

Warned by Every Prophet

by Tricia Berg

*Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "**Turn from your evil ways** and keep My commandments and My statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by My servants the prophets." 2 Kings 17:13*

As we read the above verse, we need to keep in mind that we believers are grafted into Israel. (Rom. 11:11-24) We who have entered into the New Covenant are not under the Old Testament Law, but we serve the same God as those to whom the above passage was written. He doesn't change. He still hates sin and desires His children to be holy like their Father. We are His adopted children if we truly believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths. (John 1:12-13, Rom. 10:8-10, Rom. 2:29)

*For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but **if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live**. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of **adoption as sons**, by whom we cry, "**Abba! Father!**" 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. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the **revealing of the sons of God**. Romans 8:13-19*

*As **obedient children**, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, **you also be holy in all your conduct**, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as **Father** who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed **from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers**, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the **precious blood** of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:14-19*

Notice in the passages below, the Galatians and Colossians are being scolded for being convinced to observe the letter of the law concerning Sabbaths, new moons, feasts, circumcision, food restrictions, etc. Yet somehow there is a growing movement of people who think that people in this age, including

Gentile believers, still need to jump through these hoops. They twist the very clear passages in the Bible to fit their preferred view and deceive themselves into thinking they're actually keeping them (which is impossible without a physical temple). (See Acts 15:10-11, 19-20, 28-29, 21:25, Rom. 14:14, 20, Jam. 2:10, Deut. 16:16) Contrary to their claims, Peter's vision demonstrated that the food restrictions represented the distinction between Jew and Gentile that no longer exists. (Acts 10:1-11:18, Gal. 3:28, 1Cor. 12:13, Rom. 2:9-11)

*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive **adoption as sons**. And because you are **sons**, God has sent **the Spirit of his Son into our hearts**, crying, "**Abba! Father!**" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. **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 4:4-11*

*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. 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 2:16-23*

Making a show of being holy by observing rituals does not cleanse the inside (Matt. 23:1-7, 27-28)—that includes abstaining from eating particular foods (Mark 7:1-23, Rom. 14:17, Heb. 13:9), ceremonial washings of hands and objects (Matt. 15:1-20, 23:25-26), water baptism (Matt. 3:7-12), circumcision (Gal. 6:15), making offerings that are not from the heart (Matt. 23:23, 6:1-4, 2Cor. 9:7), or praying repetitively or insincerely (Matt. 6:5-8, Luke 18:9-14). Jesus is our Sabbath rest, and Lord of the Sabbath. (Eph. 2:14-16, Col. 1:19-

20, Mark 2:28, Heb. 4:8-10 - the comparison with Joshua relates to entering the promised land, which was a foreshadow of the kingdom of God. It's not about keeping the seventh day Sabbath, which will ultimately be fulfilled by the millennial reign of Christ.) In the New Testament, our entire lives belong to Jesus—we are His temple ALL of the time. (Luke 14:33, 9:62, Matt. 16:24-27, Eph. 2:20-22, 5:23, Col. 1:18, 1Pet. 2:4-5, 1Cor. 3:16, 1Cor. 6:19-20, 2Cor. 6:16)

*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

*The **heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the **fruit of his deeds.**"*** Jeremiah 17:9-10

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and **discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.** And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must **give account.** Hebrews 4:12-13*

Jesus has finished the work of redemption, and we now rest from performing the works of the Law, which He fulfilled. (Matt. 5:17, John 4:23-24) We have freedom in Christ to serve according to the spirit of the law instead of the letter. Each believer is free to choose for themselves how to honor and serve God, with the leading of the Holy Spirit, based on the guidelines in the Bible as to what pleases Him (obviously not sin). (Rom. 14, Rom. 12, 1Cor. 12, Eph. 5:10) We observe the spirit of the law by walking IN the Spirit. We show God we LOVE Him by obeying Him. (John 14:15-26, John 15:10, 2Cor. 5:14-15, 1John 3:24, 5:3)

*Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, **in order that we may bear fruit for God.** For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to*

that which held us captive, so that we **serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.** Romans 7:4-6

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a **new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit.** For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Corinthians 3:5-6

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 practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And **those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:13-25

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has **ceased from sin**, so as to **live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.** For the time that is **past** suffices for doing what the **Gentiles** want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 1 Peter 4:1-5

We have LIBERTY in Christ, but we will be judged by Him as to how we used it. The entire law is fulfilled by loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves (and summarized by the second one, since we can ONLY do that IF we do the first, in that order - 1John 4:7-13) If we're walking in the Spirit, we will obey God, and through our love of Him and each other, the entire law will be fulfilled.

