

The Witnesses

(Part Two)

by Tricia Berg

*But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which **righteousness** dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him **without spot or blemish**, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are **hard to understand**, which the **ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures**. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability**. But grow in the grace and **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 3:13-18*

Because we're living in the deceptive, difficult days prophesied in 1Tim. 6:3-21, 2Tim. 3:1-5, 4:3-4, 2Pet. 2 and Jude 1:3-23, I thought it might be useful to "make a case" regarding what is expected of the children of God (believers, the Church, the Body of Christ - Col. 1:18, Eph. 1:22-23, 5:23, the Bride of Christ - Eph. 5:29-33, 2Cor. 11:2-4). I would like to do this by "calling the witnesses to the stand to give their testimony" about these things from the New Testament, as God inspired each of them to speak or write. (John 12:49, 14:10, 2Pet. 1:21, 2Tim. 3:16-17) It's my hope that the passages I quote to answer the following questions, along with the order in which I quote them, will help people who are seeking the truth to easily understand what the Bible says. (Note: I have left the writer (the "speaker" giving testimony, if you will) of Hebrews unnamed, but for many reasons, I am personally convinced that Paul wrote it.)

Q. What must we do to be saved (i.e. to become a "child of God")?

A. Believe in Jesus, the Son of God, whom the Father sent to save the world. In order to do this, one must repent of unbelief (which is to cease striving and rebelling against God by accepting the free gift of faith by God's grace).

Jesus: "**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not**

condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." John 3:16-18

"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and **believes in him** should have **eternal life**, and I will raise him up on the last day." John 6:40

I said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he **live**, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall **never die**. Do you believe this?" She said to me, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." John 11:25-27 (Note, this is also a picture of 1Thess. 4:16-17.)

"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 8:24

John: Jesus was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 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 1:10-13

"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 3:36

No one who denies the Son has the Father. **Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also**. Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will **abide in the Son and in the Father**. And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. 1 John 2:23-25

Paul: The righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you **confess** with your mouth that **Jesus is Lord** and **believe** in your **heart** that God **raised him from the dead**, you will be **saved**. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses unto salvation. Romans 10:6-10

Q. Once I believe in my heart and confess with my mouth, is there anything else I need to do?

A. To save yourself, no (and it's not possible for you to save anyone else either). To be obedient to Jesus' commands, there are some things we do—but none of them is complicated. The Spirit helps believers to repent of seeking and doing their own will, and instead, turn to God with the desire to know and do His will (which is spelled out in the Bible.) (Phil. 2:12-13)

Jesus: And I came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

*I took bread, and when I had given thanks, I broke it and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in **remembrance of me.**" And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the **new covenant** in my blood." Luke 22:19-20*

And one of the scribes came up and heard us disputing with one another, and seeing that I answered them well, asked me, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" I answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." And the scribe said to me, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when I saw that he answered wisely, I said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask me any more questions. Mark 12:28-34

(Note: "Loving our neighbor" doesn't mean approving of their sin. If our child were fascinated with fire, would we consider it loving to encourage them play with it? No, that would be irresponsible. Also see Ezek. 33:1-20.)

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. 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 7:12-14

Paul: *And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, I passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There I found some disciples. And I said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” And I said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” And I said, “**John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.**” On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when I had laid my hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. There were about twelve men in all. Acts 19:1-7*

In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. Galatians 3:26-29

(Also see Col. 3:3, Rom. 6:1-11, quoted later—water baptism symbolizes the death as if by drowning of our old self and rising a new creation into Christ and His resurrection. However, Jesus was baptized “to fulfill all righteousness,” which I believe refers to His being ceremonially cleansed, as well as “anointed” (the Spirit appeared like a dove instead of being represented by oil) before beginning His ministry as our High Priest (who later offered Himself for our sins, and which position He holds permanently). Matt. 3:13-17, Ex. 29:4, 7 - Aaron’s high priesthood foreshadows that of Jesus, Heb. 7, 9:24-28)

*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*

*Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are **summed up in this word: “You shall love your***

neighbor as yourself. "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.** Romans 13:8-14

And it is my prayer that your **love** may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may **approve what is excellent,** and so be **pure and blameless** for the day of Christ, filled with the **fruit of righteousness** that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:9-11

Q. Does obeying or disobeying the above commands have any effect on my salvation? (i.e. Does water baptism impart saving faith, or does observing the Lord's Supper strengthen faith?)

A. We obey because when Jesus becomes our Savior, He also becomes our Lord. The baptism that saves is that of the Holy Spirit, not water. John scolded the Pharisees who didn't believe in Jesus for adding baptism to their "works" to "save themselves" by. The Lord's Supper is observed in remembrance of Jesus' death on our behalf, as He instructed. (See Luke 22:19-20 and 1Cor. 11:23-26 above.)

John the Baptizer: *But when I saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to my baptism, I said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. **Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.** I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. **Jesus will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.** His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."* Matthew 3:7-12

Jesus: "**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

I answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to me, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" I answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is **born of the Spirit.**" John 3:3-8

"Already you are **clean** because of the **word** that I have spoken to you." John 15:3

Paul: Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5:24-27

For in **one Spirit** we were all **baptized into one body**—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to **drink of one Spirit**. 1 Corinthians 12:13

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. **Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup**. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But **when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world**. So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come. 1 Corinthians 11:27-34 (Also see 1Cor. 11:17-22.)

So **faith comes from hearing**, and hearing through the **word of Christ**. Romans 10:17

Q. What about the "greatest commandments" that Jesus summarized above into two? Why should I keep them if they don't save me? Isn't my earthly family the most important thing in this life?

A. We keep them because God has not changed. He still expects a higher standard of behavior from those who are His than from the rest of the world—including not only higher than unbelievers, but also than the animal kingdom, which was not made in God’s image. (2Pet. 2:12, Jude 1:10) We keep His words because we love Him, and His love IN us overflows OUT of us. Our true family consists of fellow believers, which means that we mustn’t let anyone lead us away from God, including not letting them take His place in our hearts—but we ARE responsible for caring for our earthly family, and that includes sharing our faith with them. (Prov. 22:6, Deut. 6:4-9, 15:7-8, Lev. 19:17-18)

Jesus: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. **By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.**" John 13:34-35

"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**. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. **Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.**" Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" I answered him, **"If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words.** And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. **Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.**" John 14:15-27

"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. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*" John 15:1-17

On the last day of the feast, the great day, I stood up and cried out, "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'*" **Now this I said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in me were to receive,** for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because I was not yet glorified. John 7:37-39 (This is what "made to drink of one Spirit" refers to in 1Cor. 12:13.)

