

## **True Reformation (and Transformation)**

by Tricia Berg

On this date (October 31, 2017) when everyone is celebrating the 500th anniversary of the reformation, I have some observations to share. The reformation was all about removing false teachings taught by the Roman Catholic church. However, there are still many such teachings lingering to some degree or another. If we don't understand what they are so that we can move away from them and closer to the pure truth of the Bible, we are in danger of regressing. If we can't recognize deception, then we may be led astray in any number of ways. (2Cor. 11:1-4, 2Tim. 2-3, 2Pet. 2, Jude 1)

*O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you! Avoid the **irreverent babble** and **contradictions** of what is **falsely called "knowledge,"** for by professing it some have **swerved from the faith**. Grace be with you. 1 Timothy 6:20-21*

The Bible warns of an end-time "Mystery Babylon" deceiving the world. (Rev. 17, Rev. 13) God calls her a harlot who is drunk with the blood of the [true] saints (believers), which are those who refuse to take the mark of the beast (false god) and worship it. We can all recognize explicit warnings against the Roman Catholic church about forbidding to marry, eating restrictions (such as meat during Lent, whereas even "Ash Wednesday" and the observance of Lent is a man-made tradition not specified in the Bible and therefore not to be forced on anyone), repetitive prayers, using the term "father" to apply to spiritual leaders, praying to angels as well as Mary or other dead people, and referring to Mary as a mediator when ONLY Jesus mediates between us and God, and His earthly mother is equal to other believers, as is the Pope. We give due respect and honor, but we do not exalt or give glory to ANYONE except God. (Please see my short, recent article here:

<http://clotheyourselves.blogspot.com/2017/10/our-lady-of-fatima.html>)

If we can recognize the above false teachings as traditions of men and avoid them, they why is it so hard to recognize others that have been accepted out of long-standing tradition?

*And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, "**This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**' You leave the commandment of God and hold*

**to the tradition of men."** And he said to them, **"You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!"**  
Mark 7:6-9

*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the **true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth**, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. John 4:23*

*Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? **You observe days and months and seasons and years!** I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain. Galatians 4:8-11*

*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. Colossians 2:16-19*

If reformation begins with publishing theses against false teachings, then the true reformation began April 26, 1517 with Karlstadt's 152 theses. Please also see my article on that topic called "True Reformer (Possessing Everything)" here: <http://layoutfortoday.blogspot.com/2017/04/true-reformer.html>

I am not against honoring the work of the reformers, but I am against singling out one person and giving him all of the credit. I would hope that each one of them would want all glory to go to God. As for any ill feelings toward Luther personally, I do not harbor any. He was God's servant, not mine. (Rom. 14:4) He did a lot of good, but I do take issue with his writings against Jews (such as "The Jews and Their Lies"). God went to great pains to explain to us that they are BLINDED due to disobedience to the Gospel. We should therefore not be surprised when the majority of them do not accept our message, yet. There WILL come a day when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in and God unblinds them, contrary to article XVII of the Augsburg Confession. In the meantime, we are to love even our enemies. That does not mean telling them whatever they like to hear (e.g. "God approves of homosexuality"), but it also does not mean hating ANYONE (e.g. "God hates homosexuals"). The truth is ALWAYS to be

shared with LOVE as the motive. (1Cor. 13:1-3, 2Cor. 13:11, James 5:19-20, 2Tim. 2:24-26, Rom. 13:8-10, 2Cor. 2:10-11)

It is true the Bible teaches we are to exclude from our fellowship people who claim to be believers but do not accept core teachings of the Gospel. (2John 1:9-11) However, Luther would have done well to bear in mind a few other warnings: 1) Don't judge one another's service to Christ—Rom. 14:10-12; 2) Don't devour one another—Gal. 5:13-15; and 3), Do not to boast against the original branches (Jews), or our individual branches can also be broken off. (Rom. 11:17-25) Their branches WILL be grafted back into their cultivated tree at a time of God's choosing, which is after the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. For those who say the "true" Church "is" Israel, please see my article "Grafted In" here: <http://layoutfortoday.blogspot.com/2015/07/grafted-in.html> I hope to write a more exhaustive article in the future addressing additional issues.