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

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

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

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.** James 2:8-17

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 1:19-27*

In Matt. 7:21-29 and Luke 6:43-49, Jesus said basically the same thing as James said above. People who think they can just give Jesus "lip service" of believing, but not follow through by following Him, are deceiving themselves. (Also see Jam. 1:12-16, Matt. 10:38, Luke 9:62) We are FREE in Christ, but that includes being free FROM the power that sin once held over us to make us OBEY it instead of obeying God.

*Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the **Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.** 30 But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman. Galatians 4:25-26, 30-31 (The reference to Mt. Sinai is a reference to the Law, since that is where it was given. Exo. 19-20)*

*What then? Are we to **sin** because we are **not under law but under grace?** **By no means!** Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, **you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?** But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become **obedient from the heart** to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been **set free from sin**, have become **slaves of righteousness.** I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as **slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness**, so now present your members as **slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.** For when you **were** slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what **fruit** were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now **ashamed?** For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been*

set free **from** sin and have become **slaves of God**, the **fruit** you get leads to **sanctification** and its end, **eternal life**. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:15-23

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin**. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8:31-36

They **promise them freedom**, but they themselves are **slaves of corruption**. For whatever **overcomes** a person, to that he is **enslaved**. 2 Peter 2:19

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 (Also see Heb. 10:26-31.)

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

As God's adopted children who are spiritually given new birth through the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8, 1:13, 1Pet. 1:23, 1John 3:9, 3:24, John 14:20), we are warned to turn from evil as the same as those who were physically born Jews were supposed to do. (Jer. 6:16)

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." 2 Timothy 2:19

*For your **obedience** is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be **wise** as to what is **good** and **innocent** as to what is **evil**.* Romans 16:19

*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

*For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him **keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit**; let him **turn away from evil and do good**; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But **the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.**"* 1 Peter 3:10-12

***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.** Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 1 Corinthians 10:6-14*

We may not have metal, stone or wood images that we worship, but anything that comes before or above God in our hearts and lives is an idol. Worshiping our own version of God, one who is unconcerned about our sin and holiness now that Jesus died for it (Heb. 12:14), one who doesn't "see" our sin anymore (Rev. 2-3, Acts 5:1-11), is also idolatry. Jesus will forgive and cleanse us of any sin that we **repent** of and confess to Him. He intercedes on our behalf for the

very reason that we slip or do things we shouldn't out of ignorance, but that is different from refusing to repent, and deliberately practicing sin as a way of life. (Rom. 8:34, Heb. 7:25, Rom. 6, 1Cor. 15:33-34, Heb. 10, 1John 1-4, 2Pet. 5:1-15, Philip. 3:14-19, 1Cor. 10:6-14, 2Cor. 12:20-13:3)

Notice in the passage at the top that instead of doing evil, they were to keep God's commandments. So are we—just not the Mosaic Law. Jesus fulfilled the Law, and we obey His two simple (but not easy) commandments. By keeping those two, we fulfill the rest. This doesn't mean we are free to intentionally sin, but that if we really love God and our neighbor, we WON'T sin against them (especially not on purpose). Just going through the motions of serving God does not please Him, but that doesn't mean that He doesn't desire that we please Him. He wants GENUINE devotion and adoration, as He alone deserves.

