

## Who Wins When “Love Wins”?

by Tricia Berg

We’ve all heard that popular rallying slogan these days. I’ll give you a clue about the answer to the question posed by the title of this article: It’s not who you think it is. It’s not the people who are told what they want to hear even though it contradicts the Bible (which is to contradict God, who inspired those words to be written). (2Tim. 3:16-17, 2Pet. 1:21) Those deceived people are the losers in this battle. They THINK that getting their way is “winning,” but there are nasty consequences that are being ignored and even lied about. Some of those are physical and emotional effects during this short earthly lifetime, and some are eternal. No, the “winner” when sin is celebrated is the devil. (1Pet. 5:8-11, 2Pet. 2:1-22, Jam. 4:7, Eph. 6:10-20, 4:27, 2Cor. 11:14-15, 2:11, Acts 13:10, 2Tim. 2:26, 1John 3:7-10, John 8:44, Rev. 20:1-3, 10)

Why would anyone be so “mean” as to tell someone things they don’t like hear—things the hearers consider “unloving”? I suppose some people do just have a mean streak. But for most, including myself, it’s because we care enough to speak the truth even if it’s uncomfortable—even if it causes people to dislike us. Why? Because it’s just TOO important to place our own comfort as a higher priority than someone else’s eternal well-being. As Paul said in the passages below, it’s better to hurt for a while now than forever later.

*For I wrote to you out of much affliction and **anguish of heart** and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the **abundant love** that I have for you. 2 Corinthians 2:4*

*For even if I **made you grieve with my letter**, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though **only for a while**. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were **grieved into repenting**. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For **godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation** without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:8-10*

*For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down. 2 Corinthians 13:10*

(Read 1Cor. 4:20-5:13 to understand the situation to which Paul is referring. Please note in 1Cor. 5:5 that Paul is concerned for the man’s soul as well as the purity of the Body of Christ (1Cor. 5:7); and in 1Cor. 5:11, he applies his

instructions to all forms of sexual immorality (as well as other sins), not only the particular form of it he named in 1Cor. 5:1.)

God is the perfect Father of those who believe, and thus have been given the right to become His children. (John 1:12-13, 1John 3:1, Matt. 23:9) Even most (but not all) earthly parents know that letting their children have their way isn't always the best for them. (Matt. 7:9-11) What good parent would tell their kid who thinks they can fly that it's okay to jump off the roof (even though "it's not 'hurting' anyone else")? No, they love them enough to tell them the truth.

***"The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. They have dealt corruptly with him; they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are a crooked and twisted generation. Do you thus repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?" Deuteronomy 32:4-6*** (See also Deut. 32:10-12, Rom. 11:17-25, Mal. 2:10)

Parents (and scientists, doctors, etc.) used to know that children are born either male or female. There was no question involved (except in the cases of rare birth defects, which today we can determine the appropriate action to take through DNA testing). God said that He made TWO distinct genders (Gen. 1:27), not various mixes of them, not morphing from one to another, but SET for life at the time of conception. Teaching children that God "lied" about how He created mankind is evil. Mutilating and drugging children (who do NOT know what is best for them, but are VICTIMS) is child abuse, the corruption of minors, and playing God. People who intentionally teach children misinformation about God will answer to Him for it. (Matt. 18:1-9, Mark 9:42-50, Luke 17:1-2, Isa. 3:9-11, 5:20-21, Jude 1:14-19, Rev. 18) Whoever can't see that these things are wrong not only has no common sense, but they are spiritually blind as well. (Prov. 1:22-33, Prov. 8, 16:22, 1Cor. 2:13-14)

***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 29:16

***"Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'? Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' or to a woman, 'With what are you in labor?'"*** Isaiah 45:9-10

Parents (used to, for many) also know that they need to protect their children from bad influences that will corrupt their morals.

***Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. 1 Corinthians 15:33-34 (Also see Psa. 1, 26:4-5, 50:16-23, Prov. 1:10, 4:14-17, Jer. 15:17.)***

It seems to me that these days the masses are getting their "biblical" doctrine from celebrities, whether they be musicians or authors (both secular and Christian), actors, well-known preachers and Bible teachers, talk-show hosts, the pope, "news" anchors (but there is no objective news anymore—it's all commentary and editorials), well-liked and respected school teachers and college professors, etc. However, while these stellar folks are impressing us with their "wisdom" on the topic of "love," it's very important that we clarify this: pure, holy love is not the same as sex. We can and should love God more than our lives or anything in them, and love our neighbor as ourselves. (Deu. 6:4-9, Luke 10:25-28) We do not have sex with our friends and neighbors just because we love them. So saying that it's not for us to tell anyone "who they can love" is absurd. What is REALLY meant is "who they can have sex with," and yes, we DO tell people what is acceptable and what is NOT.

So far in this fallen society, the vast majority of people still agree that people cannot have sex with: 1) children, 2) their parents or siblings, 3) someone else's spouse, or 4) animals. So far, we can still recognize that anyone who does not agree with those basic standards of decency is DEPRAVED. Same gender sexual relationships used to be on that forbidden list, and before that intimacy between heterosexual couples who were not married was also on it—but just because the culture changed does not mean that God has. In fact, we can be sure that He has NOT changed. (Mal. 3:6, Heb. 13:8) He is the judge of what is evil and what is good, not us. We are warned not to reverse the two. (Isa. 5:20-23) Jesus said WOE to those who cast stumbling blocks. (Luke 17:1-2) All those who love the Lord should hate evil—that includes both the act of practicing evil, and the fact that people are being deceived with lies to their detriment. (Psa. 97:10, Prov. 8:13, 16:6, Amos 5:15, Rom. 1:18-20, 2Thess. 2:9-12)

Do you think that all of these advocates of homosexuality, impersonating the opposite gender and transgenderism actually CARE about the people they're "supporting"? Or is it possible that many of them are just going along with whatever modern culture promotes in order to be more popular, and therefore, to make a bigger profit? Even the various celebrations of "pride" (but see what

God has to say about pride in 2Pet. 2:13-14, Prov. 6:16-19, 8:13, 16:5, 21:4, Psa. 101:5, Gen. 6:5, Ezra 9:6, Jer. 8:12, Ezek. 36:31, Isa. 3:9) throughout the world come along with a booming travel industry aimed at a particular deceived portion of society. Even if they do “mean well,” the result is the same—the blind stumble in the dark together. (Luke 11:29-36, Eph. 5:5-17, Psa. 73, Psa. 37, 119:105) No, the ones who really LOVE are the ones who are not getting anything from telling the truth, except perhaps hatred directed toward themselves.