The majority of Protestant denominational churches do not believe in a literal thousand-year reign of Jesus with those faithful who are rewarded by being part of the first resurrection. This is VERY clearly spelled out in Rev. 20, and alluded to in Phil. 3:7-21, 2Tim. 2:3-7, Rom. 8:17 and 1Pet. 1 (to name a few). In case it helps someone, ALL who believe in Jesus (if they were not part of the first resurrection from out of the dead—Rev. 20:4-6, Phil. 3:11-21, 1Cor. 9:24-10:13, 2Tim. 2:3-7, Luke 20:34-36, Rev. 17:14) will be resurrected on the "last day," which was shown to refer to the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. (John 6:39-40, John 7:37, Rev. 22:17) The last day of that feast will not be fulfilled until after the millennium, which is also when the last enemy, death, will be destroyed and thrown into the Lake of Fire with Satan. (Rev. 20:11-15)

The last day is literally when time is no longer kept, so it will continue forever. The sun and moon by which we now keep time will flee away, and God is the light. (Rev. 20:11, Rev. 21:22-27) There is a gap between 1Cor. 15:24 and 1Cor. 15:25-26, during which the millennium occurs. If you read it understanding that, you can see that 1Cor. 15:27-28 make much more sense. In a similar manner, the disciples did not understand that there would be 2,000 years between Jesus' ascension and His second coming, either. (Luke 19:11-27)

I read that those writing the Augsburg Confession felt that the last day could not be after the millennium, as that would defy the "thief in the night" warning. However, there is no need for the element of surprise at the end of the thousand years, as Jesus will have been visibly ruling during that time. (Isaiah 2, Zech. 8:20-23, Zech. 14:16-21) As for now, we do not see everything

subjected to His rule as He has not yet exerted the full power that has been given to Him. (Heb. 2:8, Rev. 11:15-18, Rev. 19:6-10) He is patiently waiting for all who are going to be saved to come to repentance before He returns. (2Pet. 3:8-18) Those who are born during the millennium will not have to accept Him by faith, as they will be able to SEE Him. (John 20:29)

I don't know how people reconcile their rejection of part of the Bible with their claim that they believe all of it, and being warned not to remove anything from the Book of Revelation. (Rev. 22:18-19) I sincerely hope that the quotes "James is an epistle of straw" and "You may do whatever you wish with Revelation" [but Luther himself has no use for it], attributed to him are not true sayings of his—but they appear to be well-documented.

However, my concern is not about any single denomination or person, but against practices and beliefs based on false teachings in the church. I was member (confirmed as an adult, after six months of weekly evening classes) of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS, a conservative denomination) for 18 years. My children attended WELS parochial school from 1<sup>st</sup> grade through high school. I am very familiar with this topic and have loved ones who are still WELS members. I was "baptized" by sprinkling with water at the age of 4 in a Methodist church (which I do not remember, but I have a certificate), but my baptism by immersion in a lake in 2015 is truly one of my most treasured memories. It saddens me that so many believers today have been robbed of that joy.

The majority of this article will focus mainly on two accepted practices or beliefs of many Protestants which do not agree with the Bible—especially by those in various denominations, which division Jesus prayed AGAINST in John 17 and Paul reiterated. What else is that but division when a Christian calls himself by the name of a man such as Luther, Calvin, etc.?