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

*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 14:20-24*

*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 (Also see Matt. 5:13-16)

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

Paul encourages us to cleanse ourselves from what is dishonorable, so we will be useful to the master of the house. He exhorts us to FLEE from "youthful passions" and pursue righteousness and other virtues that are fruits of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:12-25) We are not left on our own to do these things of our own power—they are fruits produced BY the Holy Spirit who lives IN us if we are born again. However, if we refuse to cooperate with Him, He will not force us. (1Thess. 5:19, Eph. 4:30) Paul encourages us to be patient with those who have been "captured by the devil to do his will" and "correct them with gentleness" so perhaps they will "come to their senses and escape" (from their evil master, the devil). (Also 2Pet. 2:19, Rom. 6:12-13, James 5:19-20)

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 2:20-26 (This immediately follows v. 19, "Let those who name the name of the Lord turn from iniquity," quoted previously.)

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. Colossians 1:21-23

The false prophets of our day for the most part encourage people to do whatever they want, even if God said in the Bible NOT to do it, and call it "faith" when they put God to the test. (Luke 4:12) (There are also some who insist that we are still under the Law, but most people recognize that as false teaching. There are no mega-churches that I am aware that preach law-

keeping.) Below is what God said about the false prophets in Jeremiah's day, warning the people about them. The people were being assured all was well and they were "good" with God despite their ignoring all of His instructions. Sound familiar?

*Thus says the LORD of hosts: "**Do not listen** to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with **vain hopes**. They speak visions of their **own minds**, **not** from the mouth of the LORD. They say continually **to those who despise the word of the LORD**, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who **stubbornly follows his own heart**, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.'" For **who among them has stood in the council of the LORD to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened?** Behold, the storm of the LORD! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. **In the latter days you will understand it clearly.** "I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds." Jeremiah 23:16-22*

Let's not forget that God considered it despising HIM when the people refused to go into the promised land out of fear. (Num. 14, esp. v. 11) We are told NOT to fear those who can only harm our bodies. (Matt. 10:28) Remember, the things that happened in the past are examples to us. (1Cor. 10:6-14, quote previously.) Notice how Abraham, Isaac and Jacob physically lived in tents during their "exile," while looking forward to the city of God. We're doing the same thing. We are ALSO sojourners here on earth, and the tents are our bodies. (2Cor. 5:1-11, 2Pet. 1:13-15, 1Pet. 1:17-19, 1Pet. 2:10-12, Phil. 3:17-21, Eph. 2:19-22)

*By faith Abraham went to live in the land of promise, as in a **foreign land**, **living in tents** with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was **looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.** Hebrews 11:9-10*

Like the patriarchs of Israel (the cultivated olive tree we are grafted into), they COULD have returned to their old country if they didn't have enough faith to trust in God. God doesn't "lose" us, but He doesn't force us to follow through on our professed faith, either. The faith is counted as righteousness IF it is REAL, not if it's FAKE. When claim to believe, but we love the world and its ways more than God, we are saying we want to return to our "old country."

These ["giants of the faith"] 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

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 2:18-26 (Also see John 15:14.)

James is NOT saying that we earn salvation, but that IF our faith is genuine, we will follow up on it. God is not impressed by empty words and "good intentions" that result in His NOT being honored and glorified. (Titus 1:16, 1John 3:8, Phil. 3:18-19, 1John 2:3-6, Gal. 6:7-9, Matt. 5:13-16, John 13:35, 15:8-10, Eph. 2:10, Col. 1:10, Titus 2:11-15, 3:8, Heb. 6:11-12)

We are to have the mind-set that the ONLY one we should fear is God. (Today, it seems to be quite the opposite, don't you think? People idolize and adore celebrities of all kinds, take their advice, and often try to emulate them, but they think of Jesus as a "buddy," change His words to ones they like better, and think of Him mostly when they need something, or like "fire insurance.") We know that even though Jesus said the one who denies Him, He will also deny and yet Peter was forgiven for denying Him three times. So like other sins, that one is forgivable, but we mustn't be found denying Him even up until our death or when He returns. Stifling the Holy Spirit is the start of falling away from God. (Heb. 3:12-14, Matt. 13:20-22, Heb. 6:7-8, Matt. 13:40-43, John 15:6)

"Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall

*glorify me.” But to the wicked God says: “**What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. If you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company with adulterers.** You give your mouth **free rein for evil**, and your tongue **frames deceit**. You sit and speak against your brother; you **slander** your own mother’s son. **These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.** Mark this, then, you who forget God, lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver! The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!” Psalm 50:14-23*

*For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: “Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and **do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.** But **the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.**” Isaiah 8:11-13*

*Only **let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ**, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and **not frightened in anything by your opponents.** This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For **it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake**, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. Philippians 1:27-30*

*“**Blessed** are you when others **revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:11-12*

*And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. **Blessed** are you when people **hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!** Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.*

Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.” Luke 6:20-26

*"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. **If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.** So **have no fear of them**, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And **do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.** Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. **So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.** Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. **Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.**" Matthew 10:24-39*

The "sword" referred to by Jesus in the above passage is the one that divides the soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and discerns thoughts and intentions of the heart. That includes everyone, but those who are IN Christ will not be condemned. (Heb. 4:12-13, quoted previously, Rom. 8:1, 1Cor. 3:12-15, Rom. 2:6-11, 14:12, 2Cor. 5:9-10, Gal. 6:4-5, Matt. 16:27, Rev. 11:18, 22:12, 1Pet. 4:17) Like those above, the following passages reassuring us of God's love, power and might are NOT meant to encourage us to sin against Him! They are meant to inspire us to endure through whatever suffering that comes our way, knowing that our reward in heaven far outweighs anything this world could ever offer. Notice how honoring God with our behavior and being assured that God is on our side are connected:

*Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Let marriage be held in **honor among all**, and let the*

*marriage bed be **undefiled**, for **God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous**. Keep your life **free from love of money**, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "**The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?**" Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. **Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.** Hebrews 13:1-8 (Also see 1Cor. 6:9-20, Gal. 5:19-21, Rev. 21:8, 22:15, Rom. 8:13-19.)*

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?** As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither **death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.** Romans 8:31-39

Note: Our God is the same one who spoke through the prophet in Isaiah 59. He still hates those things. Now that the Redeemer predicted in Isa. 59:20 has come, we must turn from our sin (as those who are being grafted in to Israel - Rom. 11:17-24) instead of taking the free gift and trampling on it—outraging the Spirit of grace. (Heb. 10:29) Those who do not bear fruit (of the indwelling Holy Spirit, rather than quench Him or perhaps make an insincere claim of faith, so that He is simply NOT present) are cut off by the Vinedresser like a body part that causes sin—we are the Body of Christ. (John 15:1-2, Matt. 5:29-30, also Matt. 7:19) Don't claim 1John 2:12, but reject 1John 2:28-29 and 1John 3:24, among many others. The point is for our good to evaluate ourselves. (Psa. 139:23-24, 2Cor. 2:4, 7:8-10, 1Tim. 1:5)

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

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

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces **endurance**, and endurance produces **character**, and character produces **hope**, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been **poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit** who has been given to us. Romans 5:1-5

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been **grieved by various trials**, so that **the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that though being destroyed by fire is moreover being refined—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ**. Though you have not seen him, you **love** him. Though you do not now see him, you **believe** in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, **obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls**. 1 Peter 1:6-9

But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you **endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated**. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a **better possession and an abiding one**. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a **great reward**. For you have need of **endurance**, so that **when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised**. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. Hebrews 10:32-39

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. **Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand**. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. **As an example of suffering and patience, brothers,**

take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the **steadfastness of Job**, and you have seen the **purpose of the Lord**, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. James 5:7-11

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' **If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.** But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. John 15:18-21 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. **In the world you will have tribulation.** But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 16:33 (Also see 1John 4:4-6.)

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

We are warned in these last (latter) days about false prophets in the following passages. Today, I don't think anyone is teaching that the resurrection has already happened (except perhaps the Jehovah's Witnesses who do not believe in a literal, physical resurrection, not even of Jesus!), but we certainly do have plenty of quarreling about words, taking passages out of context, twisting them, etc.

