

## **WHAT KIND OF FAITH?**

(or "Let No One Deceive You")  
by Tricia Berg

Question: Does your faith reassure you that even though you slip many times and "soil" the pristine white robe that was provided to you by Jesus when you believed on Him for salvation, He will forgive you and wash you clean again every time you repent and ask Him (1John 1:7-10, Rev. 22:14, Matt. 18:15-17, 21-35); or does it reassure you that even though God is holy and hates sin, that He "understands" why you as His dear child have no interest in remaining "clean" and why you love the world more than Him, having no concern whatsoever for the unimaginable suffering of Jesus on your behalf to free you FROM sin (not only the PUNISHMENT for yours, but the CONTROL over you that it [presumably ONCE] had)?

Since we each need to examine our OWN faith (2Cor. 13:5) and make very important conclusions (and changes if need be), I thought I would try to help in that regard by sharing my personal Bible studies. There seems to be a lot of confusion over justification and sanctification. The first is a one-time, instantaneous event when you received your "garment of salvation" and were declared "righteous" by God because you believed Jesus, His Son, died for your sins and rose again from the dead. This is what is meant by being saved by grace through faith alone. It is the free gift of God. (Rom. 5) The second (sanctification) is NOT the same as salvation, but is also necessary in order to enter the kingdom. It is our walk with God AFTER we have been saved. (Acts 15:19-20, 28-29, 1Thess. 4:2-6, 4:7-8, 5:22, 1Pet. 2:11-12, 2:15-16, Rom. 2:6-8) This also is a work of GOD that we do not earn, deserve or repay; however, justification (salvation/the righteousness of Jesus "imputed" [counted/attributed] to us/to "our account") and sanctification (being set apart in holiness for God - 2Cor. 6:14-7:1, abiding/remaining IN Jesus - John 15:1-21 and, therefore, covered/clothed with HIS holiness - Rom. 13:14, Gal. 5:24, Rom. 8:13) both require us to STOP striving against God, surrender to HIS ways instead of insisting upon our own way (including any efforts to save ourselves), as well as cease pursuing our old ways that were in rebellion against Him. (Rom. 8:7, 1Cor. 2:14, Titus 3:3)

God grants repentance from unbelief, which is the cause of both rejecting His Son and our [formerly] BEHAVING as though there were no God or that someone or something else was our "god." When we repent from our unbelief, we receive the gift of saving faith, and He enables us to desire to do

and to know His will. (2Tim. 2:24-26, Phil. 2:12-13, Rom. 1:18-32, Gal. 4:8, Eph. 2:8-10) He has given us another gift—free will, with which we choose for ourselves whether we will use it to honor and glorify Him or to strive against His Holy Spirit (who is IN us if we truly believe) and to seek glory for ourselves. (Eph. 4:30, 1Thess. 5:19) Obeying God because we are His born again children, washed clean by the precious blood of His Son and regenerated by His Holy Spirit, is NOT working FOR salvation—it is a RESULT of saving faith. (Jam. 2:14-26, Rom. 6:16-18)

"Let no one deceive you." We see those words several times in the Bible, mostly to warn against people who tell others that God doesn't expect obedience, or against people who think they can earn or contribute toward their own justification (salvation). (1Cor. 3:16-23, Eph. 5:5-12, 1John 3:4-10, 1Cor. 6:9-20, 1Cor. 15:33-34, Gal. 6:7-9, Jam. 1:12-16, 2Tim. 3:12-13) We need to be on guard against BOTH errors. The truth is that Jesus FINISHED the work of salvation, and those who ARE saved WILL obey, or at least WANT to and be grieved when they fall short. (2Cor. 7:8-11) Do you think the Holy Spirit within us strives against God, inspiring us to live in the same way as unsaved people do? Of course not! He is our only hope of overcoming this world! (John 14:20, 16:33, 1John 5:18-19) There is a difference between the "legal standing" of righteousness (justification) given to us because of Jesus' finished work on the cross on our behalf when we believe on Him, and the kind of righteous acts we do as a result of His indwelling Spirit. (1John 2:1-6, Rev. 19:7-8)

I have written so many devotionals that go into great detail on this topic. (<http://layoutfortoday.blogspot.com/p/free-pdf-downloads.html>) I write, not because I "have arrived" at perfection and can now tell others how to get there, but because I CARE about the rampant deception leading people away from the truth in these dangerous times. NO ONE "arrives" until they see Jesus face to face. Even Paul said below that He was seeking "to attain" the goal (of a crown of righteousness awarded to Him for a life lived in obedience and faithfulness to Christ). Paul didn't express his certainty of having attained it until he reached his final days on this earth. (2Tim. 4:6-8) We are all works in progress, with progress being a key word. (2Pet. 1:5-11) What we practice says a LOT about us and how much we love and esteem our Savior. (1John 2:26-29, John 14:15-26)

