

Treasuries of Wisdom and Knowledge

by Tricia Berg

*For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. **I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.** Colossians 2:1-4*

The reason for Paul's struggle in verse 1 is given in verse 4. Most people, including Christians, are easily deluded with plausible arguments. This problem persists today and should be our struggle, too, if we truly want to exalt and glorify God. That is why I'm writing this message—deception is rampant today, even in the Church (which is being built by God out of true believers, not a man-made building and certainly not a denomination). (1Pet. 2:4-5)

*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to **abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.** Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, **not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.** 1 Peter 2:11-16*

What is this grievous struggle? I think we can summarize it like this: People are in constant danger of listening to and believing those who twist the Scriptures to support ungodly conclusions about what pleases God. Well-meaning people with good intentions are led astray into supporting unbiblical positions because they don't know their Bibles. They can make time for worthless media, but not to read the Scriptures that offer eternal life. (Jam. 1:21, 5:19-20) They want to seem "nice," and so they cave in to pressure from worldly people who rebel against God—people who refuse to humble themselves before Him, but instead boast about how loving they are about their approval of every sort of sin (except intolerance of sin—that "sin" is intolerable). So, many are tricked into thinking that these people also love God, and that this kind of "unity" pleases and glorifies Him.

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also. Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. **For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God;** as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." **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 6:11-7:1

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

It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." These are grumblers, malcontents, **following their own sinful desires;** they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, **following their own ungodly passions.**" It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, **devoid of the Spirit.** But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and

praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. Jude 1:14-25

Make no mistake—God does NOT consider it "love" to disobey Him. And what He has prepared is for those who LOVE Him.

"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?" Jesus 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." John 14:15-26

*But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared **for those who love him**"—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 1 Corinthians 2:9-11*

*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.** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 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 1:12-27 (Also see Matt. 7:21-29.)

"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.**" John 15:1-19 (Also see John 13:14-15)*

As we see above, it is necessary to ABIDE in Jesus in order to remain in His love. If it were not something for us to heed, then why would we be told repeatedly to do it? (John 8:31, 15:4-10, 1John 2:24, 28, 3:6, 9, 24, 4:13, 16) He doesn't "lose" us, but He doesn't hold us against our will, either. He joyfully welcomes us back if we return, but I personally think we can learn from the story of the prodigal son that He doesn't chase after us as so many popular songs say in these very self-focused days that we live in. (Luke 15:17-24) Yes, this parable immediately follows the one about the lost sheep, but the sheep was LOST—it didn't want to cash in its inheritance early so that it could go "live it up" in the city like the prodigal son did... We can give up our firstborn inheritance like Esau did, if we value worthless junk more than eternal treasure. (Heb. 12:15-29) We can return to our "former country" if we are foolish enough to desire to do so, but trust me, there will be unbearable regret for those who do. (Heb. 10:34-39)

*These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. **If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.** But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. Hebrews 11:13-16*

*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 3:17-21*

*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 (See how this passage continues further below with instructions for believers.)*

When we stray, God does try to persuade us to return to Him by calling to us by His Spirit, but if we choose to harden our hearts toward Him in order to continue in our willful sin, then we may at some point no longer even hear Him calling—we may no longer be able to accept the gift of faith that we need to be saved and hold fast to the end. (Rom. 10:17, Eph. 2:8-10, Phil. 2:12-14, 15-16, Rev. 21:7-8, Heb. 3:5-6) How sad is that?!!

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. As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." Hebrews 3:12-15

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

Do not quench the Spirit. *Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22*

And how "loving" is it to tell people mushy stuff they love to hear, undoing God's own warnings to us? Not very kind OR wise, I'd have to say.

*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 4:1-5*

*Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for **I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.** Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that **after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;** and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:26-35*

Here's an idea—instead of being craftily manipulated into giving generous donations that go to pay for extravagant salaries and comfy facilities (many of which are wrongly referred to as "the house of God"), why not give directly to the poor or to reputable charities serving them? (Luke 12:32-34—I hope we all understand that the greatest treasure in heaven is Jesus Himself!)

We're told that we're to learn lessons from what happened in the Old Testament. We're not meant to "unhitch" ourselves from it, by any means! (Not that we're under the Old Covenant—see my article about that entitled "[In Defense of Paul.](#)") And how will we travel the narrow road if we "go off the map"? (Those are both sayings of specific false teachers, which those who sit under them will recognize as such, but see Heb. 5:14 and Jam. 3:1.)

