffering for Jesus' sake is SO important for us to understand that Peter wrote about it in every "chapter" of his first letter (but there were no chapter breaks or section headings, or even verse numbers in the original text.)

*In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various **trials**, so that the **tested genuineness of your faith**—more precious than gold that though being destroyed by fire is being tested—may be found to **result in praise and glory and honor** at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:6-9 (Also see Isa. 48:10, Rev. 3:18-19.)*

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

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. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. **For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God**. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. **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.** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might **die to sin and live to righteousness.** By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. 1 Peter 2:11-25 (Also see Rom. 6.)

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. **Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.** For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him **turn away from evil and do good**; let him seek peace and pursue it. **For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.**" 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 3:8-17 (Also see Rom. 12:14-21.)

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has **suffered in the flesh** has **ceased from sin**, so as to **live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.** For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are **surprised** when you do not **join them in the same flood of debauchery**, and they **malign** you; but **they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.** 1 Peter 4:1-5

Beloved, do not be surprised at the **fiery trial** when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you **share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.** **If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.** But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a

*meddler. **Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.** For it is time for **judgment to begin at the household of God**; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" Therefore **let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.** 1 Peter 4:12-19 (Also see Mal. 3:13-4:3, Ezek. 9:3-11, Rom. 2:6-11.)*

*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have **suffered** a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself **restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.** To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:6-11 (Also see Mark 14:38.)*

Those who are most proud of being "tolerant" (and therefore most intolerant of anyone who tries to warn about the wages of sin - Rom. 6:20-23) often REJECT the clear teaching of the Bible that people who practice sin will not inherit the kingdom of God. (1Cor. 6:9-10, Gal. 5:19-21, 1John 3:8-10, Rev. 2-3, 21:8, 22:15) The same Paul who said that we must love in 1Cor. 13:1-3 also said to speak the TRUTH in love in Eph. 4:15-16. He also told the Corinthians that rather than be proud of accepting the sexual sin of a professed believer, they should mourn and remove him from their fellowship (until he repented, for the good of his soul)! (1Cor. 5:2-5, 12-13, 2Cor. 2:8-10) It's not multiple choice. We CAN do all of these things simultaneously if we do so with as much gentleness as possible, and our motive is love. (1Tim. 1:5, Gal. 6:1, Jam. 5:19-20)

If we find ourselves relating to and preferring the company of unsaved people more so than our fellow believers and brothers in Christ, there is something amiss. If we actually side WITH unbelievers when they criticize believers for holding fast to biblical values and morals, then we are taking a stand with the devil (Rev. 12:10, Eph. 4:27, 2Tim. 2:26, Jam. 4:7, 1Pet. 5:8-9, 1John 3:8-10) and against Jesus. (Luke 11:23, Mark 3:25, Gal. 5:15-16) He is NOT on the side of sin. If that were the case, then there would have been no need for Him to suffer and DIE to pay the penalty for ours. Whoever accuses their brother in Christ of being "self-righteous" for insisting that God defines what is good or

evil, not man (Isa. 5:20-21), is making themselves an enemy of God—that is what it is to be a friend of the world.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. 1 John 2:15-17

Jesus does intercede for us and knows what it is like to endure temptation (Heb. 7:25, 4:14-17), but He doesn't "understand" why we value earthly things more than our heavenly inheritance or why we love our sin more than Him. People who do so obviously don't comprehend the great privilege it is to be a child of God or GET IT that He came to set us free FROM sin, not TO sin. We are TRULY new creations when He comes to live inside of us and give us new life. (Titus 3:3-8, Rom. 7:4-6) As such, we don't continue living the same as we did before He saved us. We daily seek to follow Him, making progress in our journey in His footsteps. (1Cor. 11:1, 2Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:14-15, Gal. 2:20, Rom. 6, 8, Matt. 10:37-39, Matt. 7:13-14, 1Pet. 2:21) Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by the devil for forty days. (Matt. 4:1-11) Our "wilderness" is this present life on earth. We need to be sure we're on the narrow path to eternal life, not deceiving ourselves by still walking the broad path to destruction even though we claim to be new creations in Christ. (Matt. 7:13-29, Psa. 1, 1Cor. 15:33-34, 2Cor. 6:14-7:1, John 15:18-21)

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 [victor's crown], 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. 10:1 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*

Please note that the Greek word translated "temptation" is the same as "trial" in many other verses. The difference is that God tempts no one, but allows us to be tried, as we discussed above. Since He doesn't cast a stumbling block before anyone (Luke 17:1-2, Matt. 18:6-9), we KNOW that He doesn't "make" anyone in such a way that they are unable to resist anything that He has called sin—but all of creation has been tainted with sin of every kind.