I have to interject here: Holding up signs (complete with profanity, not that it would be okay without that) telling people at funerals that Jesus hated the person being buried is NOT loving - 1Cor. 13:1-3. We are not called to condemn anyone to hell. We’re to be GENTLE and to live quietly. (2Tim. 2:24-26, 1Thess. 4:11-12, 2Cor. 12:20, 1Pet. 3:15-16) However, that does not mean refusing to stand up for the truth—again, truth and love go together. (1Cor. 16:13-14) We’re to be salt and light to this dark world, and if we refuse to do so, we’re not good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled. (Matt. 5:13-14, Mark 9:50, Luke 14:34-35, Col. 4:5-6, Eph. 4:15-16, 5:11-17)

We MUST learn from the mistakes of the past. Refusing to walk in God’s ways is not how to be blessed:

***"For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown," says the LORD. Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.' I set watchmen over you, saying, 'Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet!' But they said, 'We will not pay attention.' Therefore hear, O nations, and know, O congregation, what will happen to them. Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it. Jeremiah 6:13-19***

*And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to **pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place**, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no*

prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2:1 But **false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies,** even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves **swift destruction.** And **many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.** And in their **greed** they will **exploit you with false words.** Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an **example** of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the **sensual conduct of the wicked** (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and **especially** those who **indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.** Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. **They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime.** They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. **They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!** Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. **For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption.** For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is **enslaved.** For if, after they have **escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,** they are **again entangled in them and overcome,** the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been

*better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than **after knowing it to turn back** from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire." 3:1 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that **scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.** They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word **the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire,** being kept until the day of judgment and **destruction of the ungodly.** But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. **Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,** waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, **be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.** And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, **just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.** You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.  
2 Peter 1:19-3:18*

Those of us who KNOW these things MUST speak up (out of LOVE), rather than to have to answer to God later as to why we kept silent. (Matt. 5:13, Luke 11:33, Col. 1:28, 4:5-6, Eph. 4:15-16, 5:7-17, 1Tim. 4:1-5, 5:20, 2Tim. 2:19-26, Titus 1:9, 2:15) Cowardice and selfishness are both poor choices. (Rev. 21:8) People won't hate us if we just go along with them, but we won't be able to live with ourselves. (John 15:18-21, Matt. 5:10-16, 1John 3:11-13, 2Tim. 3:12-13, 1Pet. 2:19-23, 3:13-17, 4:12-19, 2Cor. 4:17-18) Why won't we? Because we believe God when He said there are consequences to ignoring and/or rebelling against His will, and we don't want anyone to perish! But what is the motive of people who refuse to stand up for the truth? Self-preservation? Intentional deception? Financial gain? God knows. (Matt. 6:19-24, Luke 12:20-21, 1Pet. 5:2-4, Acts 20:26-35, 1Tim. 6:9-11, Rom. 2:6-11, 14:12, Heb. 4:12-13, 10:30, 13:5, 1Pet. 4:4-5, Rev. 22:12)

People who try to silence those who try to sound the alarm are like people who take the batteries out of their smoke alarm. It's "peaceful" until the house burns down. Speaking the truth in love isn't even a thing anymore in our culture (and in much of the "civilized" world). (Eph. 4:15-32) People consider anything they don't like to hear "hate speech." But God is BOTH Truth and Love—it's not multiple choice. (John 14:6, 1John 4:8) We aren't to cast actual stones at anyone to condemn them to death (nor to harm them), but to show mercy with the hopes of restoring them to fellowship through their repentance. "Go and sin no more." (John 8:7-11, 5:14, Rom. 2:4, Matt. 18:15-17, 2Tim. 2:25-26, 2Cor. 7:9-10, Heb. 12:17)

We WANT people to repent and be saved, just as GOD does. (2Pet. 3:9) We're not to be GONGS (1Cor. 13:1-3), but we're not to change the message in order to make it more palatable to people, either. A man-made message will NOT save people! (1Cor. 2:14, 2Cor. 11:2-4, 2Thess. 2:9-12, Eph. 4:19, but read all of Eph. 4:17-32) Twisting the message to suit the ears of the hearer is NOT a good thing! Jesus said difficult, NOT easy things to people with "ears to hear." (Matt. 11:15, 13:9, 13:14-17, 13:43, Mark 4:9, 4:21-25, 8:18, Luke 8:8, 14:34-35, Rev. 2, Rev. 3, 1John 4:5-6, John 15:20) Those who HEAR are meant to OBEY. (Matt. 7:24-27, Jam. 1:21-25, John 15:20)

People have bought into the lie that if they EVER sinned in ANY way, they have "no right" to "judge" anyone else. How convenient for those who want to shut down every voice trying to maintain some level of decency in our culture—ALL have sinned, so "problem solved." But Romans 2:1-5 is about the hypocrisy of judging others for the same sin you are doing yourself. Someone who is sexually immoral must repent of that BEFORE trying to help another sexually immoral person see the error of their ways. (Matt. 7:3-5) The POINT is to

RESTORE sinners to fellowship AFTER they repent. (2Cor. 13:10-11, 1John 1:10-2:6, 2:28-3:10, 1Cor. 5:2-5, 11-13, 2Cor. 2:7, Luke 17:1-4) If they remain in fellowship while unrepentant, it "leavens" the PURE Body of Christ with SIN. (1Cor. 5:5-8, but see all of 1Cor. 5:1-13, 1Tim. 1:5-11, Rev. 2:20-23, 3:3-6, 3:18-22, Gal. 6:1, Jam. 5:19-20, 2Cor. 7:1, Jude 1:23, 2Pet. 3:11-18) The "judging" is not condemnation, but helping people see the error of their ways for the good of their soul and the health of the congregation. (Heb. 12:10-11)

Everything happens again. (Ecc. 1:9) In the Old Testament, there was a king who preferred to hear lies from false prophets rather than hearing the truth from God through a true prophet. (1Kings 22:8, 13-14) God will punish those who speak lies in His name, telling them that He is pleased with them no matter how much they sin. (Jer. 23:9-40, Zeph. 1:12-18, Amos 5:18-24, Mal. 3:13-4:3, Ezek. 9:4-6, Isa. 66:5, Isa. 30:9-11) God will hold those who lead His sheep astray accountable. (Jam. 3:1, 2Cor 11:13-15, John 10:12-13, Matt. 7:15-23, Luke 6:43-49, Ezek. 34:2, 10, Jude 1:11-13)

We have been warned against listening to people who just want to tell us what we want to hear in order to make a profit from us and to be popular. (Rom. 16:18, 2Pet. 2:3, Jude 1:4, 11-13, 16, 2Tim. 3:1-5, 4:1-5, Acts 20:26-35, Matt. 7:15-29, Mic. 3:5, Luke 6:26) We're supposed to learn from the whole Bible and compare what we hear to it. (Acts 17:11, 1Cor. 10:6-13) Needless to say, we need to be careful not to be found among those doing the deceiving. (2Tim. 3:12-15, 16-17)

Our laws used to reflect morality. What was wrong used to be illegal. When things that God hates are made legal (including abortion and same-sex marriage), that sends people a signal that those things are no longer wrong. The nation of America is not Israel (which was both a nation and congregation of God's chosen people, and will be again when God returns to dealing with them for their rejection of His Son - Isa. 49:13-23, 54:4-10, Jer. 33:19-26, Ezek. 36:21-38, Zech. 12:10, Matt. 24:30), but it was founded on Christian principles—and those principles made it the great nation that it became. When we don't have the truth of the Bible to guide us, then we walk in darkness. (Psa. 119:105, 111:10, 2Pet. 1:19-21, 2Tim. 3:14-17)

Did you know that God doesn't want partiality shown to ANYONE? That includes BOTH the rich AND the poor (they should be judged justly, not automatically guilty OR innocent, and not be given "waivers" from the law applying to them - Ex. 23:2-3, 6-8, Deut. 16:19-20, 2Chron. 19:7, Job 32:21, 34:19, Psa. 82:2, Prov. 14:31, 22:16, 24:23-25, Isa. 58:7, Zech. 7:9-10, Jam. 2:1-7, 1Tim.