*For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. **Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.** Do not be **idolaters** as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." **We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did,** and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. **We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did** and were destroyed*

by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. **Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.** Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "**Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.** When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." Luke 13:23-30

"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 (Also see 1Cor. 3:11-18.)

Also see the passage right before the one above (1Cor. 9:24-27) as well as Heb. 12, which is related to it—admonishing us to run a good race, with self-discipline. (Also 2Tim. 2:3-7, 22-26, Rev. 2-3, Phil. 3:8-21.) Notice how right before the admonishments of Heb. 12 is the history lesson of the faithful saints in Heb. 11. They demonstrated the faith in their hearts by their deeds. (Jam. 1:25, 2:14-26, Gal. 6:7-10) (Remember, there were no chapter breaks or section headings in the original texts.)

Here is a dire warning about what happens when people think that God doesn't see their sin, or that He changes with the times. (Rom. 2:1-5, 6-11, 2Cor. 5:9-

10, Rev. 22:10-15) Don't let anyone trick you into thinking that this doesn't apply to us today! Don't listen to the darkened children of the devil pretending to belong to the light.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became **futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools**, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore **God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves**, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason **God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, **they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.** Romans 1:18-32***

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

*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. Ephesians 5:1-17

Jesus, John and Paul all warned us that we need to look at the outward FRUIT (actions, words) of each person to see what they're like on the INSIDE. Those who are doing things that God forbids are NOT bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit (who dwells in genuine believers), or they would bear GOOD fruit! In other words, they LIE if they say they are children of God.

"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. Matthew 12:33-35

And he 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 7:20-23

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. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the

desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. **Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.** 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.** If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Galatians 5:13-26

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.** Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. **Let no one disregard you.** Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. 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 2:11-3:8

Remember, "good works" referred to above do not earn salvation. They are the natural result of the love for God that comes after receiving salvation. (2Cor. 5:14-15) If we have bad fruits, then we should not reassure ourselves that we're "good" with God. Also see the Parable of the Sower—actually we can learn a lot from all of the parables in Matt. 13. Not everyone who believes for

a while bears good fruit and continues following Jesus. The bad fish will be thrown out. The weeds, which were NOT planted by God, will be burned up. These are not pleasant things to think about, but we're not ashamed of Jesus, are we? (Mark 8:34-38)

*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.** Romans 8:5-9*

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

Should we listen to people who contradict or twist God's words, or shouldn't we AVOID them as we were told to do? (1Tim. 6:3-21, 2Pet. 3:14-18) Does someone who knows and loves God deliberately defile His temple? The Bible says NO, but the devil knows how tempting that lie is and he uses it to the fullest. We need to recognize that this is an attack against God. To participate in and approve of it is to join sides with the devil in his rebellion against God. Gentile believers (that's us) were specifically told to refrain from sexual immorality. (Acts 15:19-20, 8-11) For those who like to lump all of the whole Old Testament requirements together, the dietary laws represented the separation of Jews (God's people) from Gentiles (unbelievers, unsaved) and those prohibitions have ceased in this age of grace where all are invited to become children of God when they believe. (Acts 10, John 1:12-13, Eph. 3:6, Rom. 10:19-20, Rom. 14) However, sexual immorality not only represents spiritual idolatry, but it also defiles God's temple, since He dwells in the physical bodies of believers. (1Cor. 6:17-20) (And for those who think that if God ever disliked His people eating pork and shellfish, that He still does—I would refer them to God's instructions to Adam and Eve (vegan, Gen. 1:29) or Noah (everything that moves, Gen. 9:3). He has a purpose for His instructions in each age. Remember, everything God made is GOOD, Gen. 1:25, Rom. 14:14, 20, 1Tim. 4:4-5)

*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 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. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 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 1:5-2:6

Remember, ONLY Jesus could keep the law perfectly, because He is the Son of God, born without the sinful nature we inherit from our Fathers, because His Father is GOD. (Matt. 1:20) It could even be considered blasphemous to suggest that we are in any way able to keep the Old Testament law as Jesus did. We simply are not able, due to having inherited Adam's fallen nature. (Rom. 5:12) That's why Jesus fulfilled it for us. (Matt. 5:17) We keep the spirit of the law, by the power of the Holy Spirit in us. (2Cor. 3:4-6) That's how we "walk as He walked," NOT by reverting to the letter of the law. (Gal. 3:3, 5:4)

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 3:4-10

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

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

Getting back to our passage for today, Paul continues in Col. 2 to warn against the danger of being brought back into the "slavery" of following rules and regulations, which would include the rote and ritual that those who enjoy exercising power over the people like to insist upon as the "right" way to worship—just like the Pharisees who added minuscule details to the commandments they were given in the law (which they were under, whereas we are not). (Also see John 4:20-26, Rom. 7:4-6, Matt. 23.) Yes, there is to be orderliness (1Cor. 14:26-33), but NO, the Holy Spirit should not be stifled by a rigid schedule.