*I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be **no divisions** among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." **Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?** 1 Corinthians 1:10-13*

*But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh.*

*For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? **For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul?** Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. **So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.** He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. 1 Corinthians 3:1-9*

*And in Antioch the disciples were first **called Christians.** Acts 11:26b*

*After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, "After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the **Gentiles who are called by my name,** says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.' Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues." Acts 15:13-21 (Also see 1Cor. 10 for admonitions and warnings to Gentile believers.)*

Please note that WE are God's building. There is no such thing in the Bible as a physical building built by human hands being called a "church." The building referred to as the Church is SPIRITUAL, made up of believers. (Heb. 3:5-6, 1Pet. 2:4-12) The point that human hands do not build the temple is a recurring theme in the Bible. (Mark 14:58, Acts 7:48-50, Acts 17:24-25, 2Cor. 5:1-3, Heb. 9:11, Heb. 9:24)

So here is what I really want to discuss. Nowhere in the Bible does it say "faith comes through baptism" or "faith comes by observing the Lord's Supper." To accept that it says that because someone says it does is to do exactly what the people did before the reformation—but they didn't have the opportunity like we do to check for themselves. Baptism and the Lord's Supper do not save. Most would say they KNOW that, but then if we know that ONLY faith saves, then how can we say that faith is created through something WE do (such as baptizing or taking communion)? Wouldn't that be WORKS? No, these ordinances are observed by people who are ALREADY saved, in obedience to

Jesus' commandments to do so. Nevertheless, you can find articles and videos online by well-meaning pastors explaining that God uses baptism and the Lord's Supper as a "means of grace" to "create" or "strengthen" faith. I was also taught as a confirmand that if I did not partake of the Lord's Supper often, my faith might die.

*Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Matthew 26:26-29*

*"Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20*

Protestants understand that Roman Catholics are in error when they observe the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice each time. However, Lutherans consider the body and blood to be present in their ritual as well (Augsburg Confession, Article X), (presumably basing their belief on John 6). They do not accept Jesus' words that we do this "in remembrance" of Him. More importantly, they seem to have completely missed Jesus' words in John 6:63 explaining that when He said "my body is true food and my blood is true drink," it was figurative. The sacrifice of His body on our behalf gave us SPIRITUAL LIFE the same way that eating bread helps us survive physically. (Jesus used a similar example with His reference to "living water," which represented the Holy Spirit—John 7:38-39; see also Rev. 22:17.) Those who stopped following Him rather than waiting for a clarification from Jesus had no interest in learning the truth. They were not willing to accept that Jesus was not going to save them in the way they had expected, through force. (Rom. 9:30-33, Matt. 11:12) They did not understand that the repeated animal sacrifices were mere shadows of His perfect SINGLE sacrifice.

*Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. **Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly**, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he*

*would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. Hebrews 9:23-28*

*And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. **Do this in remembrance of me.**" And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." Luke 22:17-20*

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

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

*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might **sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word**, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5:25-27 (Also see 1Cor. 6:17-20)*

We know that Jesus is not a physical light like a candle or electric lamp, and His body is not literally a curtain through which we pass into a room (the Holy of Holies, which does not exist any longer in any physical building on earth, but only in heaven), or a well from which to drink water. These too are symbolic, but they have profound spiritual meaning and are by no means to be taken lightly. (John 8:12, Heb. 10:19-20, John 4:7-15, John 7:37-39) The truth is that the cup of the New Covenant was wine representing blood. (Also see a foreshadow in John 2:1-12—the ritual cleansing water appears to represent the cleansing by the water of the word through the Holy Spirit, but wine also represents the Holy Spirit—Matt. 9:17, Eph. 5:18.) However, we certainly do understand that we are not meant to sprinkle anyone with blood as was done to the Israelites under the Old Covenant as a foreshadow of the New. (Ex. 24:8, Heb. 9:19-20)

For if the **sprinkling of defiled persons** with the blood of goats and bulls, and with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the **blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience **from dead works** to serve the living God. Hebrews 9:13-14

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. Hebrews 12:22-24

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for **sprinkling with his blood**: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. 1 Peter 1:1-2

Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law **almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins**. Hebrews 9:18-22