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. 2 Timothy 2:14-18

"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. **Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.** On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, **'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'** Everyone then who **hears** these words of mine and **does** them will be like a **wise** man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who **hears** these words of mine and **does not do** them will be like a **foolish** man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." Matthew 7:13-27 (Also see Luke 6:43-49.)

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

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons **not to teach any different doctrine**, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. **The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.** Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without

understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions. **Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.** 1 Timothy 1:3-11

*If anyone teaches a **different doctrine** and does not agree with the **sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ** and the **teaching that accords with godliness**, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are **depraved in mind** and **deprived of the truth**, imagining that godliness is a **means of gain**. But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich **fall into temptation**, into a snare, into many **senseless and harmful desires** that plunge people into **ruin and destruction**. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. **It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs**. But as for you, O man of God, **flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith**. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to **keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach** until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only **Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords**, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. As for the rich in this present age, **charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God**, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to **do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life**. 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 6:3-21

*I solemnly 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, exhort, with great patience and instruction. **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.** But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 2 Timothy 4:1-5*

One of the most disturbing ways that the Bible is being manipulated is to support homosexuality. (There are two very good series on this topic on YouTube. One is by Fred Tarsitano (3 parts) and the other by Mike Winger (4 parts). For anyone who is interested in learning the TRUTH, I highly recommend watching BOTH of those series.) The REASONS that God gave for destroying the nations who were driven out prior to the Israelites being given possession of the land are in Lev. 18.

*"Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for **by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean**, and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and **the land vomited out its inhabitants.** But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and **do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.** For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. So keep my charge **never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you**, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God." Leviticus 18:24-30*

*But they did not listen, and Manasseh **led them astray to do more evil than the nations had done whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel.** 2 Kings 21:9*

Verses 6-18 of Leviticus 18 prohibit intimacy between close relatives by blood or by marriage—this includes ALL children. Physical intimacy is to be ONLY within the bounds of marriage. God has not given an age of when it is

acceptable for people (always of the opposite gender) to marry, but nature tells us that since married couples are meant to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28 - this is impossible for homosexual "couples," due to God's intentional design), we know that marriage should not take place at least until physical maturity (which has gotten younger throughout the ages due to the corruption of the earth, contamination of the food supply, etc., so it would be better to stick with the ages before these recent changes in the age of development took place, in my opinion.) It is also logical to assume that individuals who are unable to care for themselves are too young to get married (and some may never arrive at that point intellectually).

Verse 19 is against intimacy with women during menstruation. Most have never heard of this one and automatically say it's obsolete when they do hear it. If I had to venture a biblically-educated guess, I would say that the menstrual cycle represents death (both spiritually, as when Adam and Eve were banned from the Garden of Eden, at which time Eve was told her difficulties related to child-bearing would increase - Gen. 3:16, and the fact that an egg has not been fertilized to create new life, but is discarded from the woman's body). So it's likely that a man would be considered temporarily defiled (like the woman already was "unclean"—thus unable to enter the temple for a specified period) by coming into contact with the blood (since the life is in the blood - Lev. 17:10-12). Not only that, but since the main purpose of intimacy is fruitfulness, and no offspring will (normally) result from intimacy during that time period, then perhaps God doesn't want the man's "seed" to be wasted. (This also raises the question as to whether God approves of birth control, but that's not the topic of this article. See also Gen. 38:8-10.)

With all that being said, we no longer have requirements not to touch dead things, but believers ARE the temple, so a woman is unable to refrain from "entering" the temple during her period. However, the other references to this restriction are also found in lists of forms of sexual immorality, as opposed to rules about ritual uncleanness due to coming near dead things. (Ezek. 18:6, 22:10-11) So it seems like it's relate to both impurity (which can also have a purpose of protection of health) and to fruitfulness. It's unclear to me whether this prohibition is still in effect or not, but those surrounding it in the text ARE. Concerned couples should study the Bible and pray to God for wisdom in this very private matter. If they then become convinced that it is still wrong, they can cease from that point on and receive forgiveness for what was done in ignorance.