5:20-21); immigrants (we should treat them the same as anyone else, not make things harder OR easier for them than natural-born citizens—they're meant to assimilate with our culture including language, laws, etc. - Ex. 23:9, Deut. 24:14, 31:12, Ex. 12:49, Num. 15:16, Ezek. 22:29, Mal. 3:5, Psa. 146:9); or women (particularly widows) and children (particularly orphans)—(but there is a difference between fair treatment and preferential treatment - Psa. 72:4, 146:9, Isa. 1:16-17, 3:4-5, 12, 10:1-2, 58:6, Jer. 22:3, Ezek. 22:29, Zech. 7:9-10, Mal. 3:5, Gal. 3:28).

It's GOOD that God never changes and still loves/hates the same things. If He changed continually, or even just a little, gradually, we wouldn't have any way of knowing what pleases or displeases Him at the current time. (Mal. 3:6, Heb. 13:8, John 15:10, 2Cor. 5:9, Gal. 1:10, Eph. 5:10, 6:6, Phil. 2:13, Col. 1:10, 1Thess. 2:4, 4:1, 1Tim. 2:3-4, 2Tim. 2:3-4, Heb. 11:5, 13:16, 20-21, 1John 2:28-29, 3:22) For anyone who says that the Old Testament is irrelevant for us today, I don't think you realize where basic rules of morality came from. That includes the very accepted and valued "love your neighbor."

*"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall **leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.** "You shall **not steal**; you shall **not deal falsely**; you shall **not lie to one another**. You shall **not swear by my name falsely**, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. "You shall **not oppress your neighbor or rob him**. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall **fear your God: I am the LORD.** "You shall **do no injustice in court**. You shall **not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor**. You shall not go around as a **slanderer** among your people, and you shall **not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD.** "You shall **not hate your brother in your heart**, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall **not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.** Leviticus 19:9-18 (Also. Lev. 19:35-37.)*

The previous chapter contained the prohibitions regarding sexual behavior. This is where we get our standards for what is and is not acceptable. This is how we define the term used SO frequently in the New Testament—"sexual immorality."

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God. **You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you.** You shall not walk in their statutes. You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD. "None of you shall approach any one of his **close relatives** to uncover nakedness. I am the LORD. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether brought up in the family or in another home. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your son's daughter or of your daughter's daughter, for their nakedness is your own nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, brought up in your father's family, since she is your sister. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is your father's relative. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she is your mother's relative. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother, that is, you shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law; she is your son's wife, you shall not uncover her nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter, and you shall not take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to uncover her nakedness; they are **relatives; it is depravity**. And you shall not take a woman as a rival wife to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is still alive. "You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in her menstrual uncleanness. And you shall not lie sexually with your neighbor's wife and so make yourself unclean with her. You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion. "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 18:1-30*

If anyone wants to debate about Old Testament requirements such as shellfish and textiles, they can read my article “Be Fruitful” for more enlightenment directly from the Scriptures. As we can see by the way the above passage begins, a reason is given for them. They were to separate themselves from the pagans and heathens, because they were the chosen people of God. Back then, the various separations of foods, animals, crops and textiles represented that ONLY they were God’s people. However, NOW salvation has ALSO come to the Gentile believers—who must separate from the unsaved, fallen world—because we are now God’s people, too. (2Cor. 6:14-7:1, 1John 2:15-17, Jam. 4:4, Titus 3:3-8, 1Pet. 2:4-12, Jam. 1:27, John 15:19, Eph. 3:6, Acts 13:47, 26:23) So some prohibitions are OUT, as is clearly taught in the New Testament (Mark 7:15-23, Acts 10:10-16, Rom. 14:14, 17, 20, Col. 2:16-23), and some are still in effect, as is reiterated in the New Testament over and over again. (e.g. Acts 15:7-11, 19-20, Acts 21:25)

If the Old Testament doesn’t apply to you, then I guess you don’t consider yourself a “child of Abraham” or a “Jew.” (Gal. 3:7-9, 29, Heb. 2:16, Rom. 2:28-29, 4:12, 16-17, 9:7-8, 11:17-21, 1Pet. 3:6) But if that’s the case, then you will NOT enter the kingdom of heaven. (Gal. 4:30-31, Luke 13:22-30, Heb. 11:13-16, 1Pet. 2:11-12) Abraham was the father of Isaac (a “type” of Christ—see my article “Temple of God”), who was the father of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. (Acts 7:8, Gen. 32:28) Pretty much everything in the Old Testament looked forward to fulfillment in Jesus. (Matt. 1:21-23, 2:14-15, 17-18, 3:13-15, 4:12-16, 5:17, 8:16-17, 12:15-21, 13:34-35, 21:4-5, 26:53-56, 27:3-10, Luke 4:21, 22:37, 24:44-47, John 12:37-41, 13:18-19, 15:22-25, 17:12, 18:7-9, 18:31-32, 19:23-24, 19:28, 19:36-37, Acts 1:15-16, 3:18, 13:27-41, 2Cor. 3:12-18, 6:2, 6:16-18, Col. 2:17, Heb. 1:5-13, 5:5-6, Heb. 7, 9:23-24) If we don’t KNOW that, then we can easily be led astray into thinking that we don’t need the Old Testament to understand the New Testament. CULTS discourage people from reading the normal, whole Bible for themselves.

Some say that “Jesus never said anything against homosexuality.” He didn’t need to. His answer about divorce made it clear that marriage is ONLY between a man and a woman. (Mark 10:5-9, Gen. 1:27-28, 2:24-25, 3:20, Mark 8:38, John 9:38, Luke 7:23) Further, those who say such things are forgetting that

there is ONE God. (Jer. 10:10, Matt. 12:29, 16:16, John 1:18, 8:58, 10:30, Luke 9:26, 24:52) Jesus was both man AND God. (Col. 1:15-20) So since all Scripture is GOD-breathed, then ALL Scripture can be considered the "words of Jesus." (2Tim. 3:16-17) The Holy Spirit who indwells believers is also referred to as the Spirit of Christ. (1Pet. 1:11, Rom. 8:9-11, Phil. 1:19, John 14:18-21) Jesus is our High Priest in the order of Melchizedek, who had no beginning and has no end. (Heb. 7:3) Notice how Paul says that those in the wilderness drank from the spiritual Rock that was Christ:

*For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. **For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.** Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. **Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.** Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." **We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did**, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. **We must not put Christ to the test**, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, **nor grumble**, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands **take heed lest he fall.** **No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.** 1 Corinthians 10:1-13*

The above passage goes along perfectly with the following one, which I believe that is because BOTH were written by PAUL, though some disagree. Note that it's best to read "chapters" without the breaks and section headings, which were not in the original text and make it wrongly appear that one thought has been concluded and another has begun. We are the "offspring of Abraham" if we share his faith, being grafted in to Israel's "olive tree." (Rom. 4:12-13, 16-17, Gal. 3:7-9, 29, Rom. 11:17-25) So much for the New Covenant being "completely new" and "unhitched from the Old Testament" as some false teachers claim, all the while selling books for a profit from people WHO DO NOT READ THEIR BIBLES. There is no escaping the Old Testament without getting rid of the New Testament as well, in which case, why even claim to be a Christian?