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

And my mother and my brothers came, and standing outside they sent to me and called me. And a crowd was sitting around me, and they said to me, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And I answered them, "*Who are my mother and my brothers?*" And looking about at those who sat around me, I said, "*Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.*" Mark 3:31-35

John: *For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should **love one another**. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.** By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? **Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.** By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, **because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.** And this is his **commandment**, that we **believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him.** And by this we know that he **abides in us**, by the **Spirit** whom he has given us. 1 John 3:11-24*

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 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. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. 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 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.** So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 1 John 4:7-16*

*If anyone says, "**I love God**," and **hates his brother**, he is a **liar**; for he who does not love his brother **whom he has seen** cannot love God **whom he has not seen**. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been*

*born of him. **By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.** And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 4:20-5:5*

Paul: **Let love be genuine.** Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. **Love one another with brotherly affection.** Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. **Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.** Romans 12:9-13

But if anyone loves God, he is known by God. 1 Corinthians 8:3

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. **Love never ends.** As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. **So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.** 1 Corinthians 13:4-13

Let all that you do be done in love. 22 **If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed.** Our Lord, come! 1 Corinthians 16:14, 22

For the **love of Christ controls us**, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that **those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.** 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10

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. Ephesians 5:1-2

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "**Honor your father and mother**" (this is the first commandment with a **promise**), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." **Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.** Ephesians 6:1-4

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. Colossians 1:9-14

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

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of **faith** and **love**, and for a helmet the **hope** of salvation. 1 Thessalonians 5:8

But if anyone does not **provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household**, he has **denied the faith** and is **worse than an unbeliever**. 1 Timothy 5:8 (Also see 2Thess. 3:10-15.)

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And **let us consider how to stir up one another** not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:22-25*

James: *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? **If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?** So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. James 2:14-17*

Peter: *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. **Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.** Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. **As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another,** as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that **in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.** To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:7-11*

Q. How can it be "saved by grace alone" if anything is expected in return?

A. The gift of salvation, including the faith itself, IS free. The natural response to the gift is love, gratitude and respect. Because the Holy Spirit indwells those who are born of God, it is HIS fruit that is produced in and through a believer. These changes working their way out from within are not "in return" as in "payment," but they are evidence of true faith. Absence of desire to know His will and to please God in a professed believer is cause for concern. (2Cor. 13:5)

*Jesus: "And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. **But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.**" Luke 24:49 (Also see John 14 and Acts 2 above about the Spirit of Truth, the Helper.)*

*"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is **born of the Spirit is spirit.** Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be **born again.**' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. **So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.**" John 3:6-8 (So like the wind, you can't SEE it, but there are perceivable EFFECTS of its presence.)*

Paul: For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. **For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.** 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. 13 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. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. Romans 8:5-9, 13, 23

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

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Colossians 3:1-4 (Also see John 15:1-10, 1John 2:26-29, 1John 4:13, Rom. 8:9, 1Cor. 15:22-23, John 14:1-3, Matt. 25:10, 1Pet. 1:8-9, 2Tim. 2:19, 1Cor. 2:9, Jam. 1:12, 2Tim. 4:8, Rev. 3:11.)

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Galatians 6:8

And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 2 Corinthians 5:5

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

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

for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things 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, 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 2:12-16

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the **fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;** against such things there is no law. And **those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** Galatians 5:19-24

In him you also, when you heard the **word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.** Ephesians 1:13-14

And you were **dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.** But God, being rich in **mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.** Ephesians 2:1-10 (Also Col. 1:21-23.)

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:30

For the **grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live**

*self-controlled, upright, and **godly lives in the present age**, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to **purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works**. Titus 2:11-14*

*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*

Q. But didn't God say in the Old Testament that all good works are like filthy rags? (Isa. 64:6)

A. Context is everything—look at the preceding verse and the one after it:

You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, for we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities. Isaiah 64:5-7 (Also see Isa. 59, 29:13, Amos 8:4-6.)

They were not joyfully serving God with their hearts according to the spirit of it with love, but if they remembered God and obeyed Him at all, it was begrudgingly, looking for loopholes in the letter of the law. They were blind because they couldn't see that it's impossible to keep the law perfectly, but they thought they were doing so (or that God couldn't see that they weren't). (John 9:40-41, Matt. 15:14, Rom. 2:17-24, 9:30-33, Psa. 94) God has ALWAYS wanted the SPIRIT of the law to be kept, with LOVE as the motivation. He has the same desire for His children today, even though we are no longer under the Mosaic law (received by Moses at Mt. Sinai), but the "law of liberty." We're to use our freedom in Christ to serve God and one another joyfully from the heart.

Our “good works” are not only doing good deeds, but also refraining from doing things that God says are evil.

Jesus: *And the Pharisees and the scribes asked me, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” And I said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “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.” **You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.**” And he said to them, “**You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!** For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban”’ (that is, given to God)—then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.” And I called the people to me again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.” Mark 7:5-15*

*And when I had entered the house and left the people, my disciples asked me about the parable. And I said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus I declared all foods clean.) And I said, “**What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.**” Mark 7:17-23 (Also see Luke 11:37-54, Matt. 23)*

*“Do not judge **by appearances**, but judge with **right judgment**.” John 7:24*

(The context above was that the Pharisees faulted Jesus for healing on the Sabbath, based on their selective enforcement of the letter of the law—they thought it was all about outward appearance instead of serving God from their hearts, according to the spirit of the law. They wanted to enforce Sabbath observance in some of the situations that should have been obvious exceptions. They understood that certain instances were not considered breaking the Sabbath, but yet tried to “catch” Jesus, the Son of God, “breaking the Sabbath”

by healing on the Sabbath. Luke 13:10-17, 14:1-6, Matt. 12:9-14, Mark 3:1-6, John 5:16-18)

*"Go and learn what this means, '**I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.**' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."* Matthew 9:13

*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have **neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness.** These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!"* Matthew 23:23-24

*"You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 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."* The woman [at the well] said to me, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." I said to her, "*I who speak to you am he.*" John 4:22-26

Paul: For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only **do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.** For the whole law is **fulfilled** in one word: "**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**" But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. Galatians 5:13-15

*Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having **died** to that which held us captive, so that we **serve in the new way of the Spirit** and not in the old way of the written code. Romans 7:4-6*

*For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a **matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.** His praise is not from man but from God. Romans 2:28-29*

Abstain from every form of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:22

*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 see 1Tim. 6:3-21, esp. vv. 10-11.)*

*James: Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But **be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves**. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. **But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing**. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. **Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world**. James 1:21-27*

*So speak and so act as those who are to be **judged** under the **law of liberty**. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. **Mercy triumphs over judgment**. James 2:12-13*

*John: 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 3:1-10

Q. If I have "put on Christ" when I believed and was baptized into His Body, then how can God "see" my sins anymore? Doesn't He only "see" Christ's righteousness? The Bible says that I am no longer under condemnation. (Rom. 8:1)

A. True—those in Christ will not be condemned, but be sure that you are really IN Christ, not just that you thought it wouldn't hurt to say you believe just in case it all turns out to be true. (See John 14, 15 and 1John 1-3) Also, there is a difference between being judged and being found guilty. Not everyone who comes before a judge is condemned. Those who are IN Jesus will NOT be condemned for their sins, but He will judge each of us for the way that we used our freedom while IN Him (not for sins before we were saved, and not for those that were washed away upon confession, repentance and receiving forgiveness and cleansing - 1John 1:9)—for faithful service (or not - Luke 19:11-27, Matt. 25:14-30). He expects us to use the gifts He has given us for His glory. (1Cor. 12:4-11, Rom. 12:6-8)

Ananias and Sapphira both claimed to believe, such that they wanted to donate the proceeds from selling their land (as others were doing) to the church for the benefit of the needy. (Acts 4:32-5:11) But they decided together to lie about the amount they received and take the credit for donating all of it while only giving a portion. God SAW what they did. They were each separately given the opportunity to "come clean" about the matter, but "stuck to their story." They were punished by God, not for giving too little, but for lying to Him, which is NOT a fruit of the Spirit (obviously). (Also see 1Tim. 5:20-21.)

Jesus: "You are the **salt of the earth**, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the **light of the world**. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**" Matthew 5:13-16

"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. **The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his**

evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. **Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?** Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." Luke 6:43-49

Paul: Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to **walk and to please God**, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. 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 4:1-8

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be **undefiled**, for **God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous**. Hebrews 13:4 (Remember, sexual immorality is physical intimacy between anyone other than a man and woman who are married to each other.)

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

The sins of some people are **conspicuous**, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others **appear later**. So also good works are **conspicuous**, and

even those that are not cannot remain hidden. 1 Timothy 5:24-25 (Also see Ecc. 12:13-14.)

But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "**Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.**" Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, **if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.** So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a **pure heart**. 2 Timothy 2:19-22 (Also see Heb. 3:5-6, 12-14.)

For if we go on sinning deliberately **after** receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a **fearful expectation of judgment**, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "**The Lord will judge his people.**" It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:26-31

(The above passage is a warning not to put God to the test by causing His holy name to be profaned among unsaved people by intentionally and carelessly behaving like "children of the devil," instead of like His children.)

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. **If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.** Do you not know that you are **God's temple** and that **God's Spirit dwells in you**? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For **God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.** Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. 1 Corinthians 3:12-18

(Note about the above passage: If someone thinks they are wise but their definition does not match God's, then they need to think the opposite of what their current position in order to "become wise." Here are some of the many helpful passages in this regard: Prov. 14, Prov. 3-9, Psa. 111:10, 119:97-106, Matt. 7:24-27, Jam. 1:22-25, 3:17, Eph. 5:15-17, Col. 1:9-10, 4:5-6, 1Tim. 6:20-21, Rom. 16:19, Matt. 25:1-13, Rom. 1:18-23, 1Cor. 1:18-31, Luke 11:31-36. Also see my article "[Buy Wisdom](#)" for more on what the Bible says about wisdom. Comparisons to light and dark, good and evil, wise and foolish all go together—but don't be deceived by those who have reversed the two. 2Cor. 11:13-15, Isa. 5:20-21)

Peter: *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the **grace** that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **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 1:13-19*

***His divine power** has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, **make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue**, and virtue with **knowledge**, and knowledge with **self-control**, and self-control with **steadfastness**, and steadfastness with **godliness**, and godliness with **brotherly affection**, and brotherly affection with **love**. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.** Therefore, brothers, be all the more **diligent to confirm your calling and election**, for if you **practice these qualities** you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:3-11*

*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*

Q. But doesn't the Bible says all I have to do is believe? Didn't Paul say that if we try to earn salvation, we've fallen from grace? (Gal. 5:4)

A. Yes, believing IS all that is required to be saved. When we believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths, our faith is counted as righteousness—Jesus' payment for our sins is credited to our account. (Col. 2:13-15) The works that Paul is cautioning against are those of returning to observance of the Mosaic Law for assurance of salvation. The Galatians were being told they needed to be circumcised, refrain from eating unclean foods, observe various special days and rituals, etc. (Gal. 4:10-11, Col. 2:16-17, Rom. 14:5, 14, 20) However, the apostles had sent a letter to the Gentiles who believed, giving them very few requirements. (Acts. 15:10-11, 19-20, 28-29, 21:25)

If Paul were telling them it was wrong to want to please God as His saved children, that would go against his other teachings as well as the rest of the Bible! Likewise, if Paul or anyone meant that by obeying God that we earn salvation, that would also contradict the Bible's clear teachings, including Paul's. We obey because we love God, because we're grateful for having received the gift of salvation by grace through faith, and because we recognize that Jesus is both Savior and Lord, worthy of all of our respect and devotion. It's HIS power in us that enables us to do so. We have been set free FROM sin, not TO sin. (Rom. 6)

*Jesus: "And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for **I always do the things that are pleasing to him.**" As I was saying these things, many believed in me. So I said to the Jews who had believed me, "**If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**" They answered me, "We are offspring of Abraham and*

have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" I answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin**. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." They answered me, "Abraham is our father." I said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the works your father did." They said to me, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God." I said to them, "**If God were your Father, you would love me**, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. 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. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? **Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.**" John 8:29-47

Paul: Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the **righteousness** that he had **by faith** while he was **still uncircumcised**. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also **walk in the footsteps of the faith** that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. 20 **No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God**, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." But the words "it was counted to him" were **not written for his sake alone, but for ours also**. It will be counted to us who **believe** in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Romans 4:9-12, 20-25