The immersion into water during baptism corresponds symbolically to the death (by "drowning") of the old, sinful self. (Romans 6) Emerging out of the water represents the new birth as a child of God, into the resurrected body of Jesus. (1Cor. 12:27, John 1:12-13, Gal. 3:26-27, 1John 3) This just one reason why it is so tragic for people who still constantly, deliberately indulge their old nature to consider themselves a "new creation" just because they were baptized as infants. Those who crossed the Jordan into the promised land with Joshua (symbolizing Jesus taking us into the Promised Land) did not do so by SAYING they would do so (or having someone say it for them), but by actually FOLLOWING Him. (Heb. 4, Heb. 12, Matt. 16:24, 1Pet. 2:20-25)

As for children being heirs to the promise, "children" does not refer to their ages. (Acts 2:39, Gal. 4:28, John 13:33, Gal. 4:19, 1John 2:1, 3:7, 18, 4:4,

5:21) It refers to successive generations of people. (Ex. 34:6-7) The Bible doesn't explicitly tell us NOT to baptize babies for good reason. It is common sense. Babies do have a conscience, but they are as yet unaware of it. As newborns, they have the sinful nature, but they have not yet exercised it, because they are physically unable to commit sin, yet (nor are they guilty of having tried to work their own way to heaven or of rejecting Jesus as Savior). As they become more able, they will ALL sin, but they will not feel guilt until they are old enough to know better.

Babies feel no guilt, no need to repent, no need of a Savior to wash them clean of the sins they have committed or to purify their guilty consciences. How can they repent when they are not even aware there is such a thing as sin yet? If they die before they have the ability to knowingly commit a sin, I do not believe our loving God sends them to hell (contrary to the teaching in the Augsburg Confession, Article IX.3). I think most people would agree, but yet so many still feel there is an urgency to baptize babies. Why?

*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but **sin is not counted where there is no law.** Romans 5:12-13*

*For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since **through the law comes knowledge of sin.** Romans 3:20*

*He will be eating curds and honey when he **knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right**, for before the boy **knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right**, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. Isaiah 7:15-16*

***The times of ignorance God overlooked**, but now he commands all people everywhere to **repent**, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” Acts 17:30-31*

*But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because **in his divine forbearance he had passed over***

**former sins.** *It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one **who has faith in Jesus.** Romans 3:21-26*

*Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our **hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience** and our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:19-22*

Something else that I would like to add is that we have a strong witness from the Old Testament as to the age of accountability. Those who were under the age of twenty were not held accountable for the sin of grumbling against God and refusing to believe His promises. They were allowed to enter into the land, unlike their parents, after forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Most likely these young people did hold the same views as their parents—they probably imitated the actions and words of their parents if they were old enough to do so—but God did not hold it against them. The promised land is a foreshadow and symbol of the kingdom of God. That is what Hebrews 4 is about—the failure to enter into His rest was due to the disobedience of unbelief, not due to failure to keep the literal Sabbath properly (or they should have been put to death, since that was the penalty for that sin—Ex. 31:14). (Num. 14:26-35, 32:10-13, 26:65, Josh. 3-4)

Another “witness” to the existence of an age of accountability is that men were eligible to go to war at the age of twenty. (Num. 1:13) War may result in death—no one should go into it not even understanding the concept of death yet. Whereas, the penalty of sin—not of “the sinful nature”—is death, which is also not understood by infants. (Rom. 6:23). Also, “bore fruit for death” applies to those who have acted upon their sinful nature. (Rom. 6:21, 7:5) Other “witnesses” in the Old Testament regarding age making a difference is that those twenty years old and up were required to be counted in the census for the purpose of paying the half shekel temple tax (Ex. 30:13-15), and twenty was the “cut-off” age for males when the “value” of their lives increased. (Lev. 27:3, 5)