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For **because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.** 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but **Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.** And **we are his house if indeed we hold fast** our confidence and our boasting in our hope. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, '**They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.**' As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" **Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.** As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, **do not harden your hearts** as in the rebellion." For who were those who **heard and yet rebelled?** Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with **those who sinned**, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. 4:1 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, **let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.** For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,'" although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." And again in this passage he said, "They shall

*not enter my rest.” Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. **Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. 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.** Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us **hold fast** our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace **to help in time of need**. Hebrews 2:14-4:16*

Please understand that those who were not allowed to enter into God’s rest due to disobedience and unbelief were punished because they REFUSED to FOLLOW Moses in. They had already forgotten the powerful miracles that God had shown them. (Num. 14:11, Psa. 95:7-11) It wasn’t that they didn’t believe that God EXISTED (Jam. 2:19), but that they put Him TO THE TEST (Matt. 4:7, 22:18, 1Cor. 10:9) by refusing to OBEY Him, and by distrusting and JUDGING His perfect ways because of their grumbling against Him. (Num. 14:11, 22-23, 27) They even realized their mistake and tried to remedy it after it was too late. (Num. 14:39-45, just like Esau - Heb. 12:17, and Cain - Gen. 4:13)

Don’t forget also that Jesus said that many who hear and believe in Him will fall away due to persecution, cares of the world, desire for riches, etc. (Matt. 13:18-23, Mark 4:14-20, Luke 8:5-15) People who fall away are simply revealing what is truly in their hearts (Mark 7:20-23)—whether they love God first, most, best, highest or NOT (Matt. 22:36-40)—whether they will submit to HIS ways or only want their OWN. (John 14:15-26, 15:8-10, John 6:66, 1John 2:19) He does MIND having His sovereignty questioned by His creation. You don’t have to take my word for it—see Isa. 29:13-15, 45:9-12, Rom. 9:20, Jer. 8:9, 1Cor. 1:18-31, Jam. 3:13-18, Ecc. 12:13-14, Mark 12:28-34.

The reference in the above passage about resting on the seventh day shows how the entry into the promises land foreshadows the entry into the millennial kingdom of peace over which Jesus will reign for a thousand years. (Six days of creation, then seventh day of rest; “a thousand years is as a day and a day is as a thousand years to the Lord”—Gen. 1, Psa. 90, 2Pet. 3:8, Rev. 2—six thousand years of “work” of God striving with mankind (120 years of jubilee cycles - Gen. 6:3, Lev. 25:10), followed by a thousand-year “day” of rest. See more on this later, and also in my article “Jars of Clay.”) Jesus IS our Sabbath, and we must FOLLOW Him and be found IN Him to enter in. (Luke 6:3-5—notice the reference to the bread, whereas Jesus is the Bread of Life, and He is the Lord of the Sabbath—John 6:35; John 10:9—Jesus is the Door; Eph. 2:14-15—He Himself is our peace.)

Paul was the “apostle to the Gentiles” (sent to bring the Good News to the non-Jews - Acts 9:15, Gal. 1:15-16, Rom. 11:13-14, 1Tim. 2:7, Eph. 3:8). I heard someone say that the apostles didn’t refer back to the Old Testament when preaching to Gentiles, but that just isn’t true. The only written Scriptures in existence at the time of their ministry were those of the Old Testament. Paul himself quoted extensively from the Old Testament. He was trained under Gamaliel (a well-known teacher of the law - Acts 5:34) and was set apart by God before his birth, which included God’s preparing him for the task He chose him for. (Acts 22:3, Gal. 1:15-17) People who spout off “facts” like these (which deceive people) need to heed God’s warning to become a fool so that they can become wise. (1Cor. 3:18-20, Gal. 6:3, Jam. 3:13-18)

It’s hard to understand the Bible if we only take little “bites” of it here and there. We’re meant to read it ALL, for ourselves—then we can be fully informed. Then if someone tries to deceive us by taking it out of context or twisting it such that it contradicts the rest of God’s word, we’ll recognize it for what it is. That’s why I am including LONG passages of Scripture in this article, many of them spanning more than one “chapter” (whereas again, there were no chapter breaks in the original texts), and also providing numerous cross-references.

Paul also talked about love quite a bit, AND about the impropriety of sexual immorality among believers a LOT. It would seem that the exhortation to LOVE does NOT cancel out the exhortation to refrain from sexual immorality.

*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 Rom. 12:1-2, Jam. 4:4-5, 1John 3:1-10—it's about what we make a practice of, not about being afraid that if we slip we'll be cast aside. (Heb. 3:12-14, Mark 4:17-19, Heb. 10:26-39, 1John 4:18) IF we love Him, we will obey and abide in Him and He will bear good fruit through us. (John 14:15-26, 15:1-10)

Note in the above passage that "you WERE washed" is not meant to assure anyone that it's okay to continue sinning—that's obvious from the passage (and also Romans 6, among many other passages). No, that phrase complements 2Pet. 2:22—we who LOVE God don't go back to wallowing in the mud after being clothed in the righteousness of Christ, knowing the price He paid for us. (1Pet. 1:14-19, 4:3-5) There's a difference between walking through a mud puddle and taking a bath in it—not having any desire whatsoever to be clean. "Not be dominated by anything" means not enslaved to it, including SIN—again, Rom. 6, also 2Pet. 2:19, John 8:31-36. We're set free FROM being enslaved to sin and are now slaves to righteousness, bearing GOOD fruit. (Gal. 5:13-25, Col. 1:10)

But where is the love in Paul's letter to the Corinthians? How about this:

*But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9 (Isa. 64:4, 65:17, Rev. 21:1-22:5, Rom. 8:19-25)*

We have to use God's own guidelines for determining who it is that loves Him, which was previously mentioned. (John 14:15-26, 15:8-10) He wants our hearts, not empty words or rituals. (Mark 7:6-8, 12:28-34, 1John 5:3, Rom. 6:17-18, 2Cor. 5:14-15, 1Pet. 1:8-9, Deut. 30:6, Isa. 1:10-20, 1Cor. 16:22)

Since the topic of this article is the deception that is being spread not only throughout the world, but also in the church, let's look at what the Bible says in more depth. Remember, God is ONE. (Isa. 45:18, John 8:58) All things were created by, through and for Jesus. (John 1:1-3, Heb. 11:3, Gen. 1, Rev. 4:11, Col. 1:15-20) Jesus is NOT at odds with His Father.

