

Time to Wake Up!

by Tricia Berg

There often seem to be two camps among professed believers in regard to repentance, and they are opposite extremes. One side says that we must work for salvation, or if not, that work is still required to keep it. The other side says that we don't work for salvation and neither is anything else required or expected of us after making a verbal confession of faith--Jesus paid it all and God is "no longer concerned" with our sin.

You can probably guess where I'm going with this. Neither of these views is correct! The truth is in the middle. We do not work FOR salvation OR to "keep it," but God DOES expect us to behave as His children AFTER we come to the knowledge of the truth. Jesus set us free from both the penalty for our sin AND from the enslavement to it, from the way it used to make us obey its will instead of God's. (*John 8:34-36, Romans 6:11-18, 2Peter. 2:19*) If God at any point was going to be "unconcerned" with sin, a good time would have been BEFORE Jesus suffered and died a horrific death for ours. Does God make any mistakes or change? No. This was the ONLY way. (*Mark 13:32-42*) Jesus won the victory on the cross and purchased (redeemed) us with His blood. We now belong to Him. (*Acts 20:28*) We have been given to Him by the Father. (*John 17:6*)

There are consequences during this life (His discipline, for our good so we will learn to glorify God in all we do - *John 15:8*) and in the next (loss of reward - the Bible repeatedly mentions how Jesus "has His reward with Him" when He returns, *Rev. 22:12, Isaiah 40:10, 62:11, 1Cor. 3:14-15*) for true believers who disobey. God is not waiting to "smack us" the instant He sees us mess up, but we mustn't deliberately and/or regularly choose to indulge our flesh instead of to please Him. We need to TURN FROM our sin, with the help He gives us. (If we are not true believers, then we will suffer God's wrath for eternity.)

Whoever disrespects God in this way is obviously lacking in knowledge of who it is they are dealing with--not just a human they are choosing to disobey, but God. (*Luke 12:47-48, Psalm 111:10, Psalm 50:16-23, 1Thess.4:3-8*) How can a confession of faith be genuine if we don't even know who God is or what He is like? (*Malachi 3:13-4:3, Isaiah 5:18-23*) The fact is that anyone who TRULY believes and has made Jesus Lord in their heart and mind, WILL sincerely want to obey Him, not look for ways to justify their sin. That is why faith without works is just as dead as works without faith. (*James 1:21-25, 2:14-26*) It proves whether faith is alive and genuine.

People like to use the following passage to say that once they claim to have faith, it doesn't matter if they ever repent of any of their sins--Jesus won't "let them go."

*"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

I think that we can agree that if someone has made a false confession, they are not "in Jesus' hand." Notice that Jesus said His sheep *follow* Him? He also said this interesting thing about people who say they will follow, but don't:

*Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is **fit for the kingdom of God.**"* Luke 9:62

*"If anyone **serves** me, he must **follow** me; and **where I am, there will my servant be also.** If anyone **serves** me, the Father will honor him."* John 12:26

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

When Jesus becomes your Lord and Savior, by the free gift of God, by grace, through faith in believing (*Romans 10:8-10, Eph. 2:8*), what does that mean? Let's look up what "lord" usually means and see if that helps us at all.

lord /lôrd/: someone having power, authority, or influence; a master or ruler.

Hmmm. Jesus has authority and power over us as our master and ruler? (*Revelation 11:15-18*) That seems to be news to many people today who think He's their buddy who only lives to be sure they are happy. But He told people this:

*"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 6:46-49

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. *On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”* **Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them** *will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”* *And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. Matthew 7:21-29*

I have to interject here that many people like to point out that the “work” the Father expects us to do is to believe. (*John 6:29*) That is true. Without believing, there is no hope for anyone to be saved and Jesus is the ONLY way. However, but we don’t stop there when there are other instances declaring the will of God as well. (*Rom. 12:1-2, Eph. 6:5-9, Col. 4:12, 1Thess. 4:3-8, 1Thess. 5:16-22, Heb. 10:36-39, 1Pet. 2:15-16, 1Pet. 4:1-5, 1John 2:15-17*) The workers in the parables Jesus told followed up. They didn’t just SAY they would. (*Matt. 21:28-32* - remember, John preached repentance to prepare the way for Jesus—people can’t understand their need for a Savior if they don’t realize they are sinners.)

If we are unable to stop sinning and it's expected by God that we will continually succumb to temptation, then why did He inspire these following passages to be written for our benefit?