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. **Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.** Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—"Do not handle, Do not taste,

*Do not touch” (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? **These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.** Colossians 2:8-23*

But also notice that Paul addresses another danger in Col. 3. Believers are not to embrace the opposite extreme either. They're not to feel so "free" that they indulge themselves with deliberate sin. (Rom. 6, Eph. 4:17-24, 1Pet. 1:14-19, 4:3-5) These instructions precede a list of what we ARE to do, but they aren't contradicted by them. So we know that being "loving" does NOT mean participating in or endorsing sin, especially that of a sexual nature. Yes, there is sin that God considers "worse" than some other sins. No, not all sins are the same. When Paul says "do not lie to one another," that includes NOT telling someone it's okay to sin because "God made them that way," or "God wants them to be happy" (as if they're so "special" that the Bible doesn't apply to them?) Remember, Jesus is always to hold the FIRST place of importance in our lives, above even family and close friends. He will be ashamed of those who are ashamed of Him and His words (even if we consider them "harsh" and only like certain portions of what He said). (Matt. 10:37-39, Luke 9:23-26) He will deny those who deny Him. (2Tim. 2:12)

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. Colossians 3:5-11

*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 5:9-13*

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

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

These days, what often happens as a result of sexual immorality? Besides the potential physical penalty of diseases, all too often, babies die. What is their crime deserving of the death penalty without a trial? They're evidence of sin—evidence that must be destroyed. And yes, some are even murdered because they're not convenient to those who are so selfish that they don't want their life and plans interrupted by someone else's life. We can't count on what's

legal anymore to know what's right. We need to consult the "treasuries of wisdom and knowledge" in Christ Jesus, as recorded for us in the Bible and illuminated for us by His Spirit IN us. (1Cor. 2:14, John 14:26, 1John 2:26-28)

How can anyone claim to believe in God if they don't even think He knows the difference between one body and two bodies? The idea that no woman should be "forced" to give birth is severely flawed. For one thing, the women in late term abortions DO still give birth, just not to a LIVE baby in most cases. Don't pretend that it's about the woman's health when those supporting this evil object to medical care being given to any survivors of this horror. (So much for the oath to "do no harm" that doctors take—or do they still?) Is it okay to destroy the infants that aren't wanted? By whom? There are people waiting in long lines to adopt babies.

We don't even have the excuse that we can't see the unborn baby anymore, but those making a profit from this evil "industry" try to make sure no one has to be "offended" such a "disturbing" sight. To turn a blind eye to it is no better than looking the other way during the holocaust. Pretending there's nothing wrong or that it's not our problem will not fool God. And aren't we being our own "gods" if we think we have the power of life and death of innocent people in our hands? (Psa. 82:5-7, Prov. 6:16-19)

*Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. **If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?** Proverbs 24:11-12 (Also see Heb. 4:12-13.)*

*The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: **Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'** For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever. Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and*

then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations? *Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD. Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD, and **when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer**, therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. And I will **cast you out** of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim. Jeremiah 7:1-15*

(Also see Ezek. 9:4-7, Mal. 3:13-4:3, 1Pet. 4:17-19, Heb. 10:26-39, Matt. 21:12-13—today many sell books and DVDs with shoddy doctrine and collect buckets full of money that should be used to serve the needy in the name of God instead of buying jets, light shows, designer clothing and you name it. Rom. 2:19-24, 1Tim. 6:9-10)

I feel I must point out here that the people destroyed and/or driven out of the Promised Land in the Old Testament were practicing abominations such as worshiping nature, committing sexual sin, and even sacrificing their children to idols! (Lev. 18) We shouldn't sympathize with them. They were NOT innocent. And let's keep in mind that the Promised Land prefigures/foreshadows the Kingdom of God. (Heb. 4) Nothing evil or unclean will enter it. (Rev. 21:27) Believers have been washed clean by the blood of Jesus and can be cleansed anew by that same blood from the ONE sacrifice of Jesus of Himself (Heb. 9:24-28) of any sin they slip into, confess (to Him) and (obviously) repent of—we're NOT to LIVE in our sins. (1John 1:7-9, see above.) That's like a sow returning to the mud after being washed. (Rev. 3:4-6) The end of believers who make that choice is worse than if they had never come to know God, and worse yet for the ones who deceived them. (Matt. 18:7, Luke 17:1-2) Notice that they call it "freedom," but we know better, don't we??