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**. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? **By no means!** Do you not know that **if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?** But thanks be to God, that you who were **once slaves of sin** have become **obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed**, and, having been **set free from sin**, have become **slaves of righteousness**. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you **once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness**, so **now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification**. 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**. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:12-23

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship**. **Do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may **discern what is the will of God**, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." **Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.** 1 Corinthians 15:33-34 (Also see 2Cor. 6:14-7:1)

John: 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

*I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. And now, little children, **abide in him**, so that when he appears we may have confidence and **not shrink from him in shame at his coming**. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that **everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him**. 1 John 2:26-29*

James: *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore **whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God**. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the **spirit** that he has made to **dwell in us**"? James 4:4-5*

Peter: *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*

Jude: *But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, **keep yourselves in the love of God**, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; **save others by snatching them out of the fire**; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. Jude 1:20-23 (Also see John 15:10, Rom. 11:22.)*

Q. But since Jesus finished all of the work of salvation, then why should I have to do anything? (John 19:30) The thief on the cross was saved and he died without doing any good works. (Luke 23:39-43)

A. The thief on the cross is indeed an example of how believing in your heart and confessing Jesus as Lord with your mouth saves. However, he didn't have an opportunity to do any good works (and thus, will not receive any reward for faithful service.) Neither did he have time to continue in his sin, but had he lived, he would have been expected to TURN from it. (Most of us do not die almost immediately after coming to faith.) It's not about having to do anything.

It's about there being evidence that we have been set free from sin. (John 8:31-36, 1Cor. 6:12-13, 2Pet. 2:19) When we truly believe, we become slaves to righteousness instead of to sin as we once were—this is not about empty words, but a visible change inside (by the power of the Holy Spirit) working its way OUT. (Phil. 2:12-16, Gal. 5:13-26) If someone tells you they're going for a walk, but you see with your eyes that they are still sitting, do you believe they are on a walk? No. Walking or following requires action. The new life is not imaginary, but real. We're on a journey, progressing toward Christ-likeness by the power of the Holy Spirit who resides in those who believe. (Eph. 4:22-24)

*Jesus: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. **The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.**"*
*This figure of speech I used with them, but they did not understand what I was saying to them. So I again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the **door**. If anyone **enters by me, he will be saved** and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have **life** and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And **I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.**"* 22 At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and I was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around me and said to me, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." I answered them, "*I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name **bear witness** about me, but **you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.**"*
John 10:1-16, 22-27

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that

*I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And **you know the way** to where I am going.” Thomas said to me, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” I said to him, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said to me, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” I said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? **Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?** The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. **Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.**” John 14:1-11*

*“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ **If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.** But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.” John 15:18-21*

*“**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 (Note that the passage about “salt” and “light” immediately follows this one in vv. 13-16.)*

*Paul: What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? **By no means!** How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were **buried therefore with him by baptism into death**, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might **walk in newness of life.** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our **old self** was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would **no longer be enslaved to sin.** For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 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. Romans 6:1-11

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. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:5-17

I **press on** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are **mature** think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. **Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.** But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Philippians 3:14-21

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also **lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely**, and let us **run with endurance the race that is set before us**, looking to Jesus, the founder

and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who **endured from sinners such hostility against himself**, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. **In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.** Hebrews 12:1-4

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.** 4:1 I charge you in the presence of God and of **Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead**, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be **sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.** 2 Timothy 3:12-4:5

So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore **let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.** For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to **do good and to share what you have**, for such sacrifices are **pleasing to God.** Hebrews 13:12-16

John: 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. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And **by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him**

ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. 1 John 2:1-6 (Also see 1John 3:13 above.)

Peter: *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 2:19-25*

Q. What is all of this about being persecuted? Why would anyone not like me if I obey the "Golden Rule" and treat them as I want to be treated? I want others to mind their own business, and so that's what I do to others.

A. That's exactly the problem. People do love only being exposed to words and ideas they agree with and having others approve of their sin, but that's not what we're called to do. We're to be the salt and light, which is to be truthful (which includes both our words and deeds that verify that we are telling the truth when we say we love God and our neighbor). The light doesn't have to be so harsh that it makes people cringe, but those who are accustomed to darkness will be uncomfortable until they adjust to the light. We're not to use ONLY salt in our speech, such that our words are sour like pickles, but the world thinks that "truth equals hate." If that were the case, God would not have taught us that it can and should be part of LOVE—not like a gong, with rude arguments, but with gentleness. People who are being deceived need someone to be honest with them, not to be encouraged to continue believing lies.

Jesus: *"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and **people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil**. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."* John 3:19-21

*"Woe to you, when **all** people speak **well** of you, for so their fathers did to the **false** prophets." Luke 6:26*

"And **blessed** is the one who is **not offended by me.**" Luke 7:23

Then I told my disciples, "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 will find it. **For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?** For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done." Matthew 16:24-27

"For **whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed** when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." Luke 9:26

"And I tell you, everyone who **confesses me before men, the Son of Man also will confess** before the angels of God, but the one who **denies me before men will be denied** before the angels of God." Luke 12:8-9

Paul: For **I am not ashamed of the gospel**, for it is the **power of God for salvation to everyone who believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall **live** by faith." For the **wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness **suppress the truth.** Romans 1:16-18

Rather, **speaking the truth in love**, we are to **grow up** in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it **builds itself up in love.** Ephesians 4:15-16

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.** Ephesians 5:11-17

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all

mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:22-26

John: And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. **And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.** For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. **Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.** 2 John 1:5-11

Q. Are you suggesting that I should go around hurting people's feelings so that they're pushed away from God? We're supposed to keep peace!