*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but **with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.** 1 Corinthians 10:13*

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

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

I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and **have not repented** of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced. 2 Corinthians 12:21

This next passage is very popular with people who want assurance of God's love, but people like to ignore the part about persecution and suffering. Paul isn't referring to our own evil behavior--it's about external factors beyond our control that CANNOT separate us from fellowship with Him. Notice all of those very unpleasant things in the first verse? Needless to say it's a FAR cry from being "slaughtered all day long" when we are living like the world, blending in, not being persecuted AT ALL for going against the flow and standing up for Jesus. (1Tim. 3:12, James 4:4, 1John 2:15-17)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? **Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."** No, in all these things we are **more than conquerors** through him who loved us. For I am sure that **neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.** Romans 8:35-39

This next passage is rather similar, isn't it?

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. **We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body**

the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 2 Corinthians 4:7-11

We are CONQUERORS in these things when we abide IN Jesus (*John 16:33, Heb. 4:15-16, Heb. 7:25*), just as the letters to the churches in *Revelation chapters 2 and 3* tell us what it takes to OVERCOME. ONE church is spared the "hour of trial," because of having ALREADY endured persecution and persevered (and yet they are still told to HOLD FAST). (*Rev. 3:8-13*) Remember, the one who conquers is the one who loves Jesus more than their own life. (*Rev. 12:11, 2Cor. 5:1-10, Matt. 10:37-39, Philip. 1:29-30*)

What about this verse that everyone loves--it's so comforting, right?! People like it so much that they only quote the last phrase from it:

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

God's promises ARE very good, but we need to see if that really says that He is pleased with us when we sin and that our doing so deliberately, unrepentantly will have no effect on our relationship with Him. Once again, let's look at the context:

*Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. **Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."** So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. **Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. **Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.** Hebrews 13:1-9*

Did you know that the quote about God "never leaving nor forsaking" was from the Old Testament? That promise was made to Joshua when he was taking on the HUGE responsibility of walking in the footsteps of Moses. Let's look at that passage in context as well:

*Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. **Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.** Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:1-9*

I don't see anything there about Joshua being reassured that he should have no fear if he chooses to disobey God. He is being called to a very difficult task, however, God will be WITH him through it. The context of the New Testament passage above is also about remaining faithful to our VERY faithful, true, trustworthy God no matter what happens. It's not meant to be reassurance that if we show hatred for God by refusing to repent of our sin, that there will be no consequences. As we know, He defines obedience as love, so the opposite would be hatred, disdain, lack of respect, etc. (*John 14:15-24*) Never forget, the promises have been made to THOSE WHO love Him. (*1Cor. 2:9-10, Rom. 8:28, James 1:12, 2:5*) His commandments are not burdensome, because we love Him. (*1John 5:2-3*) He summarized them into two for us to keep it simple. (*Mark 12:29-34, Rom. 13:9*) This doesn't mean that we disregard everything else the Bible says, but that if we truly live it out, then all will be fulfilled. Jesus fulfilled the law. (*Matt. 5:17-20*) We live by the law of liberty, offering living spiritual "sacrifices" of our lives, not by the letter of the law. (*James 1:25, Rom. 12:1-2, 7:6*) It's a HIGHER calling, not lesser. (*Philip. 3:14-16*) By the power of His Spirit within us, we walk in His footsteps, relying on Him to cleanse us and set us back on the right path whenever we slip or stumble. (*1John 2:3-6, 1John 1:8-10, 1Pet. 2:20-21, Heb. 7:25*) We don't need to be afraid. He will help us to overcome as He did. That's great news! (*John 16:33*)

(And please understand that "those in prison" in *Heb. 13:3* are our *brothers and sisters in Christ* who are suffering for His sake like Paul did, not unbelievers who have committed crimes for which they deserve to be punished. Prison evangelism is fine, but that verse is not referring to it. It's about not abandoning our own family in the Lord out of embarrassment, fear or inconvenience. (*Matt. 12:50*) Paul wrote not to be discouraged because of his suffering for Jesus and that he desired believers to remain strong and supportive of him for their own blessing and the health of the body of Christ. (*Philip. 4:17, 2Cor. 1:2-14*) We are not to be ashamed of each other for standing up for the truth, even if it results in ostracism by the world, to which we do not belong. (*2Tim. 1:8, 16-18, John 15:18-19, 1John 3:13-14, 1Peter 2:11-12*)