We saw previously that the Church is bodily indwelt by the Spirit of Christ. (Also see 1John 3:9.) In Matt. 19:4-6, Jesus specifically referred back to Gen. 2:24-25, marriage between a man and his wife, and the two becoming one. Paul explains above that the physical oneness of the married man and woman represents the spiritual union of believers with Jesus, who are His Body. (Rom. 12:5, 1Cor. 12:27, Eph. 1:22-23, 5:23, Col. 1:18) His presence IN us (as our spirit is joined with His as one, like a marriage) also makes our bodies HIS TEMPLE. This is PROFOUND—not something to be casual about by any means. (1Cor. 3:16-17, 2Cor. 6:16, Eph. 2:22, Rom. 8:9, 1John 3:24, 4:13, 1Pet. 2:5)

Paul drives the point home about our bodies being temples of God after explaining that there will be rewards for faithful service. (Rev. 2-3, 11:18, 22:7-8, Matt. 25:14-30, Luke 19:11-27)

*He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now **if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.** If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a **reward**. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. **Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.** 1 Corinthians 3:8-17 (Also see Matt. 28:19-20, Luke 14:25-35, 1Pet. 1:6-9, 4:12-19.)*

After this, Paul chastises them again for their conceit over the gifts of the Spirit they had received from God, but there is also another reference to love—I find it sad that the chapter breaks and section headings added in by editors interrupt lines of thought:

*What do you wish? Shall I come to you **with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness**? 5:1 It is actually reported that there is **sexual immorality among you**, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that **a little leaven leavens the whole lump**? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you **not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.** For what have I to do with judging outsiders? **Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?** God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you." 1 Corinthians 4:21-5:13*

Note that we are not expected to police the whole world, but to discontinue fellowship with unrepentant believers for the health of the Body of Christ. Paul then expresses his personal preference that men who serve the Lord could do so with less distraction if they remain single, clarifying that it is not a command. He also addresses a question about eating food that has been sacrificed to idols, moving on to say the following—exhorting them to exercise self-control in order not to be “disqualified from receiving the prize”:

*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 (Please be sure to also continue reading what comes next in 1Cor. 10:1-13, which was included in full earlier in this article. Also see Heb. 12:1-2, 6:12, 13:7, 2Tim. 2:3-7, 1Cor. 15:53.)

In his discussions about church traditions specifically given by him (which we are told to keep - 1Cor. 11:2, 2Thess. 2:15), he includes this warning (for those who have been partaking of the Lord's Supper in a gluttonous, ungodly way, forgetting the poor, drinking and eating too much—as though it were just any meal):

*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body **eats and drinks judgment on himself**. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. **But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.** 1 Corinthians 11:26-32*

Notice how there is reference to physical judgment of believers? The same thing happened in Acts 5:1-12. A married couple agreed to lie to the Church about their voluntary donation, and thus, to the Holy Spirit, since He dwells in believers—as if He didn't know the truth. It reminds me of Adam and Eve hiding in the Garden of Eden, or of Cain saying he wasn't his brother's keeper. (Gen. 3:8, 4:9) But we can't hide anything from God. (Heb. 4:12-13, Jer. 23:24, Psa. 139:7-16, 23-24)

Paul began his first letter to the Corinthians by scolding them about the puffed-up attitude of various leaders gaining followers of themselves instead of Christ. In the midst of discussing the return of Jesus for those who belong to Him (John 17:6, 24, 14:1-6), he scolds them again in 1Cor. 15:33-34, because some "have no knowledge of God." When Paul uses the phrases "wake up" and "drunken stupor," he connects that thought with 1Thess. 5:4-11, where he tells the Thessalonians to live as children of the light who are awake, not like those who are asleep or getting drunk in the darkness. (Also see Rev. 3:2-3, Mark 13:32-27, Matt. 25:13.) That passage, like this one and its context, deals with the return of Jesus for those who belong to Him (which is those who are IN Him—being in Him includes abiding—not just a "moment of faith" as some

teach). (1Cor. 15:23, 51-52, 1Thess. 4:16-17, Rom. 8:1, John 8:31-32, 15:4-10, 1John 2:24-25, 26-27, 28-29, 2John 1:8-11)

Paul also explains to the Corinthians about how the first Adam caused everyone to fall into sin, and the "last Adam" (Jesus) rescues us from that fall. (How will we understand these things if we skip the Old Testament?) He also discusses the first resurrection. Jesus will have been reigning on earth for a thousand years during a time of unprecedented peace (of which Solomon's reign was a foreshadow), but there is still some death. (Isa. 2, 11, 65-66, Zech. 8, 14, 1Cor. 15:25-26) He will not be gathering anyone together in the clouds at the end of His millennial reign. When Satan is released at that time, his army surrounding the "beloved city" on earth will be destroyed by fire from heaven (not by the sword from Jesus' mouth when He returns with the armies of heaven—Rev. 19:11-21, 2Thess. 2:8, Rev. 17:14). After which, heaven and earth flee from His presence and the judgment of those who were not part of the first resurrection takes place. (Rev. 20:1-15)

Most people understand that if something is repeated, that stresses the importance of it. One example of that would be the six times that one thousand years is specified in Rev. 20:2-7. That time period is the thousand-year reign of Christ, and yet is denied by the Roman Catholic church as well as by most "protestant denominational churches." Jesus rules with the "called, chosen and faithful" who return WITH Him in Rev. 17: 14, 19:7, 14—the "overcomers" who heeded His advice in the letters to the churches in Rev. 2-3—specifically see Rev. 2:26-29, 3:21-22.

But we're reviewing Paul's teachings, so let's move on to other passages that confirm what he previously wrote.

*For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only **do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh**, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will **not gratify the desires of the flesh**. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the **flesh** are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. **I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God**. But the*

*fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. 6:1 **Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.** Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load. Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. **Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.** And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 5:13-6:10*

So again, Paul is NOT saying that if we EVER did any of those things on the list of BAD, "fleshly fruit," we will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Matt. 12:33-37, Luke 6:43-49) He said those who DO them, as in CONTINUE doing them, refusing to repent, AFTER coming to (or claiming to) KNOW Christ. (See 1John 1:5-2:6—John says that those who live in sin after claiming to be born of God are lying.) These letters of Paul's and the other apostles were written to groups of believers. In the remainder of Galatians, Paul scolds them for allowing Jews to persuade them to accept circumcision and observe feast days, etc. (Gal. 4:10, 5:3-4, Acts 15:1-31) He's NOT telling them TO wallow in sin, but NOT to go back to the law in an attempt to earn salvation through it. (Eph. 2:15)

Colossians 3 will be covered later, but now let's look at what he said to the Thessalonians. First he commends them for accepting the message and for putting their faith into action. Then he reminds them that he gave them advance warning that he and Timothy (and indeed, all genuine believers who try to live godly lives - 1Thess. 2:14, 2Tim. 3:12-13) would be suffering for the sake of the righteousness and the kingdom of God, but not to let it shake their faith. Paul wraps up his letter with these words of instruction, followed by encouraging words about the return of Jesus for those who belong to Him in 1Thess. 4:13-18. (Also see 1Cor. 15:23, 50-53.)

Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what **instructions** we gave you **through the Lord Jesus**. For this is **the will of God**, your **sanctification**: that you **abstain from sexual immorality**; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because **the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you**. For **God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness**. Therefore **whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you**. Now concerning **brotherly love** you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Hmmm. He said pretty much the same thing to them. Love is good, but it does NOT include sexual immorality. In fact, those who do such things (whether they never come to believe and so their sins are not forgiven, or they have no respect for Jesus as Lord, or gratitude to Him as Savior) can expect to be subjected to the wrath of God. Not good! He then reminds them about how there is a day coming when sudden destruction will come upon unbelievers, who think they are safe (which includes those who are deceiving themselves about being in Christ). He gives them this advice about how to be ready for Jesus' return:

For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:5-11 (Also see John 3:19-21, Eph. 5:8, 1John 1:7.)