A. No! But if someone's feelings are hurt (if necessary, while being as gentle as possible when sharing the truth) for a short time now than to suffer eternal punishment. We need to understand God is God and we aren't. (Isa. 29:16, Rom. 9:20, Psa. 14) We have to accept how things "should be" as what He wants, or we're trying to BE Him. People who think that there is no God (Rom. 1:19-20, Psa. 19), or that there is another way to be saved than through Jesus (Acts 4:12, 1Tim. 2:5-6, 2John 1:9), or that intentionally living in the same sins for which Jesus died to pay the penalty on our behalf is compatible with the behavior of someone who has come to the knowledge of the truth are deceived. They need someone to care enough to help them, not someone to make them feel comfortable in their sins while they perish. (Eph. 4:15-16, Jude 1:23, 2Tim. 2:24-26, Jam. 5:19-20, Phil. 3:18-20, Titus 1:16) If being meek, merciful,

peaceful and speaking the truth were incompatible with one another, then Jesus would not have included not just one, but TWO blessings for the persecuted for His sake in the same discussion where He blessed the meek, merciful, peace makers, the pure in heart. (Remember the purity of our hearts is reflected by our actions. Matt. 15:18-19, 12:33-35)

*Jesus: And I opened my mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the **kingdom of heaven**. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the **meek**, for they shall **inherit the earth**. Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the **merciful**, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they shall **see God**. Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they shall be called **sons of God**." Matthew 5:2-9 (Immediately following this passage were the two blessings for those persecuted for His sake, which were followed by teaching on salt and light in vv. 10-16.)*

*"**Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'** For everyone will be salted with fire. **Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.**" Mark 9:42-50 (Also see Rev. 11:1-2.)*

*Paul: **Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.** Colossians 4:5-6 (Also see Eph. 5:15-17.)*

*For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter **grieved** you, though **only for a while**. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were **grieved into repenting**. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For **godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.** 2 Corinthians 7:8-10*

*When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, **so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.** 1 Corinthians 5:4-5*

(This means they were to discontinue fellowship with him until he repented, because he was deceiving himself that he was saved or that he knew the holy God he claimed to believe in. This lack of saving faith was evidenced by his ungodly behavior. Continuing in fellowship with him while he practiced sexual sin could have the effect of causing other believers to stumble, as well as reflecting poorly on the pure, undefiled Body of Christ. The man apparently DID repent, and Paul instructed them in his next letter to restore their fellowship with him.)

*For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather **turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.** So I beg you to **reaffirm your love for him.** For this is why I wrote, that I might **test** you and know whether you are **obedient** in everything. 2 Corinthians 2:6-9*

*For **the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.** For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to **save those who believe.** For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the **power** of God and the **wisdom** of God. **For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.** For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But **God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.** And because of him you are **in Christ Jesus**, who became to us **wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption**, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:18-31*

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? For **we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity**, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. 2 Corinthians 2:14-17

But we have **renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word**, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the **god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God**. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has **shone in our hearts** to give the **light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**. 2 Corinthians 4:2-6

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. **The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned**. 1 Corinthians 2:12-14

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all **wicked deception** for those who are **perishing**, because they **refused to love the truth and so be saved**. Therefore God sends them a **strong delusion**, so that they may **believe what is false**, in order that **all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness**. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

Peter: 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

Q. Who am I to JUDGE anyone by enforcing my version of the truth on them?
Jesus said NOT to judge anyone EVER, or we will be judged.

A. "Our version" of the truth should align with God's version in the Bible. His "version" of the truth IS the "right" version for everyone. (Psa. 24:1, Isa. 45:18-25) We can't enforce it on the world (1Cor. 5:12-13), but people who don't understand this will perish for lack of the truth. (Jude 1:14-15, 1Pet. 4:17-18) If they believe in a "god" of their own making, that "god" cannot save them. The loving thing to do is shine His light on them so they can recognize deception and run from it.

Jesus' statements regarding judging are frequently misquoted. He said to judge rightly, not by appearance, and to deal with our own sin before addressing someone else's, and not to criticize others for the same things we do ourselves. We don't hold grudges or condemn anyone—we forgive even repeated offenses against us when they repent. We must forgive as we were forgiven and show mercy as we were shown mercy. That **doesn't** mean we have permission to tell people that if they make a practice (instead of repenting) of the behaviors that the Bible says will keep them out of the kingdom of God, they will still enter in!

Jesus: "Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him." Luke 17:3-4

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." Matthew 18:15-17

*Then Peter came up and said to me, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" I said to him, "**I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'** And **out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'** So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience*

with me, and I will pay you.' **He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.** When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, '**You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?**' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. **So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.**" Matthew 18:21-35

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For **with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.** Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." Matthew 7:1-5

"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. **If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.**" John 15:20

John: Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. **They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.** We are from God. **Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us.** By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. 1 John 4:4-6

Paul: Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will **escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?** But because of your **hard and impenitent heart** you are **storing up wrath for yourself** on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works: to those who **by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality**, he will give **eternal life**; but for those

who are **self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness**, there will be **wrath and fury**. There will be **tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil**, the Jew first and also the Greek, but **glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good**, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. Romans 2:1-11

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 1:28-32

Question for readers: Is it really "acknowledging God" if say we believe, but reject HIS ways, including His account of creation, His morals and values, etc.? Does God need to accept OUR terms, or shouldn't it be the other way around? No, there won't be a Bible quiz before we can get to heaven, but yes, it is calling God a liar or being ashamed of Him if we reject what He inspired men to write.

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**. Ephesians 5:3-10

As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to **keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality**. 1 Timothy 5:20-21

James: My brothers, **show no partiality** as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing

comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have **dishonored the poor man**. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who **blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called**? If you really fulfill the **royal law** according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show **partiality**, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. James 2:1-10

Q. Isn't that "parading our righteousness before men to be seen" and being self-righteous if we talk about sin and morals? (Matt. 6:1-8)

A. The context of that passage is not about dealing with sin—it's about doing good deeds for the wrong reasons (to receive praise and glory from men - also see Matt. 5:44). We do good because we are children of God who love and serve Him joyfully. Righteousness is NOT bad, we're to pursue it! (See the blessing for those who hunger and thirst for it in Matt. 5:6, quoted above.) "Self-righteous" is when someone tries to appear to be holier than they are (like the Pharisees were)—usually trying to obey God of their own power, but that's impossible without the help of the Holy Spirit. The law is good, because it shows us what God desires and helps us to see how we fail Him—but He has made a way, both by forgiving our sins because of Jesus' sacrifice of Himself, and by giving us a new heart that obeys Him out of love, not fear that He's waiting to smite them down if they slip up. (1John 4:18-19)

Jesus: "But **love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.**" Luke 6:35

"And **everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.**" Matthew 19:29-30

Paul: Whatever you do, **work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that **from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your****

reward. You are **servicing the Lord Christ.** For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Colossians 3:23-25

Brothers, **if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.** Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load. Let the one who is taught the word **share all good things** with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us **not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.** Galatians 6:1-9

Now we know that the **law is good, if one uses it lawfully,** understanding this, that the law is **not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient,** for the **ungodly and sinners,** for the **unholy and profane,** for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. 1 Timothy 1:8-11

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! But **if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.** For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." Romans 7:7

James: For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. **Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.** 1 Timothy 6:10-11 (Also 2Tim. 2:22.)