*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 (Also see Heb. 12, 1Cor. 9:24-10:13)***

I'm only going to highlight a few passages from the Bible that illuminate the problems with the false teaching that if we have "faith," then we will take it for granted that God doesn't see or care about sins we commit (many of them deliberately) after we were saved. (Mal. 3:13-4:3, Psa. 94, Rom. 6:15-23, Rom. 3:23-28, Acts 17:30-31) This is not about living in fear of "losing" salvation for slipping, but about learning what pleases God because we LOVE Him and WANT to do His will as His redeemed, adopted children. (1John 4:10, 18, 1:5-2:6, 3:1-10, 1Pet. 1:14-19, Eph. 5:10, 2Cor. 5:14-15, Titus 2:11-15)

I would encourage anyone who is confused by the conflicting messages being presented in today's permissive culture, even in the church, to look up the surrounding context of passages used to support such a position. (Titus 1:16, Rom. 16:18-19, 2Pet. 2:3, 18-22) We don't just get to "pick" the parts of the Bible that we like—it all has to go together. God is not the author of confusion, and He doesn't contradict Himself or change. (Heb. 13:8, Mal. 3:6)

When Paul warns the Galatians not to accept circumcision or submit to the "yoke" of the law again now that they are free in Christ, He does NOT mean they should instead CELEBRATE their sin. That goes against ALL of the rest of the teachings of the ENTIRE Bible! (The idea of any Christian participating

in ANY kind of "pride" parade is utterly unscriptural, as God HATES pride of ALL kinds [except we may boast in what He has done for us and that by His grace, we know Him], let alone pride in SIN. (2Pet. 2:12-14, Rom. 13:13, Rom. 1:32, 1Cor. 13:6, Psa. 40:4, Prov. 21:4) Reveling in sin or being completely unconcerned by it is just as much "another gospel" as it is to return to the ritual law of animal sacrifices, circumcision, ceremonial washings, observing feast days, etc. Paul and the writer of Hebrews (there is disagreement as to whether Paul or someone else wrote Hebrews, since the book doesn't say who wrote it) explains that those things were the shadow of what was to come, and they were fulfilled in Christ. (Col. 2:16-17, Heb. 8:5) That does NOT mean that God delights in (or doesn't "see") the sins of His children now! Just ask Ananias and Sapphira, professed believers who were severely punished for the sin of lying to the Holy Spirit. (Acts 5:1-11) It's not about what we did before we were saved, but we're not to continue practicing the sins Jesus died to save us FROM - He set us free from being enslaved to the old, sinful flesh as we USED TO be. (Rom. 6, John 8:31-36, Luke 6:46-49, Gal. 5:19-21, 1Cor 6:9-10, Rev. 21:7-8, 22:11-15 - does anyone actually think that Jesus is referring to His pure, holy, set apart Body here when He talks about "evildoers" continuing to do evil?)

We will be answering to Jesus as to whether we were faithful to Him or not. Why else do you think He told all of those parables about faithfully keeping watch for His return? (Matt. 13:18-23, Matt. 25, Luke 19:11-27) Why do you think the Bible says "wake up" if God really wants us to blissfully slumber in the "comforts" of this lost and forsaken world? (Rom. 13:11-14, 1Cor. 15:34, Eph. 5:11-20, Rev. 3:2-3, Gal. 6:1, Eph. 6:10-20, Mark 13:35, Matt. 24:42, Luke 21:36, 1Thess. 5:5-8) A dear friend told me that she has "no strong convictions" about social matters concerning morality, but that she likes to "cast the net wider" (i.e. make more people feel "welcome," even if they reject God's definition of sin, or maybe refuse to believe that He told the TRUTH when He said He created the world - Gen. 1-2, Heb. 11:3, Lev. 18:6-23, 24-30, Acts 21:25, 1Cor. 3:18 - or that Jesus is the ONLY way to be saved - Acts 4:12, John 3:36, 1John 2:23). This lines up very nicely with the [extremely profitable] philosophy preached in mega-churches and taught in best-selling books written by many. The problem with it is that Jesus Himself said that the door is NARROW (so that net full of people who do NOT obey Him will not fit through it). (Matt. 7:13-29) Not only that, but the BAD fish will be thrown out! (Matt. 13:47-50)