*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 (Also see John 8:31-36, 2Pet. 2:1-3, 8-20)

This isn't pleasant to consider, but doctors who are honest will admit that there are a great many physical consequences when men use body parts that were not designed BY GOD to be used in certain ways that God calls depravity, which ways are now being taught to small children in many public schools as being "normal." And let's consider the possibility that the high suicide rates among sexually confused individuals might not be caused by the shame brought on them by "unloving" society, but by the grief the Holy Spirit brings upon people in order to bring them to repentance and back into a right relationship with God. (2Cor. 7:9-10, Gal. 6:1, 1Cor. 15:33-34) But these days, people take psychotropic drugs to make those unpleasant feelings go away—drugs that have side effects of depression, suicide, and stomach problems for which more drugs with those same side effects are prescribed. (Some people are getting very rich from this form of "healthcare," the same way that some are profiting from abortions.) It's time to wake up, people! Notice what Paul says right after explaining how love fulfills the law. (Also see Matt. 7:12, 22:38-40.)

*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 (Also see Eph. 6:10-20.)*

*For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But **you are not in darkness**, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all **children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.** So then let us not*

sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 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. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-11 (Also see Heb. 10:24-25.)

What we "have" (what we hold on to and value) is what we'll be given more of. (Matt. 13:10-17) This was tucked into the Parable of the Sower, which is very significant, I think. Jesus repeats the thought in Matt. 25:29, as part of the Parable of the Talents (about our Christian service to Him as our Master, in His absence.) This applies to many different things. People who love the world invest everything they get into getting more of it. People who love consuming the garbage media of the world acquire a taste for it and have no desire to read their Bibles—they probably even forget what little they may have learned of the Scriptures. The Bible teaches that there is coming a dangerous time when people who love lies will be given more lies to love—lies that ultimately lead to the Lake of Fire. (Rev. 13, 14:9-12)

*And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. 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 2:8-12*

This is a serious warning and a wake-up call. Let's heed it while we can still get back on the narrow road (if we've wandered from it) instead of continuing on the broad path to destruction. The foolish virgins in the parable are waiting for Jesus to return along with the wise, but the foolish are in the dark because they have run out of oil in their lamps. I guess they didn't think it was important. I guess they didn't actually love Jesus as they claimed. Tragic!!! Whatever you do, don't follow someone who hasn't got any light to lead the way—they don't even realize it! (Matt. 13:15-20, Rev. 3:15-19)

"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it

are few. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 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 7:13-20

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. **Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.** For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And **while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.** Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' **Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.** Matthew 25:1-13

NO ONE wants to be on the outside of that door, being told that Jesus does NOT know them! Jesus followed the above parable with the one about the talents. (Matt. 25:14-30) We must bear GOOD fruit if we truly are His disciples. (John 13:35, 15:8, Mark 4:20, Gal. 5:22-25) Paul had this warning for the Corinthians:

For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. 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.** This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. **I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them.** 2 Corinthians 12:20-13:2 (Also see 1Tim. 5:20 and John's warning in 1John 2:28, above.)

It occurs to me that people who think it's "loving" to undo God's warnings, including those to HIS people, do not actually know what He said, or perhaps they just don't believe it? It reminds me of this:

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "**Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'**" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "**You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**" Genesis 3:1-5*