I’m not a Hebrew scholar (Luke 10:21), but I believe it would be wise and prudent to take those numerous examples from above of God’s mercy and understanding of our varying capabilities rather than relying on the ONE verse to support the idea of everyone being guilty for Adam’s sin. (Psa. 51:5) I believe that verse is being misinterpreted—his mother was a sinner (like

everyone else), so when she conceived through his sinful father, David therefore inherited the sinful nature. That is why Jesus did NOT inherit it, since His Father is GOD, even though He was born to Mary, a sinner under the law. (Gal. 4:4, Rom. 3:23) We all become sinners through Adam because we all exercise our free will to indulge our sinful nature when we are able. (Rom. 5:12—because “all sinned,” not because “all were born with the sinful nature.” Also see 1Cor. 10:8, Col. 2:23, 1Tim. 5:6, Jam. 5:5, 1Pet. 2:11, 4:1-2, 2Pet. 2:10, 18, Jude 1:7-8, Gal. 5:13-25, Rom. 8:5-14, 13:14, 1Cor. 3:3-4, 5:5, )

*The word of the LORD came to me: “What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As I live, declares the Lord GOD, **this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel**. Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who **sins** shall die. Ezekiel 18:1-4*

God doesn’t ask us to do things that He doesn’t do Himself—as we saw earlier, He differentiates between knowing better or not knowing better. (Isa. 7:15-16, Gen. 3:7—Adam and Eve didn’t know they were naked until they sinned; nor do babies know they are naked.) How many infants and young children were put to death for breaking the Sabbath in the Old Testament? We can be sure it was NONE, but we are told that Calvin had a child put to death for striking its mother. He didn’t seem to recognize that God was referring to those who knew better and had developed self-control—not to mention we are NOT in the Old Covenant. We “cut someone off” by discontinuing fellowship with them until they repent, NOT by killing them! (Oh, if only the crusaders had understood that...) How can anyone claim to believe the verse “God is love,” (1John 4:8-13) and yet think that He randomly condemns people to hell, some of whom never even had a chance to get born alive? This is not “good news” with which to reach the masses living in darkness! (Matt. 4:16, 2Cor. 4:4, 1Tim. 2:3-4, 2Pet. 3:9, John 3:16-21—God so loved the world and their “deeds” were evil, not only their nature.)

*The LORD is **merciful and gracious**, slow to anger and **abounding in steadfast love**. Psalms 103:8*

*For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. **Mercy triumphs over judgment**. James 2:13*

*Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, **I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked**, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn*

***back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel? Ezekiel 33:11*** (How are infants able to “turn” and be saved? Also Isa. 45:22.)

Therefore ***be imitators of God***, as beloved children. And ***walk in love***, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:1-2

***Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1***

***Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God. 3 John 1:11***

Why do you suppose the angels of infants and young children always see the face of God? (Matt. 18:10) Could it be that it's because they haven't yet died spiritually by committing sins that God held them accountable for? Something to think about. It's our SINS that separate us from God. (Isa. 59:1-2)

When anyone comes to faith, it is through the gift of God from hearing the word. “Hearing” carries with it the meaning of understanding and heeding. (Matt. 13:13-17, Luke 8:10, Heb. 4:2) No one can do anything **other than share the Gospel** (using BOTH words—the whole truth, including repentance from sin, not just the fluffy parts people like—and deeds of love, not only one or the other) to “help” God save someone (and that includes baptizing them with or without their knowledge or consent). If they receive the Gospel, then their former sins are washed away and they are clean—a new creation. That “new creation” is not meant to live the same way that the old one did, but forgiveness for sins committed due to weakness, ignorance, etc. is faithfully given to those who acknowledge their sins. (1John 1:5-10)

Water baptism is symbolic (which does NOT mean unimportant), just as is the Lord's Supper. They are both for believers. Most Protestants do not administer the Lord's Supper to infants and small children (but not all—Presbyterians leave it up to the parents), but most of them DO baptize babies.