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

Peter: 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 3:9-17

Q. Aren't we ALL sinners? What about "Jesus is a friend of sinners" and "church is a hospital for sinners"?

A. Yes, ALL have fallen short and sinned. (Rom. 3:23, 1John 1:10) However, there is no such verse in the Bible as "Jesus is a friend of sinners." That is a combination of the Pharisees' criticism that Jesus ate with sinners (in order to save them, not to join in their sin - Matt. 11:19) and there being no greater friend than one who lays down his life for someone (which He did - John 10:17-18, 15:13-14). The Pharisees wanted to hold on to their power over the people and didn't like Jesus interfering with their control by forgiving sins without jumping through their hoops (which they had embellished upon from what God had instructed). They didn't want to observe the spirit of the law, with mercy and compassion—they wanted to keep their traditions instead. But don't forget that Jesus expected repentance.

The Church (Greek: ekklesia - called out) is not place at all, let alone a hospice for the dying, but the gathering of people who are called out of the world to be members of the Body of Christ, cured of their former addiction to all sorts of behaviors that God has said are sin. Zacchaeus is one example. He loved money, but was reformed after meeting Jesus. (Luke 19:1-10) After Mary of Magdala was delivered from demon possession, she became a devout follower of Jesus. (Luke 8:1-3, Mark 16:9) (Demons still exist today, but they do not inhabit the same "house" as God, who protects His own. Also see Matt. 12:43-45, Luke 11:24-26, 1John 5:18-19.) Mary of Bethany was forgiven her sins from having been a "sinful woman of the city" and later commended for "choosing the better part" by sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to Him teaching (to her flustered sister, Mary's consternation). (Luke 7:36-50, John 12:1-3, 11:2, Luke 10:38-42)

Jesus: *And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at my disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" And I answered them, "Those who are **well** have no need of a **physician**, but those who are **sick**. I have not come to call the righteous but **sinner to repentance**."* Luke 5:30-32

*Afterward I found [the healed man] in the temple and said to him, "**See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.**"* John 5:14

*And as they continued to ask me, I stood up and said to them, "**Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.**" And once more I bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and I was left alone with the woman standing before me. I stood up and said to her, "**Woman, where are they? Has no one **condemned** you?**" She said, "No one, Lord." And I said, "**Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.**"* John 8:7-11

(Note: They had not only judged her sin with words, but had condemned her to death. If they were upholding the law as they claimed to be doing, they would have brought the man she was found with to be stoned as well - Deut. 22:22. Jesus in no way condoned adultery. Rather, He condemned hypocrisy. "Do unto others" does NOT mean "look the other way for me when I sin, and I will do the same for you." ALL are called to repentance.)

*And I cried out and said, "**Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to **save** the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.*** For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me." John 12:44-50

*I said to [my unbelieving brothers], "**My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it **hates me** because I **testify about it that its works are evil**.*** You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." John 7:6-8

*"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? **Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.** Truly, I say to you, he will **set him over all his possessions.** But if that **wicked** servant says to himself, 'My master is **delayed,**' and begins to **beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards,** the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not **expect** him and at an hour he does not **know** and will cut him in pieces and put him with the **hypocrites.** In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* Matthew 24:45-51

Paul: Do not rebuke an older man but **encourage him as you would a father,** younger men as **brothers,** older women as **mothers,** younger women as **sisters,** in all purity. 1 Timothy 5:1-2

Peter: So I exhort the **elders** among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: **shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.** And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. **Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."** 1 Peter 5:1-5

Q. Wouldn't that be "casting the first stone" if we talk about sin? None of us is perfect.

A. The stones that were going to be thrown at the adulterous woman were literal stones meant to KILL her. Our words are NOT meant to be condemning, but encouraging (to not practice sin, but rather to live for Christ joyfully). The purpose of dealing with sin isn't to make ourselves feel important or better than others, but to help one another walk in a manner worthy of the Lord—to keep the Body of Christ healthy and unleavened. Ideally, we should be examining our own walk by comparing what the Bible tells us to do with what we actually do (which includes thoughts, words and actions). (1Cor. 11:30-32)

Jesus: *Then I said to the crowds and to my disciples, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they **tell you,** but **not the works they do.** For they **preach,** but **do not practice.** They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger." Matthew 23:1-4*

Paul: *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. Colossians 1:9-12*

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to **walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:1-6*

*You are **witnesses,** and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, we **exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God,** who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12*

*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*

*Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? **Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.** Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you **not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater,***

reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not **those inside the church whom you are to judge?** God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.” 1 Corinthians 5:6-13 (They appeared to be proud of being so accepting of the one who was committing shocking sexual immorality.)

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that **Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!** 2 Corinthians 13:5

Q. Isn't it the Holy Spirit's job to convict people of sin and our job to "love"?

A. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and He indwells true (genuine, sincere) believers. Each person who receives Him does so by coming to faith through hearing the word of God. Just as only God makes believers, only the love of God will persuade anyone to obey Him. (1John 2:5, 5:3) However, if we don't share the Gospel and then teach those who accept it what God said He desires from His children, then we're not fulfilling the Great Commission. Jesus did not say “Go into the world and make believers.” Jesus said to make disciples, teaching them to obey His commands (which is NOT the same as reverting to the OT law, but obedience from the heart is expected of those who belong to Jesus nevertheless). If we refuse to share the truth with people, and instead, buy into the unsaved world's opinion that telling the truth is being hateful, then we are siding against God. He says that truth is GOOD and loving. There are many these days who will tell people what they want to hear, so we need to be the voice of TRUTH in this decayed world, which sadly, has infiltrated the Church. People like the saying “remember who you are” (as in forgiven), and that's nice, but also remember that when Jesus saves, He purchases us with His precious blood and we are meant to show by our behavior that we are grateful to have received the profound privilege to be redeemed people of God. (Rom. 7:4-6, Titus 2:14, 1Cor. 6:19-20, Eph. 1:7, 1Pet. 1:17-19, Rev. 1:5, 5:9-11)

Jesus: *And I came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.** And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20*

*“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a **testimony** to all nations, and then the end will come.” Matthew 24:14*

