

**True Reformer**  
("Possessing Everything")  
by Tricia Berg

*We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything. 2 Corinthians 6:3-10*

This is the 500th anniversary of the posting of 152 theses against false practices of Roman Catholicism by Andreas Karlstadt (April 26, 1517). Yes, it was six months before Luther's 95 theses on October 31, 1517. The two were German peers and began as allies in the great reformation; however, Luther was later instrumental in quashing parts of the more comprehensive reforms desired by Karlstadt.

Andreas Rudolph Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486–December 24, 1541), is better known as Andreas Karlstadt or Carlstadt, even though Karlstadt was the name of the town where he was born (similar to how Mary of Magdala was known as Mary Magdalene). He was archdeacon of the collegiate Church of All Saints, connected to the residential castle of the Saxon princes in Wittenberg. His position was second in the hierarchy of clerics and included teaching theology at the University of Wittenberg, which had been founded several years before he was ordained. So he had much to lose by speaking up, but the truth was more important to him. He married and embraced a simple, humble lifestyle.

In a letter dated April 28, 1517, Karlstadt informed Dr. George Spalatin that he posted his "conclusions" on the previous Sunday. In looking up the date April 28, 1517 (on the Julian calendar in effect at that time), we see it was a Tuesday, so the Sunday prior was April 26, 1517. He verifies this to be the case by also referring to that day as "the day of the Lord's mercy," and also indicates that the "venerable relics" were on display. The letter itself was written on the "day of Vitalis," which indicates the commemorative feast day of the patron saint Vitalis, April 28. (See [http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=598](http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=598)) NOTE: The protestant reformers were former Roman Catholics who fought against false doctrine. They did not immediately recognize and give up every error at once. If

you think about it, today we still refer to the day of Jesus' resurrection as "Easter," even though it is a pagan name and so are many of the corresponding traditions (but by far the majority of Christians don't realize it.)

Luther's theses dealt primarily against the sale of indulgences ("time off in purgatory," a temporary place of punishment that is nonexistent, according to the Bible), and the power wielded over people through them by the papacy, not to mention the profit made from the sale of them. Karlstadt protested additional unbiblical practices such as infant baptism\*, forbidding priests to marry, administering only the bread and not the cup to lay people during communion, wearing of priestly robes and usage of lofty titles, graven images and more. (Luther eventually confronted many of these issues as well.) Luther opposed the "hasty" removal of graven images and use of violence as a means to do so. However, Karlstadt opposed violence as well, as evidenced by a letter he wrote to those wishing to enlist his aid, saying that Christians are not called to violence. (See the Sermon on the Mount below.)

\*See my article entitled [Believer's Baptism](#), which I will be updating in the future. There is a shorter, newer article on the topic [here](#). I hope to eventually write a more extensive article on Karlstadt and his differences with the Roman Catholic Church and with Luther, as well.

Karlstadt insisted that we are all part of the priesthood, as the Bible says (1 Peter 2:4-12, Hebrews 3:5-6), and that we are not to be "respecters of people" (see James 2:1-13, Romans 12:3-8), exalting the clergy over others (Matthew 23:1-15) or claiming that ordinary people cannot be instructed by the Holy Spirit. (There is a need for leadership, but the full responsibility for a congregation should not fall on one man. Paul gives guidelines for gatherings in 1 Corinthians 14:26-33) He insisted that we must show evidence of being born again after claiming to have come to faith, due to the regeneration and indwelling of the believer's spirit by the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5, 1 John 3:24, 1 John 4:13, Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 6:17-20)

Ironically, Luther labeled Karlstadt a "mystic," and came to oppose him. I say it is ironic, because Luther's third theses states: "Yet it *does not mean solely inner repentance*; such inner repentance is *worthless* unless it *produces various outward mortification of the flesh*." ("Flesh" is the "old, sinful inner man" that loves sin.) That would make a pretty good summary of James 2:8-26, and yet, again ironically, Luther referred to the Book of James as "an epistle of straw." James explained by the examples of Abraham and Rahab that just **claiming** to have faith, but not **following up on it with actions**, is useless. God is not interested in hypocrites for His children, nor He can He be fooled. (Matthew 24:51, Galatians 6:7-10, 2 Timothy 2:19, 2 Corinthians 12:20-3:5, Hebrews 10:19-39, 1 Chronicles 28:9, Revelation 2:23, Psalm 94:8-11, Malachi 3:13-18) Jesus said that unless we

obey Him, then we do not love Him. (John 13:34-35, 15:12-17, Matt. 22:37-40) Let's remember that God has made great promises to those who love Him. (Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, James 1:12-16, 1 Peter 1:8-9, Matthew 7:21-27)

***"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.**" John 14:15-24

***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.** John 15:8-10***

The entire point is that IF a person has been born again (John 3:3), then their spirit is regenerated and brought to life by God alone (John 1:12-13)—by grace, through faith—there will be fruits of His indwelling Spirit evident in the believer's life. Faith without works (fruit of the Spirit - Galatians 5:19-25, the new creation in Christ - 2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 13:13-14) is dead (or perhaps counterfeit? In any case, the person has not died to self if God's will is not desired and sincere efforts made to do it - Philippians 2:12-16, 1 John 3:1-12) and works (no matter how sincere) without faith cannot save either, as only Jesus saves.