Talk about a wake-up call! And Jesus said that His angels will remove what causes sin, along with the disobedient, from His kingdom at the end of the age. (Matt. 13:41-43) Everyone who accepts the invitation must wear the

"wedding garment" which His Father provides, which is the righteousness of Jesus (and so they must BELIEVE in their hearts, and once having received that garment, they must WEAR it, not cast it off like the man in the Garden of Gethsemane who fled naked the moment persecution came, just like the seed sown on rocky ground represents those who fall away due to persecution). (Mark 14:52, Matt. 13:20-21, 22:8-14, Rev. 16:15) "Walking in grace" is NOT the same as deliberately "living in sin." Can an unbeliever save themselves by trying to please God with their behavior? No? Then obviously those instructions on how to walk in a manner pleasing to God are for those who believe. (Eph. 2:8-10, 4:1, 5:10, Col. 1:10, 1Thess. 1:12)

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who **gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are **turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all.** Evidently some people are throwing you into **confusion** and are trying to **pervert the gospel of Christ.** But **even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!** As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or **am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.** Galatians 1:3-10***

*For you know what **instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.** For **this is the will of God, your sanctification:** that you **abstain from sexual immorality;** that each one of you know how to **control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;** that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because **the Lord is an avenger** in all these things, as we **told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.** Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. 1 Thessalonians 4:2-8*

When Jude wrote about those who "deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ," he was not referring exclusively to the deceivers who make false claims that there are other ways to heaven, but in the context we can see he was especially concerned with those who DENY Jesus by refusing to OBEY Him as their LORD (also see 2Pet. 2:1-3 - "who bought them," and 1Cor. 6:18-20). What else do we mean by "Lord," if it's not that we do as He says? (Luke 6:43-49) Do we accuse our Savior of preaching "salvation by works"

because He said, "Take up your cross and FOLLOW Me"? (Matt. 10:38) That would be "another Jesus" and "another gospel" to say that Jesus died so that we BELIEVERS can continue in our sin. A believer is already SAVED. If they were not, then Jesus would NOT be their Lord, would He? "His commands are not burdensome" to those of us who belong to Him, because we LOVE Him! (1Tim. 1:5, 1Pet. 1:8-9, 1Cor. 2:9) There is a DIFFERENCE between trying to EARN salvation and desiring to please the One who SAVED us.

*Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to **contend for the faith** that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who **pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.** Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— just as **Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.** Yet **in like manner** these people also, relying on their dreams, **defile the flesh**, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." But **these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.** Woe to them! For they **walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.** These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, **for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.** It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, **to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.**" These are grumblers, malcontents, **following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.** But*

*you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, **following their own ungodly passions.**" It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; **save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.** Jude 1:3-23*

*I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! For **I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.** For if someone comes and proclaims **another Jesus** than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a **different gospel** from the one you accepted, **you put up with it readily enough.** 2 Corinthians 11:1-4 (Also see James 4:4-5)*

*For I fear that perhaps when I come **I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish**—that perhaps there may be **quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.** I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to **mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced.** 2 Corinthians 12:20-21*

In this next passage, we are given the same kind of warning that Jesus gave in the parables—the unfaithful servant will not receive the same reward as the faithful one. (This is over and above the free gift of salvation that all believers receive.) If we LOVE Jesus, we will CARE about this! Is there anything more important than His honor and glory? Will it make Him happy to take some of our rewards away and give them to another? No! He loves us, but He always does what is right and best, even when it causes Him pain. You decide for yourself, but I feel it will cause us anguish and tears when we realize we have robbed Him of part of the joy it would have given Him to reward us for our faithfulness, not to mention the honor and glory that we failed to bring Him as we should have done. (John 15:8, Matt. 5:16) It's not like we weren't warned ahead of time, if we would just care enough to read it for ourselves instead of ignoring all of His warnings. (See Rev. 2-3, for example.) Will it make us sad to lose rewards? Most assuredly, it WILL, but

we will be so glad if we are even able to "enter as through the fire" after our "works were burned up" because they were not done in love for Jesus, but for ourselves and the world, according to our own will instead of His. (1Cor. 3:11-18) The Holy Spirit dwells inside of everyone who is born again—no one will be able to fool God. (Rom. 8:5-18, Gal. 6:7-9) And if we're His, it will show on the outside by our behavior—that's why we're told to "work out" our salvation. (Phil. 2:12-13) We can't SEE the Holy Spirit, but we can recognize His influence by the fruits of the Spirit, or sadly, the absence of His control over a person by the lack of fruits. (John 3:8, Gal. 5:19-23, Rom. 7:4-6, Matt. 12:33-35)

*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**. 28 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 12:14-17, 28-29*

If our sanctification were forever complete at the moment we believed and we cannot do anything to affect it, good or bad—if we're utterly unable to "soil our garments"—then why are we told things such as "pursue holiness" in the passage above, and why did Jesus say the following to the CHURCH of Sardis?