*Blessed is the man who remains **steadfast under trial**, for when he has **stood the test** he will receive the **crown of life**, which God has **promised to those who love him**. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for **God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one**. But each person is **tempted** when he is **lured and enticed by his own desire**. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. **Do not be deceived**, my beloved brothers. James 1:12-16*

The enemy would love to silence all opposition. We see in gangster movies all of the time how they intimidate those who were going to testify against them. So it is with the devil and those who work for him. (Eph. 6:12) This is why Satan will be going after those who hold fast to Jesus in his final battle with the saints (whereas the "battle" just before his final end is over before it starts). (Rev. 12:12, 17, Rev. 13-19, Dan. 7:9-14, Dan. 8-12, Rev. 20:1-3, Dan. 7:21-27, Rev. 20:7-15) "Those who dwell on the earth" at that time will need to endure horrific persecution and pressure to worship the beast and take his mark. (Rev. 14:9-13) Those who are thoroughly tested by enduring persecution (from not only the world, but from those who claim to know God) prior to that time will be spared from Satan's wrath (the "hour of trial"). (Rev. 3:7-13, Rev. 17:12) Some will die for their faith (again, even at the hands of others who claim to belong to God - Rev. 2:8-11) prior to that time and many during it. (Rev. 11:3-13, Rev. 13:9-10) Everyone whose name is not in the Lamb's Book of Life will be deceived. (Rev. 13:3-8, 11-18, 2Thess. 2:9-12)

*For such men are **false** apostles, **deceitful** workmen, **disguising themselves as apostles of Christ**. And no wonder, for even **Satan disguises himself as an angel of light**. So it is **no surprise if his servants, also, disguise***

themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; **avoid them.** For such persons **do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.** For your **obedience** is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be **wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.** The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Romans 16:17-20 (Also 1Tim. 6:3-21.)

Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man. **Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts,** those who say, "With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?" "Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise," says the LORD; "I will place him in the safety for which he longs." The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. You, O LORD, will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever. **On every side the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among the children of man.** Psalm 12:1-8 (Also see 2Pet. 2, Jude 1, 2Tim. 3:1-5, 3:12-4:5, Luke 16:14-17.)

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are **wise in their own eyes,** and shrewd in their own sight! Isaiah 5:20-21

Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. **For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.** Philipians 3:17-19 (Also see Heb 12:16-17.)

Only let your **manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ,** so that whether I come and see you or am **absent,** I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and **not frightened in anything by your opponents.** This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. **For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you**

should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same **conflict** that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. Philippians 1:27-30 (Also see Phil. 2:12-16, quoted previously.)

If we “can’t” stand up for Jesus (because it makes us uncomfortable), including not only His “fluffy” words, but the WHOLE counsel of God now, while we have freedom to do so (although this is changing rapidly), then how will we do so when the going really gets rough? If we don’t believe it when the Bible says that those who love sin will perish, then do we really believe in the one, true God or only in one of our OWN making? Think about it.

“If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with swift horses? This was in a peaceful land where you were secure—what will you do in the proud Jordan River? For even your brothers and the house of your father, even they have dealt treacherously with you; they are in full cry after you; do not believe them, though they speak friendly words to you.” Jeremiah 12:5-6 (Also see Dan. 11:34-35.)

Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, **for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God**. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure **fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them**. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to **admonish** every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. **I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.”** Acts 20:26-33 (Also see Ezek. 33:1-20.)

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him **deny himself and take up his cross and follow me**. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Mark 8:34-38 (Also see Matt. 10:28-40, quoted previously.)