The New Covenant "royal law" and "law of liberty" are the laws under which believers operate, not the Old Covenant law. (Romans 6, Romans 13:8-10, James 1:25, James 2:8, James 2:12) Jesus said that if we understand the greatest two commands, we have come near the Kingdom of God. (Mark 12:28-34, John 13:34-35) Paul said that love fulfills the law because through it, all of the other commands (in spirit, not letter) will be kept. (Romans 7:6) We do "works" (obey Jesus, yield to the Holy Spirit's work within of transforming us into the image of Jesus, walk in the Spirit - Colossians 3:1-10, Romans 8) as a result of being saved, out of love, not to earn salvation, not out of fear—not even of our own power, but by His Spirit, working out from inside of us with our cooperation. (1 John 4:13-21,

5:3, Ephesians 3:7, 16, 20, Colossians 1:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, 2 Timothy 1:8, 2 Peter 1:3-12)

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**. Romans 13:8-10

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. James 2:8-26

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become **accountable to God**; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the **knowledge of sin**. But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and

fall short of the glory of God, being **justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus**; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because **in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed**; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a **law of faith**. For we maintain that a man is **justified by faith apart from works of the Law**. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law. Romans 3:19-31

Please note that "not one iota or dot will pass from the law" in the passage below does not change the fact that the way it is fulfilled has been changed. This does not contradict the sentence just previous to it where Jesus said He came to fulfill them. Not only that, but we ourselves fulfill them by keeping the law of Christ, of liberty, of faith, of the spirit, of love, the royal law (all the very same thing)—by the power of the Holy Spirit IN us. Our righteousness will exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees because we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, and by His Spirit, we fulfill the spirit of the law, which gives life, instead of the letter, which kills. (2Cor. 3:5-6, Rom. 8:2, 13:8-10, 14, Titus 2:11-3:8) Jesus explains that the spirit of the law is actually stricter than the letter—yet no one could even perfectly keep the letter of the law. This higher standard points out our desperate need for a Savior. (Rom. 6:14-15) Just as He fulfilled the letter of the law for us, His Spirit in us empowers us to keep the spirit of it when we yield to His leading. (Eph. 4:30, 1Thess. 5:19, Gal. 5:18, 24)

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may **see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven**. Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but **to fulfill them**. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders

*will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil. You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be **perfect**, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew 5:13-48*

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may **not sin**. But if anyone does sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the **propitiation for our sins**, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we **keep his commandments**. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep

*his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but **whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.** By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to **walk in the same way in which he walked.** 1 John 2:1-6 (We are not able to fulfill the law as Jesus did, nor are we expected to, so we know that is not what is referred to by "walking as he walked." See above for the laws we are under. "Keeping His commandments" does not mean reverting to the letter of the Mosaic law.)*

*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. 1 John 1:5-10*

We don't "purify ourselves" in this age according to the washing rituals, dietary restrictions and other requirements of the Mosaic law. (Col. 2:16-23, 1Tim. 4:1-6, Rom. 14:3-6, 14, 20) We do so by refraining from evil, especially sexual immorality, which is against our bodies—the temple of God. (1Thess. 4:1-8, 5:22, Rom. 16:19, 1Cor. 6:9-20, Eph. 5:3-33) We cannot "know God" without being made one Spirit with Him, in which case, He leads us by His Spirit in the way of righteousness, to follow the greatest two commands (which is the entire spirit of the law). (1Cor. 6:18-20, Rom. 8:9, 13-14, 14:17, Mark 12:29-34) This is how we ABIDE in Him. (John 15:1-26) As we saw above (in John's letter written to believers), it's not a matter of being cast off for slipping, but of making sure not to harden our hearts against the Holy Spirit so that we refuse to repent when He convicts us of sin. (Heb. 3:12-14)

*See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called **children of God**; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him **purifies himself**, just as He is pure. Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and 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 sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.** Little children, **make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;** the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. **No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.** By this*

*the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: **anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.** For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because **his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.** 1 John 3:1-12*

Reformation is about examining religious practices in light of the pure truth of the Bible and eliminating any traditions of men that do not line up. God does not wish to be worshiped as we see fit, but in spirit and truth. (John 4:19-26) If He gave us instructions, they are to be followed. He doesn't want us adding or taking away anything because we didn't think it was important or thought something was missing. He doesn't want legalism, either. ALL correction must have its motive in love and goal in restoration. Jesus, Paul and James both told us to rebuke sinners and welcome them back if they repent. (Matthew 18:15-17, Luke 17:3-4, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, 2 Corinthians 2:6-8, Ephesians 4:15-24, Galatians 6:1, James 5:19-20)