What does Paul say in his second letter to the Thessalonians? First he tells them he boasts about the increase of their love and faithfulness, even under

persecution. (2Thess. 1:3-4) He reminds them that God will take vengeance on their behalf, and to consider their afflictions a sign that God considers them worthy of the kingdom of God. (2Thess. 1:5-12, Luke 20:35-36, 6:22-23, Acts 5:41, 1Pet. 4:12-16, Jam. 1:12, Heb. 10:32-39) He then comforts them by correcting a misunderstanding that had crept in, whereby they thought that their persecutions meant they had been left to suffer God's wrath. (2Thess. 2:1-8) He informs them that those who truly are left behind to suffer God's wrath will be deceived by the signs and wonders of the antichrist, since they rejected the truth when it was presented to them:

*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 give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and **belief in the truth**. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, **stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter**. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, **comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word**. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-17 (Also see Rev. 13.)*

So much for truth being "hateful." Wouldn't it be better if we actually get over our hurt feelings from not getting our way now, so that we can miss out on the evil that is going to come upon the whole world? (Matt. 24:21-25:30, Rev. 12:10-12, 3:10) How could anyone not want to spend eternity with God? Paul encourages the Thessalonians to be steadfast:

*But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you **are doing and will do the things that we command**. May the Lord **direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ**. 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5*

(Also see 1Cor. 15:1-2, 58, Col. 1:21-23, 1Thess. 1:3-4, 2Pet. 1:3-15, 1Tim. 6:11, Jam. 1:2-4, 12-16, 5:10-11, Heb. 6:9-12; and see 1John 5:18-21—this is not about having everything go our way, but about how God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to resist, when we rely on Him for strength - 1Cor. 10:13, Jam. 4:6-10, 1Pet. 5:6-11.)

Paul told the Philippians that he had not yet attained to what he sought, but that we should all imitate him and his frame of mind. This is obviously NOT about “working for salvation,” since Paul not only believed, but he endured great hardship for Jesus’ sake. (Acts 9:16, 2Cor. 11:23-33)

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 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 [out of] 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. Philippians 3:7-16 (Also see Gal. 2:20, Phil. 1:21.)*

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is **true**, whatever is **honorable**, whatever is **just**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **commendable**, if there is any **excellence**, if there is anything **worthy of praise**, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—**practice these things**, and the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:4-9*

Prior to the above passages, he told them that suffering is to be expected. He also reminded them that the good works they do are not theirs at all, but the working of God’s Spirit within them. HIS good fruits work their way OUT of each believer.

*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. 2:1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from **love**, any participation in the Spirit, any **affection and sympathy**, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same **love**, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my **beloved**, as you have **always obeyed**, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.** Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be **blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life**, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Philippians 1:27-2:16 (Also see Heb. 12:3-12, 1Pet. 1:14-16, Rom. 16:19.)*

And earlier yet, he gave them these words of encouragement:

*And it is my prayer that your **love** may abound more and more, **with knowledge and all discernment**, so that you may **approve what is excellent**, and so be **pure and blameless** for the day of Christ, **filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ**, to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:9-11 (Also see Heb. 5:14, Rom. 12:2, Eph. 5:10, 17.)*

Paul taught both Titus and Timothy about what is important for them to convey to believers:

To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. **They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.** They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. 2:1 But **as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.** Titus 1:15-2:1

Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. **Command and teach these things.** Let no one despise you for your youth, but **set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.** Until I come, **devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.** Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. **Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.** Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. 1 Timothy 4:7-16

The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden. 1 Timothy 5:24-25

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

**Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.** By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. 2 Timothy 1:13-14

What we do during these earthly lives DOES matter, even though we will not be condemned to spiritual “death” (the “second death” - Rev. 20:6, 10, 14, 21:8, 22:15, Mark 9:47-48, Isa. 66:24, 2Thess. 1:6-12) if we TRULY believe, which means our names are written in the Book of Life. (Rev. 20:15, 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 21:27, Ex. 32:32, Dan. 12:1, Psa. 51:9-19)

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 5:6-10

For **the love of Christ controls us**, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that **those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised**. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a **new**

**creation.** *The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:14-17*

Next, Paul really ties it all together—love, holiness, the temple of God, children of God, being called OUT of the world, etc. These are NOT unrelated, individual concepts.

*We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; **our heart is wide open**. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return (I speak as to children) **widen your hearts also**. Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For **we are the temple of the living God**; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore **go out from their midst, and be separate from them**, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and **I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me**, says the Lord Almighty."* 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. Make room in your hearts for us**. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that **you are in our hearts**, to die together and to live together. I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy. 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:4 (Also see Heb. 12:14-17.)*

Here again Paul expresses that he doesn't like having to be harsh with them, but he does what needs to be done, for the sake of his ministry in Christ.

*I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the **meekness and gentleness of Christ**—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!—I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have **divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.** 2 Corinthians 10:1-6*

In these next passages, Paul reprimands them for listening to false teachers. Since there is no mention of them reverting to the law and its rituals as there was in the letter to the Galatians, it would seem that these teachers may have been perverting grace into a license to sin. (Eph. 4:19-24, Jude 1:4, Rom 6:1-2, 15-16, 1Pet. 2:24, 2Pet. 2:1-3, 1Tim. 4:8, Gal. 5:13, Rev. 2:20-23, 3:3-4, 21:7-8)

*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 Gal. 1:8-9, Rev. 14:4-5, Rev. 3:11-13.)*

*As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. And why? **Because I do not love you? God knows I do!** And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. 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 11:10-15 (Also see 1John 2:29, 3:7—it's what we practice that reveals our regenerated, or not, nature—especially the longer we have been "in training" with the Spirit - Titus 3:3-8, 2:11-15)*

Toward the end of the letter, Paul again deals with the disrespectful attitude that some of the Corinthians have been exhibiting against him. The fact that some of these particular details may not apply specifically to us does not mean that we can disregard the whole letter or even the teaching points of the circumstances to which he referred. The letters to the churches (groups of believers) were for the upbuilding of all who were able to read them. (Col. 4:16, 1Thess. 5:27, Rev. 1:11, Rom. 14:19, 1Cor. 14:26, Jude 1:20-23)

*Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? It is in the sight of God that we have been **speaking in Christ**, and all **for your upbuilding, beloved**. 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. 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. **I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them**—since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God. **Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!** 2 Corinthians 12:19-13:5 (See 1Cor. 6:9-20, 3:16-17.)*

Is Paul pointing out that God's Spirit is IN us to guilt us into behaving ourselves? No—it's not even by our own power that we could ever do so. He's explaining that IF we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, then that will result in changed thoughts, words and actions IF we yield to Him instead of grieving and quenching Him. (Eph. 4:30, 1Thess. 5:19) The more we know Him from His word, and the longer we walk with Him, the more the change will be evident. (1Cor. 15:34, Rom. 12:2, Phil. 1:9-11, Heb. 5:14, Col. 1:28, 2Pet. 3:18, 1John 2:6, Gal. 5:25) If we keep sinning the same as before, it puts our Father in heaven's holy name to shame. (1Pet. 1:17-19, Ezek. 36:22-23) It shows we don't love or respect Him, and are not thankful. Paul thoroughly understands that we are saved by grace, not works, and yet tells Titus to INSIST that those who have believed should SHOW it by their behavior.

*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. 2:1 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior*

appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, **by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior**, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that **those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works**. These things are excellent and profitable for people. Titus 2:11-3:8

And you **were** dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should **walk in them**. Ephesians 2:1-10 (Also see Rom. 11:30-33, 8:14, Gal. 5:24-25.)