This is not to say that the contributions of some are valued and others are not—NO works will save us, but those who ARE saved will show it by their works—just like those whose faith was counted to them as righteousness, and the deeds they did because of their genuine faith were recorded for us in the “giants of the faith hall of fame.” (Jam. 2:14-26, Heb. 11) Neither is this to say that some sins are okay and some are unacceptable—all sins need to be repented of and can be forgiven. The first step in salvation is to realize we are sinners in need of a Savior. There is a saying "the foot of the cross is level ground" (meaning that salvation is freely offered to ALL, regardless of what we have done). This is true!

Nevertheless, after we have been saved, our bodies are temples of the Lord. As such, Paul warns that sexual sin is utterly unacceptable for believers to practice, even more so than it was before we came to the knowledge of the truth. The various examples of sinful behaviors listed for unbelievers to refrain from are referred to as the kinds of things that those who DO NOT KNOW GOD do. We need to heed these warnings, which are for those who have accepted God’s offer to become his children. (John 1:12-13, 1John 3:1-10, Heb. 12:5-17, 1Pet. 1:14-19) The Bible is our handbook, so we should study it for ourselves if we want to be ready when Jesus returns. (Psa. 111:10, 119:105, Matt. 25:1-13, 1John 2:26-29, Rev. 22:11-15)

*Or do you not know that the **unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.** And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (Also see 2Pet. 2:18-22, Heb. 6:4-8, 10:26-31.)*

*Now the works of the **flesh** are evident: **sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.** I warn you, as I warned you before, that **those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.** Galatians 5:19-21*

*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.** Ephesians 2:1-3*

Now this I say and **testify in the Lord**, that you must **no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds**. They are **darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart**. They have become **callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity**. But that is **not** the way you **learned Christ!**—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to **put off your old self**, which belongs to your **former** manner of life and is **corrupt through deceitful desires**, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:17-24

Therefore be **imitators of God**, as **beloved children**. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But **sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints**. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that **everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God**. Let no one **deceive you with empty words**, for **because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience**. Therefore **do not become partners with them**; for **at one time you were** darkness, but **now** you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and **try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord**. Take **no part in the unfruitful works of darkness**, but instead **expose them**. For it is **shameful** even to **speak** of the things that they do in **secret**. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." **Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil**. Therefore do not be **foolish**, but **understand what the will of the Lord is**. And **do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery**, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Ephesians 5:1-21

Put to death therefore what is **earthly** in you: **sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness**, which is **idolatry**. **On account of these the wrath of God is coming**. In these you too **once** walked, when you were living in them. But **now** you must **put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth**. Do not lie to one

another, seeing that you have **put off the old self with its practices** and have **put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.** Colossians 3:5-10

For you know what **instructions** we gave you **through the Lord Jesus.** For this is the **will of God**, your **sanctification**: that you **abstain from sexual immorality**; that each one of you know how to **control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God**; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because **the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.** For God has **not called us for impurity, but in holiness.** Therefore whoever **disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.** 1 Thessalonians 4:2-8 (Also see 1Cor. 3:16-17. Note that "consensual" sin is still sin, and God has NO REGARD for the opinions and preferences of the fallen world. Isa. 29:16)

For the time that is **past** suffices for **doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.** 1 Peter 4:3

For this reason God **gave them up to dishonorable passions.** For their women exchanged **natural relations** for those that are **contrary to nature**; and the men likewise **gave up natural relations** with women and were **consumed with passion for one another**, men committing **shameless** acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a **debased mind to do what ought not to be done.** They were filled with **all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.** Though they know God's righteous decree that those who **practice** such things deserve to die, they not only **do** them but **give approval to those who practice them.** Romans 1:26-32

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.** Jude 1:3-13*

We will not be judged according to what others did, but what we did (although those who teach others to sin or cause others to stumble will answer for it - Matt. 18:7). (Gal. 6:4-5, Rom. 2:6-11, 14:12, Heb. 4:12-13, Jer. 17:9-10) We've been warned about false teachers who "tickle our ears," but we have God's "testimony" of the truth in the Old and New Testaments. (2Tim. 3:1-4:5, 2:14-26, 1Tim. 4, 6:3-21, 2Pet. 2, 3:1-7, 11-18) Will we accept His ways or will we go along with the unsaved world's fallen ways (or insist upon our own way)? (Isa. 55:8-9) Is the way we live our lives testifying that "we did it our way" or that we submitted to God's way? Jesus said this:

*"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." Matthew 7:13-14*

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