Another popular verse that people like to take out of context is:

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6

But let's look at it in context:

*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your **partnership in the gospel** from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for **you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel**. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. 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 1:3-11*

Doesn't that sound like Paul is talking to someone who actually is FOLLOWING Jesus, working in His "vineyard," helping with the "harvest"? Or what does "partnership in the gospel" mean then? Paul prays that they will be filled with knowledge and discernment so they will be pure and blameless, filled with the fruit of righteousness. This is not addressed to someone who claimed to believe and then proceeded to shamefully profane God's name with their unrepentant behavior. (*Hebrews 10:29-30, 1Pet. 4:17-19*)

Nowhere does it say that if we choose to ignore Jesus, willfully disobeying Him and living IN our sins after He died to pay the penalty for us, that we will not have put a barrier between Him and us. Actually, it says that we are liars if we claim to know God and yet do that, and that He will not even harken to our prayers if we disregard His instructions and fail to control ourselves. (1Pet. 4:7, John 3:36) If we actually do belong to Him and yet live for ourselves, loving the world, then we have every reason to "shrink back from Him in shame" when He returns for us. That is grieving the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:30) If we used to think sin was "fun," our definition WILL change IF we have been born again.

*If we say we have **fellowship with him** while we walk in darkness, we **lie and do not practice the truth**. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** 1 John 1:6-9*

A word to the wise. If you are a born again believer, then don't play games with God. He WILL discipline you. (If not, then you are not a legitimate child and you have MUCH bigger problems... Hebrews 12:8) He is patient and good, but He is also holy and just. He is sovereign. Everything and everyone is His possession (Psalm 24:1), but especially those who have been set aside for Him should put themselves at His disposal to do with as He pleases. (2Cor. 6:17-18, 2Tim. 2:19-22) Do you want to waste your short life being chastised when you were meant to invest the precious gift of time and every other gift He gave you wisely, being used for His glory? All we have and are is a gift from Him. Will we expend it on ourselves or for His kingdom? (Matt. 6:33) Take a look at the parables of the minas and the talents in Luke 19 and Matthew 25. Remember what happened to Jonah when he tried to run from God. I would also like to point out that the father did not run after the prodigal son. The prodigal son came to his senses and returned home on his own. (Luke 15)

Why do we need to SUBMIT to God AND RESIST the devil, so that he will flee from us? It almost sounds as though God doesn't want us to live like children of the devil, doesn't it? Giving in to sin is at NO POINT EVER held out to us as an option for TRUE believers. There is forgiveness, but that goes along with repentance (and you haven't repented of a sin if you are continuing to PRACTICE it. Does anyone seriously think they can trick God? Gal. 6:7-8)

Submit yourselves therefore to God. **Resist** the devil, and he will flee from you. **Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your**

hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:7-8

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will **not gratify the desires of the flesh.** Galatians 5:16

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

If we are abiding IN Him, then it is a GIVEN that we are OBEYING Him (and our "branch" won't be "thrown into the fire and burned"). Remember, IF we are born again, our dead spirit has been regenerated and indwelt by His Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5, John 3:3, 3:6, 6:63, Romans 8:6-9), giving us the power to overcome temptation. Our old sinful, selfish flesh has been put to death and we now live as a new creation IN Christ. Pay attention to that word "in," because those are the ones for whom Jesus will be returning. (1Thess. 4:16-17)

"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. **"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. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. John 15:1-23

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.** 2 Corinthians 5:17

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.** Romans 6:1-4

And Jesus said that it is better to enter the kingdom of God, into eternal life, maimed than to fail to enter due to sin. That's pretty serious! Before you say,

"Oh, that was before He paid our penalty for sin," look at all of the warnings to us in the rest of the New Testament (including the Revelation of Jesus Himself to John) about walking in repentance. (1John 2:1-6)

"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

*Those whom I **love**, I **reprove and discipline**, so be zealous and repent.* Revelation 3:19

*[Our earthly fathers] disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. **See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God**; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that **afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.** For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not*

*escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus **let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.** Hebrews 12:10-29*

When you read the warnings about people only wanting to listen to what they like to hear, is the first thing that you think of that, of course, that means people will be wrongly told they need to repent? Or don't you more likely think that what people WANT to hear is that they DO NOT need to repent, that they can continue on as before, without a care in the world? They want salvation to be on their terms—all roads lead to heaven, not only the narrow road. (*Matt. 7:13-14, Luke 13:23-27*) Paul told Timothy to reprove, rebuke and exhort. Why? Because the false teachers will be telling people they can do whatever they like and God is still pleased with them—that they can make up their own version of Jesus, call Him by another name even—and still get into heaven. (*John 3:18, Acts 4:12, 2Cor. 11:2-4*) Who are you going to listen to? God's own word, that you can read for yourself, or those evil people who are telling you what you like to hear FOR A PROFIT? Wake up! Is it profitable to tell people the truth or lies? Won't people line up to pay for lies and hold their hands over their ears when they hear the truth for free because they don't like it?