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to **mature** manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may **no longer be children**, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, **speaking the truth in love**, we are to **grow up** in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it **builds itself up in love**. Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that **you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!**—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in

him, as the truth is in Jesus, to **put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.** Therefore, having **put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth** with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and **give no opportunity to the devil.** Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **Be kind** to one another, **tenderhearted,** forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. 5:1 Therefore **be imitators of God, as beloved children.** And **walk in love,** as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. **But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.** Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. **For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore **do not become partners with them;** for at one time you **were** darkness, but **now** you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and **try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.** Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." **Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.** 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.** Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

Now as the church **submits to Christ**, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." **This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.** However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Ephesians 4:11-5:33 (Also see 1Cor. 6:17-20, Col. 1:18-23, 1Cor. 14:20, Phil. 3:15, Rom. 16:19, Eph. 1:22-23, 4:15-16, 1Pet. 2:1-5.)

Paul gives his motive for being so insistent on proper behavior for the children of God below:

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 1:5-11 (Also see Jam. 3:1; Col. 1:27-29, Rom. 5:1-5, 2Tim. 4:8, Rom. 8:16-19, 2:16.)**

Paul was careful to make sure that all who will read his whole letters (which are based on the FULL counsel of God from all of the Old Testament Scriptures and from His revelation from Jesus—Acts 20:26-35, Gal. 1:12, 2Cor. 12:1-4) understand that grace is NOT a license to sin!

Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, **grace** also might reign **through righteousness leading to eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord. 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may

*abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might **walk in newness of life**. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that **our old self was crucified** with him **in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing**, so that we would **no longer be enslaved to sin**. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves **dead to sin and alive to God** in Christ Jesus. **Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.** For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. 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 5:20-6:23*

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

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but **those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit**. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. **Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.** But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. **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**. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, **in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God**. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for **adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies**. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Romans 8:1-25

Paul continues his discussion of how worthy Jesus is for us to be willing to suffer for, reassuring all who DO suffer for Jesus' sake (Matt. 5:10-11) that He has not left them and will NEVER leave them (John 10:27-30, 8:29, 15:10):

*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 8:35-39 (Also see Phil. 1:29-30, 1Pet. 3:13-17, Phil. 3:8-16.)*

Once again, Paul teaches that hating evil is not in opposition to love.

*Let **love** be genuine. **Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good**. Love one another with **brotherly affection**. Outdo one another in showing honor. **Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord**. Rejoice in **hope**, be **patient in tribulation**, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. **Never be wise in your own sight**. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good**. Romans 12:9-21*

"No wrong to a neighbor" in the passage below includes not sinning against them, or causing them to sin, or leading them astray by approving of their sin. (Gal. 6:1, 1Thess. 4:6, Jam. 5:19-20, Jude 1:23, Rom. 1:32, Matt. 18:6-7) Right in the same passage as "love your neighbor," Paul reminds the reader that sexual immorality and sensuality are NOT included in the definition of "love."

*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

Some preach that God no longer "sees" our sin after we come to faith. If that is the case, then why does Paul speak so consistently about how we believers are NOT to indulge the sinful flesh, but to walk in the Spirit, above and in Rom. 6-8, Gal. 5, Col. 3 and Eph. 4-5 (among others)? What about the examples discussed earlier, such as Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-12), and those who observed the Lord's Supper without discerning the body, as though it were just a regular meal, stuffing themselves, getting drunk, not leaving any for the poor, etc. Some of them were sick or dead because of Jesus judging them in their bodies so that they would not be condemned to death spiritually. (1Cor. 11:30-32) The man in 1Cor. 5 was a believer, and his sexual sin WAS seen and dealt with. We believers are not even supposed to EAT with believers who practice sexual immorality.

Why all this drama about sexual sins—aren't all sins the same? First, we who believe are called OUT of this world and its sinful "pleasures." (John 15:19, 17:14-16, 1John 3:13, 2:15-17, 5:18, Jam. 4:4-10, 1Pet. 2:9-12) Second, sins are not all the same, or Paul wouldn't have specifically told us that the sin of sexual immorality is particularly grievous. (1Cor. 6:15-20, Eph. 5:29-32, 1Cor. 3:16-17) As discussed previously, we are one spirit with Jesus, members of His Body, and His dwelling place/temple. When we join ourselves physically with someone in sexual sin (which is any sexual intimacy OTHER THAN that between a man and his wife), then we are defiling the Body of Christ.

*But because of the **temptation to sexual immorality**, each **man** should have his own **wife** and each **woman** her own **husband**. 1 Corinthians 7:2*

There is no such thing as same-sex "marriage" in God's eyes. He did not make the rectum as a sexual organ, so anyone who uses it as such is going against nature as He designed it. Romans 1:26-27 says they receive the penalty in their bodies. (Doctors who treat the unique health problems suffered by gay men will attest to this, if they're honest.) Likewise, the same passage teaches us that

are women who pursue lesbianism are not fulfilling the purpose for which God designed them, either. But that was obvious to all before the “wisdom” of “enlightened society” took effect. (1Cor. 3:18-20, Acts 17:16-32) We can learn from the permissiveness of the Greeks. They destroyed their own culture by pursuing “higher thinking” that was actually darkened, just as we’re doing to ourselves more and more every day—it’s a slippery, steep slope.

God created His design to result in FRUITFULNESS from physical unions, which is not possible with same gender unions. (Mal. 2:15, Gen. 1:28) As previously mentioned, that lesson about physical fruitfulness teaches us about how we are to be SPIRITUALLY fruitful when we belong to Him—when we are indwelt by His “Seed” (Spirit). (1John 3:9) Those who are “unfruitful branches” (the “fruit” is born by HIS Spirit IN us - 1John 3:24, 4:13, 5:18, Eph. 3:16, 20), are CUT OFF of the Vine (Jesus) by the Vinedresser (His Father). (John 15:1-10, Rom. 7:4-6, Matt. 13:22, Eph. 5:11-12, 2Pet. 1:8-11, Rom. 6:20-23, Gal. 5:22-25, Phil. 1:9-11, Col. 1:10, Heb. 12:11, Jam. 3:17) Jesus said to CUT OFF whatever part of our body causes us to sin, and WE are His Body. (Mark 9:42-50, Eph. 5:23-32) He said that the “unfruitful branches” and “weeds” will be burned, and “bad fish” will be thrown out. (John 15:6, Matt. 13:30, 40-43, 47-50)

Notice in the following passage how Paul does not feel that being LOVING and repenting of sexual immorality are contradictory to one another? Is it just me, or does it sound like in ALL of his writings, Paul does NOT consider sexual immorality, impurity and passion (outside of marriage) to be “loving”? If he does, then why would he contrast it with what he says afterwards, describing what IS loving?

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. **Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too **once** walked, when you **were** living in them. But **now** you must **put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, **compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and*******

**patience, bearing with one another** and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must **forgive**. And above all these **put on love**, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the **peace of Christ rule in your hearts**, to which indeed you were called in one body. And **be thankful**. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, **teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom**, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with **thankfulness in your hearts** to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** to God the Father through him. Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 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 3:1-25

We have come to the church of the firstborn IF we hold fast and do not let our hearts be hardened (against the Holy Spirit) by the deceitfulness of sin—IF we don't TRADE our firstborn inheritance for earthly indulgences (but rather abide in Jesus). (Heb. 3:5-6, 12-14, 12:15-17, 22-29) If we want to receive the awesome promises made to the children of God, we must be faithful, which includes pursuing holiness. (1Cor. 9:24-10:13, notice that the passage below also begins with reference to a "race," which involves action; Heb. 6:11-12, 10:23-39, 1Cor. 2:9, 15:58, Col. 3:23-25, Jam. 1:12-18, 2:5, 5:11, 2Cor. 7:1, Gal. 3:29, 2Pet. 1:4, 3:13-18, 1John 2:25-29, Matt. 5:3-11, Acts 20:32, Matt. 25:10, Rev. 3:19—also see all of Rev. 3:15-22.)