Verses 20-23 prohibit sexual acts with the spouse of another, with any animal, or with someone of the same gender, and also the forbids the sacrifice of

children to false gods. Again, it's illogical to remove any one item from that list and leave the rest (although there are many deceived people who want to force the rest of us to accept some of these practices that God HATES—and make no mistake—there are other extremely depraved individuals whose goal is to eventually get all of them accepted). We need to understand that the various Old Testament restrictions, such as not mixing two different textiles in one garment, distinguishing clean and unclean foods, and yoking animals of different kinds together (or breeding them) represented the separation of Jew and Gentile. These were clearly declared to be obsolete in the New Testament. (Lev. 11, 19:19, Deut. 22:9-11, also see my article "[Be Fruitful](#)" for more on this topic.) The reason they are no longer in effect is that now there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile with respect to salvation. (See above.) (Matt. 7:14-23—this one passage actually explains not only that foods are all clean for us now—Acts 15:9-11, 19-20, 28-29, 21:25, Col. 2:16-23, Rom. 14:14, 17, 20, but ALSO that we are still to refrain from defiling our bodies sexually - Matt. 5:32, 15:18-20, 19:9, Mark 7:18-23, Acts 15:19-20, 15:28-29, 21:25, Rom. 13:13, 1Cor. 5, 6:9-20, 10:8, 2Cor. 12:21, Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:3-12, Col. 3:5-7, 1Thess. 4:2-8, 1Tim. 1:8-11, Heb. 12:15-17, 13:4, 2Pet. 2:6-10, Jude 1:6-8, Rev. 2:14, 2:21, 9:20-21, 21:8, 22:15.)

Do you think that God only hated these things in the Old Testament? No. God still hates now what He hated then, but His unchanging nature is why we can trust His promises. (Mal. 3:6-7, Heb. 13:7-8) The following passage is not only about marriage. Read v. 7:1, which is usually not connected as it should be, due to the change of chapter—but there were no chapter breaks or section headings in the original Greek manuscripts.

*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."** 7:1 **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 6:14-7:1 (Also see Mark 7:21-23, 1Pet. 2:11.)*

Many false teachers encourage people to feel “free” to sin (which is doing anything that God has instructed us in the Bible not to do—see above regarding things that have had their purpose fulfilled and thus no longer in effect). These people are not born of God themselves—the Bible says their end is destruction! (1John 3:6-9, Phil. 3:18-19, 2Pet. 2:3, 2Cor. 11:15, Matt. 7:13, 23, Luke 13:27, Jude 1:11-19) Anyone who desires to enter the kingdom of God should NOT listen to them or follow in their footsteps (1Cor. 6:9-20, Gal. 5:19-21, Rev. 21:8, 22:15, Rom. 1:32, 2Tim. 4:16), but those of Jesus. (Heb. 12:1-4, 13:13, 1Pet. 2:21, John 10:26-27, 8:44, 1John 3:10)

*God is not man, that he should **lie**, or a son of man, that he should **change his mind**. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? Numbers 23:19* (So among other things, we can believe it when God said He made everything, and that He made only two genders, male and female. Gen. 1:27, John 1:3, Col. 1:16-17, Heb. 11:3)

*Ah, you who hide deep from the LORD your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, “Who sees us? Who knows us?” You turn things upside down! **Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, “He did not make me”; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?** Isaiah 29:15-16*

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! **Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!* Isaiah 5:20-21* (Also see 1Cor. 3:18-20, 1Cor. 1:18-31.)

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

*And he said to his disciples, **“Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.** Luke 17:1-2*

*One who is **righteous** is a **guide** to his neighbor, but the way of the **wicked leads them astray**. Proverbs 12:26*

There’s a pretty big difference between indulging ourselves and suffering for the sake of Jesus. That will be a very difficult transition in thinking and behavior to make for anyone who listens to false teachers these days telling them that God “just wants them to be happy” and so He “understands” why they “can’t” stop

sinning. It's not about our "working on ourselves" in order to become holy of our own power. It's about YIELDING to the Holy Spirit as He transforms us into the image of Christ. (Phil. 1:6, Rom. 8:28, 12:1-2, 1Pet. 2:5, Gal. 5:16, 25)