***For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:8-10***

***And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the***

*Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may **no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.** Rather, **speaking the truth in love,** we are to **grow up in every way** into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. 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.** Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you **speak the truth** with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.** Ephesians 4:11-32*

For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. **And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.** We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. **By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in**

**him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. 1 John 3:11-18**

Jesus commanded us to: 1) preach the gospel, 2) baptize, and 3) teach them to obey these commands, thereby making disciples (followers of Jesus). He gave them in that order for good reason (and that is always the order, with NO exceptions—Mark 16:16, Acts 8:12-13, 10:43-48, 16:29-34, 18:8, 19:4-5). No one who does not believe (which most certainly includes those who don't even have the capability to believe), or is unable to follow (knowingly choose to obey Jesus' commands) can be a disciple. As for John the Baptist kicking in Elizabeth's womb when Mary (pregnant with Jesus) came to visit, the Bible tells us that he was filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb. (Luke 1:15) He was a believer before birth, but that has not been the usual case at any time in history, including today. John was the "Elijah to come" preparing the way for Jesus, if they had accepted Him as the Messiah. (Matt. 11:13-15) As such, we can be SURE that no other infant in our times fits John's unique calling.

There is no benefit to throwing out everything we have learned about what it means to be a believer and what it means to repent of unbelief and sin in our zeal to ensure that our loved ones are saved. We ourselves were not saved by the works done on our behalf (except those of Jesus) and neither will our loved ones be. Our "baptism" of infants does not obligate God to write their names in His Book of Life. The fact remains that many people who were baptized as infants stray from the faith or outright reject it as adults. Our actions in "baptizing" them as babies does not "immunize" them against that happening. We don't think that if we baptize them again without their knowledge or consent, that will remedy the problem do we? Think about it. When Jesus said to let the children come to Him, He meant for us to teach them about Him. (Deu. 11:19, Matt. 19:14—Jesus didn't baptize anyone in water—John 4:2, Matt. 3:11, Luke 3:16) If children don't hear, then they will not know the right way to go when they are older. (Prov. 22:6, Matt. 7:13-14) Pray! (Eph. 6:10-20)

Babies and small children who have been "baptized" are kind of like the disciples that Paul found in Ephesus. (Acts 19:1-7) He asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit, and they had no idea what he was even talking about! He then asked into what they had been baptized and they answered, "John's baptism." Paul explained that John was preparing the way for Jesus, who takes away the sins of the world upon repentance. (John 1:19-36, Matt. 3:1-8) They were then baptized out of obedience to the commandment now that they KNEW that all of their hope belonged in the shed blood of Jesus, not in a ritual of washing with water. (1Pet. 3:18-22) Very importantly, it wasn't until then, upon

reaching this understanding, that they received the Holy Spirit. They had not understood previously that there even WAS an indwelling Holy Spirit as part of the New Covenant. The water baptism isn't what made them believers. Their FAITH in Jesus, whom they hadn't understood until then, saved them. They received the Holy Spirit when their knowledge of what it was they believed in was complete. Prior to their encounter with Paul, they had not yet been born again. However, only those who are born again HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT within them, testifying that they are children of God, and ONLY they will enter the kingdom of God. (Romans 8)

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

*"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 [in] 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." John 14:15-24*

***I in them and you in me**, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. John 17:23*

*You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact **the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not***

**belong to him.** But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also **give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.** Romans 8:9-11

**The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,** and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. Romans 8:16-17

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to **make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.** Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. Colossians 1:24-29

What is the harm in infant baptism, you might ask? The answer is: false assurance of salvation. When asked how they know they are saved, many will point to their infant baptism or their confirmed membership in a denomination. These things do not save. Someone who has truly been baptized INTO Christ is a new creation who will show fruits of the indwelling Holy Spirit IF He is present in that person who professes to believe. (Gal. 5:16-25, Rom. 12:1-2) They will not be instantly transformed, but there will be progress made toward that end by the Holy Spirit within them working their new life in Christ OUT.

Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.** The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, **not counting their trespasses against them,** and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:17-19

Do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** We were **buried therefore with him by baptism into death,** in order that, just as Christ was **raised** from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might **walk in newness of life.** For if we have

*been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that **our old self was crucified with him** in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would **no longer be enslaved to sin**. Romans 6:3-6*

*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 13:11-14*

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always **obeyed**, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for **it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.** Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Philippians 2:12-16*

*For this very reason, **make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*** For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for **if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. 2 Peter 1:5-12

We are to do good works as believers, and those are done by the power of the Holy Spirit, not by our own. They are done AFTER being born again, NOT as an effort to be saved. (Titus 3:8) Only Jesus saves. (John 3:18) We as believers more often than not fail when we try to live in a godly manner—to be "perfect as our Father is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) I believe it's because we forget that He's

with us always, not just when we're "at church" (but we ARE the church—we ARE "God's house"). Another reason is that we are only willing to give up a measure of control to Him. We think of our lives as still belonging to us, whereas Jesus wants total surrender. He said anyone who is not willing to give up ALL is not worthy of Him. (Luke 14:33, Matt. 10:37-39)

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.** Ephesians 2:8-10*

I'm sure that many will not agree with me on the points I've discussed above, but I think we can all agree on one thing. The reformers fought for our right to read the Bible for ourselves. That is exactly what we should do—read our Bibles while we still can. One of the greatest tricks ever pulled off by the devil is to convince so many that the Bible is outdated, too hard to understand, or boring. None of those ideas are true! In the Bible, our living, loving almighty God reveals Himself to us. Let's treasure it and get to know Him through what He has inspired His faithful prophets, apostles and disciples to record for us. Let's take a look around us and see the wonders that He has made and not question whether or how He did it. (Rom. 1:18-22)

Let's not "play church" by going through the motions and thinking of it as a place we go to once a week instead of remembering that WE are temples of the living God 24/7/365.25. How we think and behave, and the words we say reflect what is on the inside of us. (Matt. 15:18-19, John 15:8, Matt. 5:16)

*The saying is trustworthy, for: **If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.** Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. But **God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."** Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for*

*honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, **if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.** So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those **who call on the Lord from a pure heart.** Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:11-26*

Let's be ready when Jesus returns for believers PRIOR to God's wrath. (See Rev. 15—those who conquered the beast are present in heaven before the seven bowls of wrath are poured out after the last trumpet. Also see Isaiah 26:20-21, 1Thess. 5:9-10, Rom. 5:9) However, even prior to this point, there are references to "those who dwell in heaven." (Rev. 12:12, Rev. 13:6) The Church of Philadelphia is promised to somehow be kept from the "hour of trial" (which appears to be the reign of the beast). (Rev. 3:10, Rev. 17:12) We are also told that the called, chosen and faithful are WITH Jesus when He returns to "destroy those who destroy the earth." (Rev. 11:15-19, Rev. 17:14, Rev. 19:11-21) Rather than argue about when Jesus will return or try to set dates, let's concentrate on being READY, with our lamps lit. Jesus gave a lot of very good advice on how to do that in the parables of Matthew 25 and in Luke 12, which includes the parable of the master returning FROM a wedding.

*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** [the Holy Spirit] teaches you about everything, and He is truth and He doesn't lie—just as He 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*

If we are to heed Jesus' words, we need to READ OUR BIBLES. (Try to compare more than one version and stay away from paraphrases or "special" Bibles published by groups to support their false beliefs.) Faith comes by HEARING THE WORD. Works do not save. They are the RESULT of a person who IS saved. (James 1:22-25, James 2:14-26, Matt. 7:15-29, John 15, Matt. 13:23) Let's confirm our calling by yielding to the Holy Spirit's work in transforming us

into the image of Jesus, from the inside out. (Luke 6:45, 8:15, 1Pet. 5:10, 2Pet. 1:10)

Luther called Karlstadt “a mystic” for preaching about the regeneration of the Holy Spirit (and thus, being expected to display the natural result of bearing fruit of the Spirit) in those with genuine faith, NOT through rituals. Those rituals that Luther wanted to keep from his former times as a Roman Catholic are works. They do NOT save.