Also notice that when referring to Jesus in v. 3 below, it says He endured hostility from sinners (and we're told to expect the same). However, when it says we haven't struggled so hard as to spill our blood yet in v. 4, it doesn't say against sinners, but against SIN. Jesus never sinned, but He was tempted (as in "tried," like a test). (Matt. 4:1-2, Heb. 2:18, 4:15, 2Cor. 5:21) We are also tempted/tried in this "wilderness" of the world, and must overcome using Jesus' example and our love of God like He did. (Matt. 4:3-11, John 15:9-10, Jam. 1:13-16, 4:7-10, 1Cor. 10:12-13, Gal. 6:1) I am thoroughly convinced that those two verses also refer back to the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus shed his blood while praying for His Father's will to be done, telling the disciples to pray not to enter into temptation. (Luke 22:39-46)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, 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 author 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. For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal assembly, and to the **church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven**, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a **new covenant**, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. 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 12:1-29

Also see Heb. 11:13-16—we're meant to follow the example of putting our faith into action like those in Heb. 11, which just happens to immediately precede the above passage. We're "exiles and sojourners" here on earth—our citizenship is in heaven. Notice what Paul says just before those particular words:

*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. 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, whom I **love** and long for, my joy and crown, **stand firm** thus in the Lord, my beloved. Philippians 3:17-4:1 (Also see Eph. 2:19, Phil. 1:21, Luke 20:34-36, Rev. 20:4-6, and remember the lesson from Esau and the bowl of soup (i.e. to feed his belly rather than valuing his firstborn inheritance). Heb. 12:15-17, Gen. 25:29-34, 27:34)*

*But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "**The Lord knows those who are his**," and, "**Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity**." Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, **if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of***

**the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.** 3:1 *But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.* 2 Timothy 2:19-3:5

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.** 4:1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: **preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.** As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 2 Timothy 3:12-4:5

Is it loving to deceive people into thinking that they will inherit the kingdom of God despite their living as enemies of God by what they do and approve? (Rom. 1:32, 16:18-19, Titus 1:16, Jude 1:4, 7-13, 16-19, 2Pet. 2:1-3, 9-22) Is it loving to reassure people that they have nothing to worry about if they love their sin more than God? (Jam. 4:4-10, 1John 2:15-17) Wouldn't that almost be like calling God a liar if He gave us these warnings to us, and yet we tell people to ignore them? We begin our walk with Jesus when we are saved. If these instructions are not for us, then who would they be for? Those who are NOT saved cannot BE saved BY trying to walk like Jesus without believing in Him. We must first believe, then we obey Him as Lord and seek to please Him. (2Cor. 5:9-10, 14-15, John 14:15-26, Heb. 11:6, Rom. 8:7-9, 13, Gal. 6:7-8)

Paul warns us that those who defiantly reject God and His truth run the risk of being allowed to go their own way, according to the desires of their wicked

hearts. (Mark 7:21-23) God will not restrain them from pursuing unholy behaviors. (People today are more likely to idolize celebrities, riches, fame, power, etc. than a literal idol made of stone, metal or wood, but the fact remains that they are giving more affection and respect to someone in place of God—often someone who leads them away from God and doesn't submit to His authority.) Notice how Paul clearly does not consider it "living by faith" to reject God's ways and perfect, powerful nature—people who say that we don't need to "believe" in the "stories" of the Bible do not seem to realize that by doing so, they are calling into question the very character of God.

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." For the **wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all **ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth**. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are **without excuse**. For although they knew God, they did not **honor** him as God or **give thanks** to him, but they became **futile in their thinking**, and **their foolish hearts were darkened**. **Claiming to be wise, they became fools**, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore **God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves**, because **they exchanged the truth about God for a lie** and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason **God gave them up to dishonorable passions**. For **their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error**. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, **God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done**. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who **practice** such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give **approval to those who practice them**. 2:1 Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge,*

**practice the very same things.** *We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who **judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself**—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to **lead you to repentance?** But because of your **hard and impenitent heart** you are **storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.** He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give **eternal life;** but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be **wrath and fury.** There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. Romans 1:16-2:11*

Jesus sent His angel to tell John to send letters to the churches in Rev. 2-3. He says that IF they do not REPENT, then He will come AGAINST them. (Rev. 2:5, 16, 2:21-23, 3:3-4) I'm afraid that they may be among the FOOLISH virgins in Matt. 25:11-13, and among those in Rev. 9:20-21 who are no longer ABLE to repent, but instead under a great delusion. (Heb. 6:4-8, 2Thess. 2:9-12, Rev. 13:13-14) The repenting needed is that of various displeasing ways (2Tim. 2:19-26), including sexual immorality, which is rampant in our society today, having become acceptable to many. As we saw from Paul's writings, "sexual immorality" is not just "code" for worshiping false gods. Physical sexual immorality is similar to spiritual idolatry because of how our physical bodies are temples of God—His Spirit dwells in us. (1Cor. 3:16-17, 6:18-20)

Paul says that if the Corinthians don't repent of their sins, including sexual immorality, he will "not spare them" on his next visit. (2Cor. 12:20-13:3) We know from 1Thess. 4:6 (but read all of 1Thess. 4:1-8) and Heb. 13:4 that God will judge those who are sexually immoral. That most definitely INCLUDES His OWN people—in fact it BEGINS with us. (1Pet. 4:17-19, Heb. 10:30-31—see Heb. 10:26-39, 1Pet. 4:3-5, Rom. 2:6-11)

Paul told us who this battle is really against and how to win it:

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **stand against the schemes of the devil.** **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly***

**places.** *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of **truth**, and having put on the breastplate of **righteousness**, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of **faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of **salvation**, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the **word of God**, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end **keep alert** with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. Ephesians 6:10-20 (Also see 1Pet. 2:11, 5:6-11.)*

Let's be ready. Let's repent and receive cleansing and forgiveness for those sins that were meant to have been in the past, but we continued in deliberately (or in ignorance, or by failing to exercise self-control, which is a fruit of the Spirit - Gal. 5:22-24) after coming to the knowledge of the TRUTH. (1John 1:5-2:6, Titus 1:1, 2Tim. 2:24-26, 3:1-7, Heb. 10:26-30) God knows our very thoughts and the intentions of our hearts. (Heb. 4:12-13, Rev. 2:16, 23, 19:15, 21, Rom. 14:12, 1Pet. 4:3-5, Eph. 6:6) Let's not play games with Him, but be sincere. (Rom. 6:17-19) Let's not pretend that we're following Christ in our hearts despite our actions proving otherwise—that's not "in truth and spirit." (John 4:23-24, Rom. 2:28-29, 10:9-10, 1Cor. 4:4-5, 1Tim. 1:5, 2Tim. 2:22, Heb. 3:12-15, 1Pet. 1:22-25)

*And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and **not shrink from him in shame at his coming**. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that **everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him**. 1 John 2:28-29 (Also see John 15:1-10, 14:15-26.)*

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