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived ***gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*** ***Do not be deceived,*** my beloved brothers. James 1:12-16 (Don't forget that those who LOVE God, OBEY God. John 14:15, 21, John 15:10, 2Cor. 5:14-15, 1John 5:3)

*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So **run that you may obtain it.** Every athlete exercises **self-control in all things.** They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But **I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.** 1 Corinthians 9:24-27*

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

Note: Regarding the passage above, no one who is not yet saved "has been" sanctified by the blood of Jesus. Furthermore, we KNOW that the hostility that Jesus endured was NOT for sinning (2Cor. 5:21, 1Pet. 2:22, Heb. 4:15, 1John 3:5). It was caused by people who rejected the truth, primarily, that He is the Son of God and Messiah (John 10:31-39, 8:31-59, 14:6, Matt. 21:28-46), but also for speaking against sin. (John 7:7, Matt. 23, 5:21-48, 15:19, Luke 11:37-54) (Also see 1Pet. 3:13-17, 1Pet 4:12-19.)

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [the "giants of the faith 'hall of fame'" in the previous chapter], **let us also lay***

aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who **endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.** In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For **the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.**" It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? **If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.** Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he **disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it **yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.** Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. **Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.** See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become **defiled**; that **no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.** **For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.** Hebrews 12:1-17 (Also see Rev. 3:19.)

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Colossians 3:23-25

Indeed, **I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him,** not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection,

and may **share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.** Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Philippians 3:8-21

The passage at the top of this article continues as follows:

But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and **they followed the nations that were around them,** concerning whom the LORD had **commanded them that they should not do like them.** 2 Kings 17:14-15 (Also see 1Cor. 15:33-34, 2Cor. 6:14-7:1, John 15:19, 1John 2:15-17.)

"Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, 'This is what the LORD says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So **turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.**' But they will reply, 'It's no use. We will continue with our own plans; **we will all follow the stubbornness of our evil hearts.**'" 18 Then they said, "Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us strike him with the tongue, and **let us not pay attention to any of his words.**" Jeremiah 18:11-12, 18

You have **neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear,** although the LORD **persistently sent to you all his servants the prophets,** saying, '**Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and evil deeds,** and dwell upon

the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers from of old and forever.' Jeremiah 25:4-5

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Go and say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, **Will you not receive instruction and listen to my words?** declares the LORD. The command that Jonadab the son of Rechab gave to his sons, to drink no wine, has been kept, and they drink none to this day, for they have obeyed their father's command. **I have spoken to you persistently, but you have not listened to me. I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, 'Turn now every one of you from his evil way, and amend your deeds,** and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to you and your fathers.' **But you did not incline your ear or listen to me.** The sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have kept the command that their father gave them, but **this people has not obeyed me.** Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, because **I have spoken to them and they have not listened, I have called to them and they have not answered.**" Jeremiah 35:12-17

I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them, because **when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight.** Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: **"Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake** have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but **it is they who shall be put to shame.** "The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple! The sound of the LORD, **rendering recompense to his enemies!"** Isaiah 66:4-6

So the point, as always, is that we should be ready when Jesus returns and that means turning from our old ways and doing His will out of LOVE for Him, because He has made us His treasured possession, bought with His precious blood. (Rev. 5:9-10, Mal. 3:16-18, Titus 2:11-15, John 14:15-24, John 15:9-10, 2Cor. 5:14-15, 1John 5:3)

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. 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be **foolish**, but understand what the **will of the Lord** is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord **with your heart**, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of **reverence for Christ**. Ephesians 5:15-21