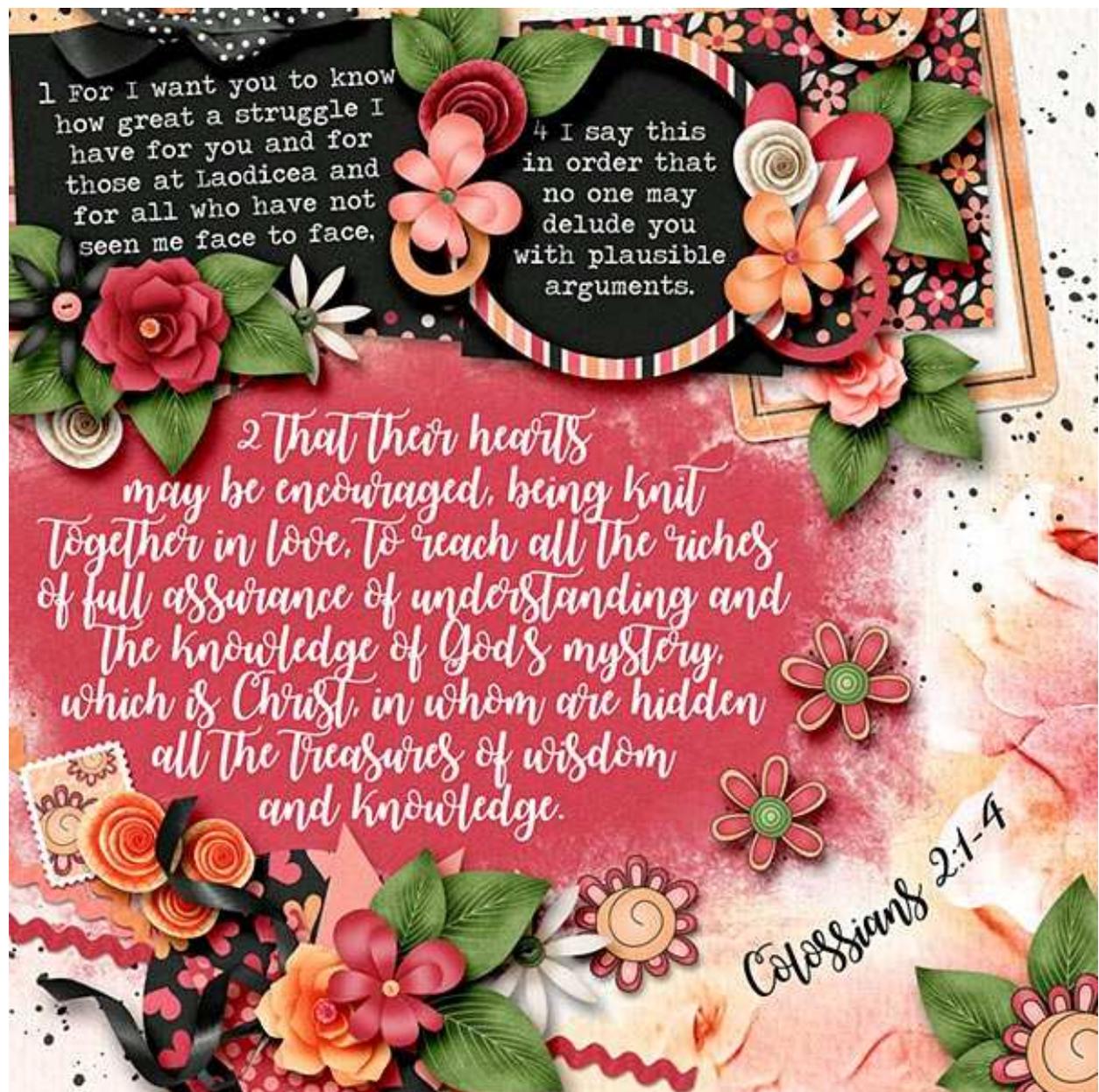
We all know how that ended. Not good at all! Eve was tricked into thinking she would be more like God if she disobeyed God! And Adam joined her instead of setting her straight. Oh my, and here we are, still listening to garbage like that, spewed from the devil. What a shame. Let me just say this, as I have often said—if we are members of the Body of Christ, the Church, then everything Jesus said in the letters to the Churches in Rev. 2-3 applies to us. We would do well to read it and heed it.

*Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who **keep what is written in it**, for the time is near. Revelation 1:3*

*"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who **keeps the words of the prophecy of this book**." Revelation 22:7*

*I **warn** everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone **adds** to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone **takes away** from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. Revelation 22:18-19*

Written by Tricia Berg, (March 2020), 22 pp. If you have been blessed by this article, you are free to share but do not claim as your own or sell, and do not make modifications and attribute them to me. You can download as many free pdf devotional articles as you wish from my blog: <http://layoutfortoday.blogspot.com/> (The most recent articles are at the bottom of the page after you click on the "free pdf downloads" link.) You can also read this article there, where the Bible verses should pop up when you hover over the cites.



kit: Better Together Mini by Jumpstart Designs, template: Dec. 2019 Challenge Template by PrelestnayaP