*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.** 2 Timothy 4:1-4*

*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.** For among them are*

*those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and **never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.** 2 Timothy 3:1-7*

If these words about repentance strike fear in your heart (because you believed a false teacher who told you it wasn't expected), then just be glad you're hearing them while your heart is still beating--that means there is TIME for you to repent and stop trampling on the Son of God! EVERYONE slips now and then, we are still living in bodies of flesh and blood, but that doesn't mean we give up the fight and live like "enemies of the cross" without the "sense to stop sinning" instead of living like children of God. Remember, the epistles contained in the Bible were letters written to professing believers. If you think about it, why would these letters be written to UNbelievers? Can anyone save themselves by works? No. The letters are for US WHO ARE SAVED so that we will know how God wants us to live now that we belong to Him. (Acts 20:28, Rev. 5:9)

*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. But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. **For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.** For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but **my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.**" But we are **not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.** Hebrews 10:26-39*

*Do you not know that **you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.** 1 Corinthians 3:16-17*

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

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

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

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

Therefore **be imitators of God, as beloved children.** And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to

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

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

Jesus provides us with a pristine white garment and we are to come to Him every time we stain it, in repentance, to receive His forgiveness and cleansing--not to wallow in the mud like we did before we were saved. (2Pet. 2:21-22, Rev. 19:7-8, Isaiah 1:18, 61:10) Get rid of the evil habits in your life NOW. Once you realize that Jesus has returned for His own, it will be too late. (Read Matthew 25. Half of the waiting virgins ran out of oil after they woke up and trimmed the wicks of their lamps. While they went to buy more oil, the door was closed to them so they couldn't go in to the wedding with the

bridegroom.) Find out what pleases God now. (*Eph. 5:15-17*) We are obedient out of LOVE for our beautiful Savior. If His Spirit lives inside of us, then our greatest desire is to honor and glorify Him in all we do.

*"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 conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'* Revelation 3:1-6

Don't listen to people who were NOT sent by God--people who are NOT saved themselves, giving advice to believers. (*John 8:44, 2Pet. 2:12-19, Jude 1:12-13*) God said that when He sends prophets, then His people will turn from their sins. (*Jer. 23:21-22*) I would like to caution you again to stay away from supposed "prophets" on Youtube. These people make a new video every time they have a dream, saying it's from God. (*Jer. 23:25-32*) They love attention and many of them take donation\$. Often their "revelations" contradict the Bible, and so you can easily identify them as FALSE. God will reveal Himself to each one who seeks Him with their whole heart, through His word. (*James 4:8, Isaiah 55:6-9, Hebrews 4:12-13*) We don't need to (and shouldn't) gather around "dreamers" who claim that God speaks specially to them and tells them "new" things that don't line up with the Bible.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is **cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits."** Matthew 7:15-20

For the **wrath** of God is revealed from heaven **against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.** Romans 1:18

*"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 13:40-43

If you have weak faith and doubt that you are saved even though you DO exhibit fruits of the Spirit (*Gal. 5:16-24*), sincerely believe (that Jesus is the Son of God who died for your sins and rose to live again) in your heart and desire to please God in all you do (*Philip. 2:12-16*), there is NO cause for you to worry. In fact, it is a sign of unbelief if you will not take God's word for it that He knows and loves you and that He will keep His promises to you. (*John 14:2-3, John 14:15-24, 1Cor. 2:9-10, 1John 4:18*) If this is you, ask Him to forgive you and to strengthen your faith. (*Luke 17:5, 22:31-32*) As with everyone, the best way to KNOW God and grow in faith is by reading the Bible. (*Romans 10:17*)

Written by Tricia Berg, May 2017. 17 pp., *If this article has blessed you, please feel free to share it without modifications (and of course, don't claim it as your own or sell it).*