Jesus lists the errors of the Church that displease Him in the letters of Revelation 2-3. He also promises a blessing for heeding His warnings and the rest of the words of the book, as well as a severe consequence for those who add or take away from it. (Revelation 1:3, 22:7, 22:18-19) We would do well to pay attention to the repeated exhortations to stay awake and keep watch so that we will be ready for His return. (Matthew 16:6, 24:42-51, 25:13, 26:41, Mark 8:15, 13:33-37, 14:38, Luke 12:15, 12:35-40, 21:8, 21:34-36, Acts 20:25-31, Romans 13:11-14, 16:17-19, 1 Corinthians 15:33-34, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Galatians 5:13-6:1-2, 1 Timothy 4:16, 2 John 1:6-11, Revelation 3:2-3, 16:15)

*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*

Someone may say, "God was referring to Israel's mistakes, not ours," but:

*For **whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction,** that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Romans 15:4 (See also 2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

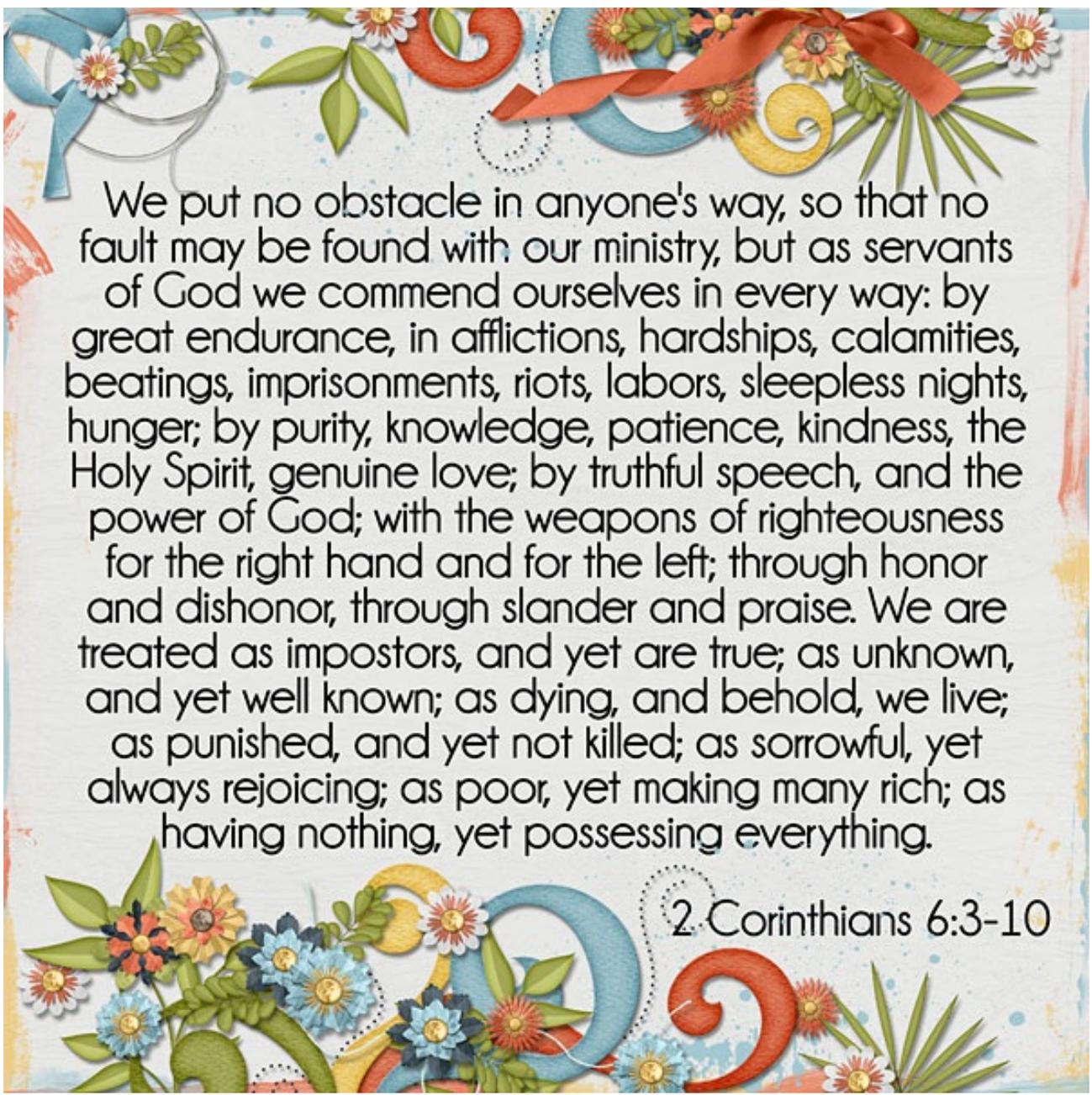
*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the **true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth,** for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. John 4:23*

**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 (Also see Phil. 3:3, Eph. 4:20-24, Col. 3:9-10, 2Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15.)

Today (4-26-17) also happens to be three years from the date on which I began this blog ([layoutfortoday.blogspot.com](http://layoutfortoday.blogspot.com)).

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A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring colorful flowers in shades of blue, orange, and white, green leaves, and flowing ribbons in blue, orange, and yellow. The background is a light, textured surface with subtle blue and orange accents.

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2 Corinthians 6:3-10

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