(Notice that it's a testimony—from God Himself—which is TRUE. There is ONE way to be saved, and we must TRULY believe in our hearts to receive salvation. Those who have received the free gift of salvation have also received the Spirit of Truth—the "testimony within themselves" - 1John 5:10, 3:23-24—who produces GOOD fruit in them. Please note that this is NOT about anyone creating a list of rules for others to follow, adding details that God didn't specify, like the Pharisees loved to do. Please also note that only a fallen angel would give a different gospel than the one in the Scriptures. - Gal. 1:6-10, Heb. 1, Col. 2:18-19, 2Cor. 11:2-4, 13-15)

And I said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Mark 16:15-16

I said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

Paul: How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So **faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.** Romans 10:14-17

The **aim** of our charge is **love** that issues from a **pure heart** and a **good conscience** and a **sincere faith**. 1 Timothy 1:5

But understand this, that in the **last days** there will come **times of difficulty**. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. **Avoid such people.** 2 Timothy 3:1-5

John: If we receive the testimony of men, the **testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. 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. 1 John 5:9-12

And this is his commandment, that we **believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another**, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he **abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.** 1 John 3:23-24

Q. What if I didn't "sign up for all of this" and all I want is to not go to hell when I die?

A. The "offer on the table" is to become a child of God (and with that comes obeying our Father). If it's a "deal killer" for us that we have to accept HIS ways instead of taking the offer on our OWN terms, then we have REJECTED the offer and shouldn't bank on its promises. (Matt. 10:37-39, 16:24-27, Phil. 3:8-21, Gal. 2:20, 2Tim. 2:4, Psa. 50:16-23) God doesn't want spoiled rotten children any more than we do (although this is getting to be more and more accepted as "normal" and even expected by our society. Rom. 1:30, 1Tim. 1:9, 2Tim. 3:2, Isa. 3:12) We're providing evidence of what our true character is like by the way we think, what we say and how we behave. God wants genuine love from His creation, so He doesn't force anyone to believe or obey. What we choose (using the gift of free will we received from God) is what we love—either the world and sin, or God and holiness. Not every saved person will receive the exact same rewards, as we saw above. Those who suffered and possibly even died for His sake, and those who gave up much for the sake of the Gospel, will be rewarded greatly. Those who renounce their faith in favor of indulging their flesh, whether out of fear of man or out of perceived treasure and/or pleasure, will not inherit. (Heb. 3:12-14, 1Cor. 6:9-10, Gal. 5:19-21, Rev. 21:7-8, 22:14-15)

Jesus: *"Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but **endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.** As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the **cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.** As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed **bears fruit** and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." Matthew 13:18-23*

Then I left the crowds and went into the house. And my disciples came to me, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." I answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. **The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil.** The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. **The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace.** In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.** He who has ears, let him hear."
Matthew 13:36-43 (Also see 1John 3:1-10.)

"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.** The **eye is the lamp of the body.** So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be **full of light**, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of **darkness.** If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and money.** Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. *Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?* Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. **Are you not of more value than they?** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 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.** Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Matthew 6:19-34

And I said to my disciples, "Therefore I tell you, **do not be anxious** about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For **life is**

more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. **Of how much more value are you than the birds!** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. **Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.** Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For **where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.** **Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning,** and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. **Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.** Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. **You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.** Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" And I said, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? **Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.** But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. And that servant who **knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.** 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 12:22-48

*And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? **"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."** It is for discipline that you have to endure. **God is treating you as sons.** For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? **If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.** Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but **he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the **peaceful fruit of righteousness** to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Hebrews 12:5-13*

Q. Wait a minute! Didn't Jesus say that He would never cast out or lose anyone who believed?

A. That is correct. So that would seem to mean one of two things for those who claim to believe in Jesus and fully expect to go in, but are denied entry to the kingdom of God. (Matt. 25:10-13, Luke 13:25-27) Either they are lying about believing (1John 1:6, 2:3-6, 3:6), which would explain why Jesus "never" knew some of them (Matt. 7:21-23), or they quenched the Spirit (while pursuing sins that He prompts them to turn from, including teaching lies for financial gain and personal popularity) to the point that they no longer believed. (1Thess. 5:19, Eph. 4:30) He is the Giver of faith, so if someone no longer HEARS Him, their faith can die. (Rom. 10:17, Heb. 3:12-14) We were warned that some of those at our "love feasts" (the Lord's Supper, which used to also serve as a meal to share with poor believers - 1Cor. 11:17-22) would be imposters who do not truly believe and therefore, are NOT born again (or perhaps "twice dead" and impossible to restore to repentance - we can be born again ONE time, but being concerned about this is a good indication that we have not reached the point of no return). (Jude 1:11-16, 2Pet. 2:12-21, Heb. 6:4-8) This is NOT about "keeping ourselves saved." It's about our revealing our true nature by what we care more about—this present, temporary world or God and the eternal inheritance He offers. (1John 2:15-17, Luke 12:32-34) Those who are truly born again put those corrupt desires of their former self to death by the power of the Holy Spirit within them. (Gal. 5:24, Rom. 8:13, 13:14, Titus 2:11-15, Rom. 6:19)

Unfruitful branches or those with BAD fruit (not of the Holy Spirit) will be cut off of the Vine by the Father who calls us into fellowship with His Son. (John 6:44, 65-66, John 15:1-10, Matt. 7:15-19, 1Cor. 1:9) When Jesus says, "I never knew you" to the "workers of lawlessness" in Matt. 7:23, the Greek word for "declare" to them is "confess" (homologēsō). That's the same word He used when He said those who "confess" Him (homologēsei), He will "confess" (homologēsō). "Confess" literally means "speak the same." Some will claim to have done great works in His name, but the words of their mouth will not be confirmed by agreement of the Holy Spirit in their hearts bearing witness that they are His. (Matt. 10:32-33, Rom. 8:9, 16-17) Paul warned that some would "profess" ("confess" - homologousin) to believe in Jesus, but DENY Him by their works. (Titus 1:16) The "giants of the faith" in Heb. 11 "confessed" (homologēsantes - agreed) that they were strangers and exiles on the earth, desiring NOT to return to their old country, but a "better country"—the "heavenly city" God has prepared. (Heb. 11:13-16, Heb. 10:36-39) We are to do the same, looking for the "lasting city" and offering the sacrifice of praise that is the fruit of lips "confessing" (homologountōn) His name. (1Pet. 2:11, Heb. 13:14-15, Rom. 12:1-2)