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. Titus 2:11-15

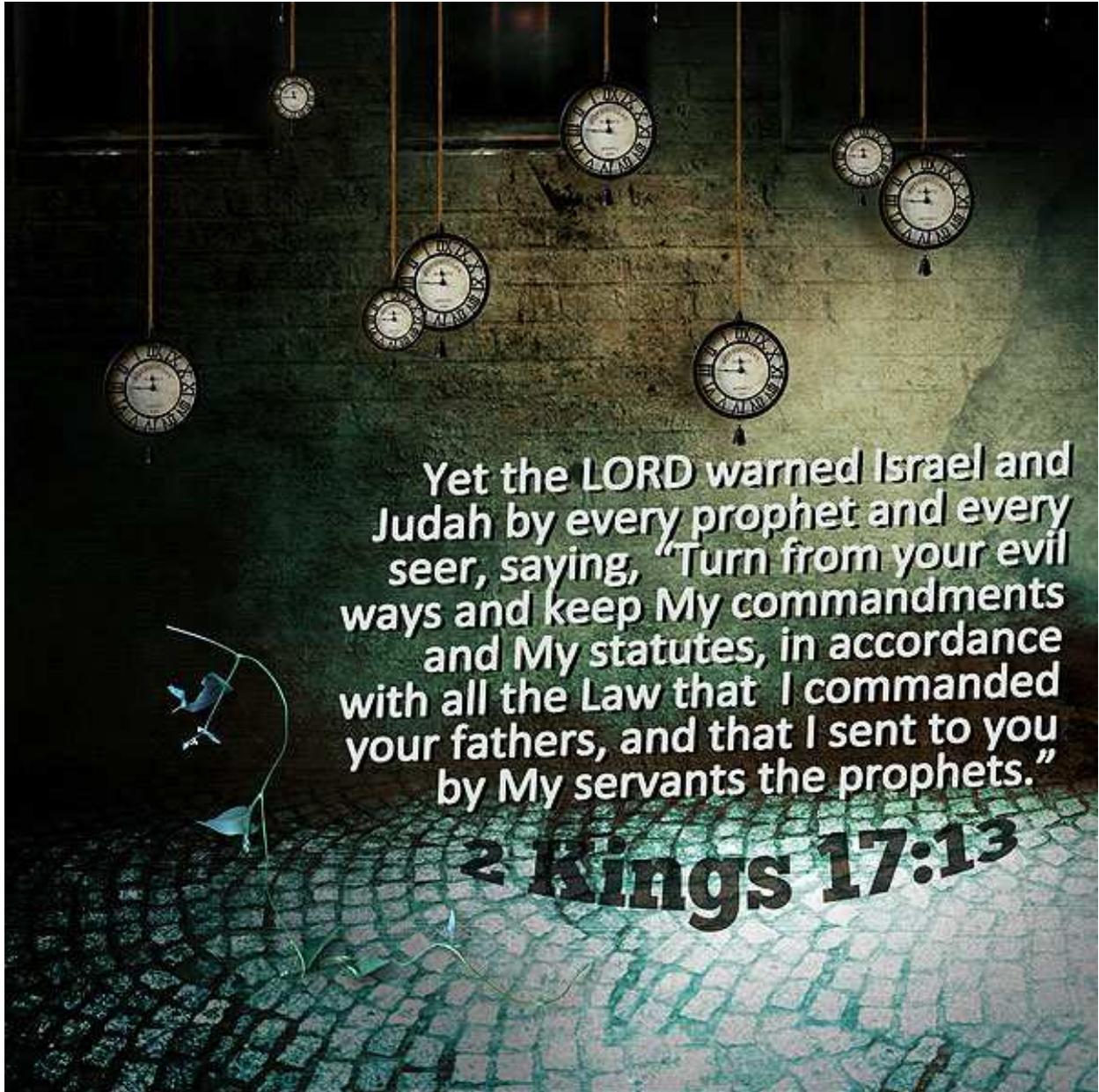
So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** 9 But you are a chosen race, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may **proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light**. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 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. 1 Peter 2:1-5, 9-12

See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but

also the heavens." This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore **let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.** Hebrews 12:25-29

"Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, 'How have we spoken against you?' **You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge** or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape." Then those who **feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name.** "They shall be **mine**, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my **treasured possession**, and I will **spare them** as a man spares his son **who serves him**. Then once more you shall see the **distinction** between the **righteous** and the **wicked**, between one who **serves God** and one who **does not serve him**. For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when **all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble**. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But **for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings**. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. And **you shall tread down the wicked**, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts." Malachi 3:13-4:3 (Also see Zeph. 1:12)

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