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

Let’s not be “respecters of persons” such that we take the word of someone because they are admired by others instead of comparing what they said to the Bible.

*And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; **God shows no partiality**)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. Galatians 2:6*

*My brothers, **show no partiality** as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. James 2:1*

Why do we make excuses for certain people? For example, Luther was known to use foul language quite often, even in writing—but the Bible says this is NOT appropriate for the children of God. (Eph. 4:29-32, 5:4, 1Tim. 2:8, 3:3, 2Tim. 2:24-26, 3:2, Matt. 12:36)

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

The above passage goes directly against Luther's letter, entitled "Let Your Sins Be Strong [or Bold]"—in which he said that, "No sin can separate us from Him, even if we were to kill or commit adultery thousands of times each day." Wow. I MUST tell you that such behavior would NOT exhibit the fruits of the Spirit, nor is it what we who will be judged by how we used our liberty should consider ourselves "free" to do! (Jam. 2:12, 1Pet. 2:16, 2Cor. 12:20-21) We don't have to be satisfied with that one passage. John says this about professed believers who make a practice of sin:

*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**. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 1 John 3:4-11*

We must love our brothers, but Luther called even those of the faith who disagreed with him nasty names—he called Karlstadt "the devil incarnate." His crime? To believe what the Bible actually says about "in truth and spirit" instead of clinging to Roman Catholic rituals (which imitated the Levitical priesthood) under the belief that they have saving power! "God's seed" in the passage above is the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 8:9-14, 1Cor. 3:16, 6:29, Gal. 5:24, John 14:15-26, 1John 3:24, 4:13) The "form of godliness" is the ritual, and denying of the "power of godliness" is the Holy Spirit—not the other way around! (Titus 2:11-15; the people described in 2Tim. 3:1-5 continue making a practice of sin rather than heeding the prompting of the Holy Spirit to walk in a manner worthy of God—Eph. 4:1-2, Col. 1:10, 1Thess. 2:12, Phil. 3:14-19, 1Cor. 9:24-10:13, Heb. 12.)

***His divine power** has granted to us all things that **pertain to life and godliness**, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having **escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful***

**desire.** *For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they **keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.** Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you **practice** these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to **recall these things.** 2 Peter 1:3-15*

Paul warns us that those who make a practice of rebelling against God by indulging their sinful nature after having been born from above will NOT inherit the kingdom of God. We need to keep it all in context rather than pulling bits and pieces out that serve our purposes. The deliberate sins of the unregenerated person are meant to stay in the past. (1Pet. 4:3-5, 1Cor. 15:34)

*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

Jesus said that those who bear bad fruit do so because they are rotten INSIDE. Those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit bear HIS fruit, which is GOOD. We have beautiful lists of what those traits and behaviors will look like from Paul (and Peter, quoted earlier).

**"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit.** For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. **The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.** "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." Luke 6:43-49 (Also see John 13:34-35, Matt. 7:16-29, Mark 7:20-22.)

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*

Let's put our trust in the Scriptures themselves rather than on someone else's interpretation of them. Let's love God more than this temporary world. (John 12:25-26, 1John 2:15-17, Jam. 1:12, 4:4-10) Then we'll be ready.

*"Be dressed in **readiness**, and **keep your lamps lit.**" Luke 12:35*

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

*Your word is a **lamp** to my feet and a **light** to my path. Psalm 119:105*

*The fear of the LORD is the **beginning of wisdom**; all those who **practice** it have a good **understanding.** His praise endures forever! Psalm 111:10*

Written by Tricia Berg, October 31, 2017, updated Jan. 2020, 24 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 at the top of the page.) You can also read this article on my blog: <http://clotheyourselves.blogspot.com/>, where the Bible verses should pop up when you hover over the cites.