*Jesus: "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will **never cast out**. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should **lose nothing of all that he has given me**, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and **believes** in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." John 6:37-40*

*"My sheep hear my voice, and I **know** them, and they **follow** me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and **no one will snatch them out of my hand**. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and **no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand**. I and the Father are one." John 10:27-30*

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

*For it is impossible, in the case of those who **have once been enlightened**, who have **tasted the heavenly gift**, and have **shared in the Holy Spirit**, and have **tasted the goodness of the word of God** and the powers of the age to*

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

John: *If we say we have **fellowship** with him while we **walk in darkness**, we lie and **do not practice the truth.*** 1 John 1:6

Q. Why should it matter what I do physically, since salvation is spiritual?

A. Besides the obvious reasons given above (God is holy and those who have received the amazing privilege of becoming His children will want to honor Him and His ways), the Holy Spirit dwells in those who are born of God. Believers who commit sexual immorality do so against their bodies, in which God dwells.

Jesus: *"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "'I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. **Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.** Remember, then, what you received and heard. **Keep it, and repent.** If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not **soiled their garments**, and they will **walk with me in white**, for they are **worthy.** The one who **overcomes** will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'" Revelation 3:1-6*

"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. "'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not

realizing that you are **wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked**. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. **Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent**. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. **The one who overcomes, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne**. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” Revelation 3:14-22 (Also see John 16:33.)

Paul: *Since we have these promises, beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit**, bringing **holiness to completion** in the fear of God.* 2 Corinthians 7:1 (Also see Heb. 12:10, 1Thess. 4:7, 2Pet. 3:11-13.)

*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. “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. **The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body**. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. **Flee from sexual immorality**. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. 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 6:9-20*

*For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, **longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed***

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

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the **holiness without which no one will see the Lord.** See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become **defiled**; that no one is **sexually immoral or unholy** like Esau, who **sold his birthright for a single meal.** For you know that **afterward**, when he **desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.** Hebrews 12:14-17

Peter: For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them **freedom**, but they themselves are **slaves of corruption.** For **whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.** For if, after they have **escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.** For it would have been **better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back** from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after **washing** herself, returns to **wallow in the mire.**" 2 Peter 2:18-22

(Note in the above passage that the ONLY way to be "washed" is by the precious blood of Jesus. So that is another confirmation—in addition to the text saying they had escaped being enslaved to corruption through knowledge of Jesus—that these who return to wallowing in the mud DID believe, but they loved the world more than Jesus—in a similar manner to those who fell away in the Parable of the Sower - Mark 4:14-25. No one can "yield fruit" UNLESS the Spirit has been sown IN them, and they willingly yield the "right of way" TO Him. We can think of the stand that the lamp that is to give light should be put

on as a sort of "witness stand." Those who don't bear witness have hidden their light, or worse yet, possibly put light for darkness. Luke 11:33-36)

Jesus: *And I said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? **The sower sows the word.** And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they **hear the word**, immediately **receive it with joy.** And they have **no root** in themselves, but endure for a while; then, **when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.** And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who **hear the word**, but the **cares of the world** and the **deceitfulness of riches** and the **desires for other things** enter in and **choke the word**, and it proves **unfruitful.** But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who **hear the word** and **accept it** and **bear fruit**, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." And I said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. **If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.**" And I said to them, "**Pay attention to what you hear:** with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." Mark 4:13-25*

*And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to me, I said in a parable, "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As I said these things, I called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." And when my disciples asked me what this parable meant, I said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.' Now the parable is this: **The seed is the word of God.** The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they **hear the word**, **receive it with joy.** But these have **no root**; they **believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.** And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who **hear**, but as they **go on their way** they are **choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life**, and their fruit does not mature. As for*

*that in the good soil, they are those who, **hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.** 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 my mother and my brothers came to me, but they could not reach me because of the crowd. And I was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." But I answered them, "**My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.**"
Luke 8:4-21*

(Note that this last part of the above passage should dissuade people from revering Mary - Isa. 42:8, 48:11, 1Tim. 2:5-6 - elevating her above other believers, but it should not be used to disparage her either. Luke 1:48)

(Also note: When Jesus refers to having an "ear to hear," that means HEEDING. Some hear and don't receive it, or receive it but don't KEEP it and would rather value the worthless things of the world more, or are cowardly. See Rev. 21:8. Some prefer to revel in the sinful pleasures of the world than to deny themselves. Some would rather have an easy temporary life than to suffer for His sake. Many will trade away their inheritance or demand it early, like the prodigal son or Esau, than to invest in treasure in heaven and wait. These are the ones who have what they were given (which is the wisdom and light of the Word of God) taken away. I believe that the reference to "depositing with the bankers" refers to donating to (or being hospitable to missionaries), to invest in the kingdom of God despite not spreading the Gospel oneself. Jesus says something similar in Luke 16:9-13 and Matt. 10:40-42.)

*"He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so **I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground.** Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, '**You wicked and slothful servant!** You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So **take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.** And cast the worthless servant into the outer*

darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 25:24-30

*“Then another came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; for **I was afraid of you**, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ He said to him, ‘I will condemn you with your own words, you **wicked servant!** You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’ And he said to those who stood by, **‘Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’** And they said to him, ‘Lord, he has ten minas!’ **‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.’**” Luke 19:20-27*

Paul: For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be **strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being**, so that Christ may **dwell in your hearts through faith**—that you, being **rooted and grounded in love**, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be **filled with all the fullness of God**. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, **according to the power at work within us**, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:14-21

For all who are **led** by the Spirit of God are **sons** of God. Romans 8:14

If we **live** by the Spirit, let us also **keep in step** with the **Spirit**. Galatians 5:25

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, **remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you**. Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you **stand fast through faith**. So do not become proud, but fear. For **if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you**. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but

*God's kindness to you, **provided you continue** in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree. **Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.** Romans 11:17-25*

God*: "The one who **overcomes** will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." Revelation 21:7-8 (Also see Rev. 14:9-13.)

*Blessed are those who **wash their robes**, so that they may have the **right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates**. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who **loves and practices** falsehood. Revelation 22:14-15 (Also see 2Thess. 2:9-12, Rev. 13, Rom. 1:18-32.)*

(*Note, our God is ONE, however, Jesus is said to be at the right hand of the Father's throne. Rev. 21:5, 22-23, Psa. 110:1, Heb. 1)

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