*"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "'I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. **Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God**. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and **repent**. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not **soiled their garments**, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. The one **who conquers** will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'" Revelation 3:1-6*

If there is nothing more that we SHOULD do IF we LOVE Jesus, who SAVED us from our sins (John 14:15-24, John 15:10, 14), then why were so many exhortations written to BELIEVERS? (Heb. 6:4-12, 1Pet. 4:1-5, 15)

Let us **hold fast** the confession of our hope **without wavering**, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to **stir up one another to love and good works**, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. For **if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth**, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has **trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?** For we know him who said, "**Vengeance is mine; I will repay.**" And again, "**The Lord will judge his people.**" It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But recall the former days when, after you were **enlightened**, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you **knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.** Therefore **do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.** For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who **shrink back** and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. Hebrews 10:23-39

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all **wicked deception** for those who are **perishing**, because they **refused to love the truth and so be saved.** Therefore God sends them a strong **delusion**, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be **condemned** who did not believe the truth but had **pleasure in unrighteousness.** But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be **saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.** He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and

sisters, **stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you**, whether by word of mouth or by letter. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-15

**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. 20 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 6:12, 20-21

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

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 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 1:13-19***

To anyone who says, "You don't know me, so don't 'judge' me," I would say: "Far be it from me! God knows you and that's all that matters." He didn't lie when He said He will provide a way out of any temptation that He allows in your life to TEST your faithfulness to Him. (1Cor. 10:12-13 - also see what precedes it in 1Cor. 9:24-10:11, 1Pet. 1:6-9) People like to say, "God knows what's in my heart" in support of remaining in their sins while claiming to love Jesus, but that goes against the Bible. What's in our natural, unregenerated heart is evil, and it comes out through our actions, attitudes and words. (Matt. 15:18-19, 1John 3:12, John 3:19-21, Rev. 2:21-23) If the Spirit controls us, then the fruit will be good. (Titus 3:3-8, Gal. 5:13-25, Heb. 6:7-9, Matt. 7:15-20, Eph. 5:8-10, Phil. 1:9-11, Mark 4:8, 20)

Don't buy a pack of lies from people who just want to get rich and famous telling people what they like to hear. God loves sinners (which we ALL are), but He still HATES sin. He says, "Come as you are, and I will TRANSFORM you into the image of My Son." (Rom. 8:29) Needless to say, He doesn't add "no matter how unwilling you are or even if you fight me tooth and nail." We're to take up our cross and FOLLOW, willingly. He doesn't DRAG us—it's OUR choice. (Matt. 16:24-27) One of the most prevalent (and accepted) sins today is sexual immorality. The devil knows how much God hates the impurity and unfaithfulness of it, and the devil hates God! What does that say about people who go along with the devil's plan of rebellion against God? (I prefer to think they're deceived, not that they hate God, too.) Both Jesus and Peter warned us about this danger. (John 8:44, 1Pet. 5:8-10, 1John 3:8-10) This is why Paul said not to "present our members" as "slaves to unrighteousness." (Rom. 6:12-13, 1Cor. 6:17-20)

*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*

Do we LOVE Him or not? The glorious kingdom promises were made to those who LOVE Him. (1Cor. 2:9, Jam. 1:12) "Let no one deceive you." Please—if you are a true believer, then wake up, get ready and keep watch. You'll be SO glad you did. If not, you'll wish you had. I'm just being honest here. What

the world needs now is the truth, in love, while there's still time to repent and seek Him with ALL of our hearts. (Jam. 4:4-10, 1John 2:15-17, Eph. 4:15-32) If you ARE awake and devoting your life to Christ, then hopefully those around you can see your light shining for Him. By necessity, that "light" includes the "salt" of the truth, not just "fluff" people enjoy hearing. (1Tim. 4:7-16, 2Tim. 4:3-4, Mark 9:50, Luke 14:34-35, Col. 4:5-6) It is easier to go along with the flow (and be liked) than to talk about unpleasant things like sin and its consequences (and be considered "hateful"), but eternal souls are more important than our comfort in this short life. (John 15:18-21, Jam. 5:19-20) People can't realize their need for a Savior unless and until they understand there is such a thing as sin. They can't understand why Jesus would die for theirs if we tell them that children of God can continue to enjoy and even delight in sinning. It doesn't make sense.

***"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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. 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."*** Matthew 5:10-16

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