

Hindsight

by Tricia Berg

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 13:5

Hindsight's 20/20 - or is it?

When Satan plotted evil against Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, he didn't attack them physically. No, he was smarter than that. He planted seeds of doubt that God really meant what He said, and then sat back and watched them destroy their own blessings. They lost their perfect, sinless nature, their immortality, their ideal life in God's garden, and their intimate fellowship with the living, holy God. All it took was a few well-chosen words that inspired poisonous thoughts. Notice how Satan picked on Eve, the weaker of the two? (1Pet. 3:7) She brought down Adam without Satan having to even say a word personally to him, because Adam trusted Eve and cared for her. (Gen. 3)

Despite having that lesson to learn from, many Christians today are being deceived by Satan into questioning what God really said. That's still all it takes is a seed of doubt planted in a gullible mind.

*I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For **such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive**. For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to **be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil**. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Romans 16:17-20 (Also Titus 1:11, 16)*

*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. 17 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 6:3-12, 17-21

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." 2 Peter 2:18-22

These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and

*praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; **save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.** Jude 1:12-23*

If only Eve had thought for herself and trusted that God meant what He said and said what He meant! She and her husband and offspring would still be in the garden today (but if we're honest with ourselves, we probably would have done the same thing she did). Here we are millennia later, telling each other that God will "understand" why we ignored His word and went our own way. (Prov. 14:11-12, Jer. 6:16-17) We think He won't mind that we're in outright rebellion against His instructions.

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Isaiah 5:20

"Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell." Matthew 18:7-9

"But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to have a large millstone tied around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea." Matthew 18:6

Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." John 8:11b

Instead of the stronger Christians ("Adam") helping weaker Christians ("Eve") understand right and wrong, many of us are just going along with them. (Rom. 1:32, 2Pet. 3:16-17, Phil. 3:17-19, 1Tim. 4:11-16, 1Cor. 11:1, 1Thess. 1:6-7, Heb. 6:4-12, Heb. 10:26-39, Heb. 12) We think we're showing love to our brothers, because we care for them—we don't want to hurt their feelings or offend them by disapproving of what they do. We don't want to seem "judgmental," but what is more important—their feelings and getting their way now, or the fate of their souls? Life is short, even though it doesn't seem like it sometimes. Those who are wise will plan for eternity now.

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. Ephesians 5:1-21

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. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Looking back and seeing all of the grief that the original sin caused (which is everything evil, disgusting, sad, horrifying—you name it—that ever has been), can anyone really believe that what Adam did by going along with Eve's disobedience was an acceptable choice? Should we really follow in his footsteps and do the same thing? Back then, they looked forward to the Savior, Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, who would provide a way for mankind to be restored to a right relationship with God. (Gen. 3:15) Today, we have the benefit of knowing that work is already accomplished. (John 19:30)

*"For God so **loved** the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God**. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But **whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God**." John 3:16-21*

*But **God shows His love for us** in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Romans 5:8*

*"The most important command," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength**.' The second is this: '**Love your neighbor as yourself**.' There is no commandment greater than these." Mark 12:29-31*

The question then might be—what is the definition of love? Is it "loving" to go along with anything and everything that people we care about suggest or do? Is that what Adam would say now, in hindsight?

***By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers**. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because **we keep his commandments and do what pleases him**. And this is his commandment, that we **believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us**. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 1 John 3:16-24*

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

him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. **By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. 1 John 2:1-6 (A;sp see 1John 2:26-29)**

*"Whoever **has my commandments and keeps them**, he it is who **loves me**. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." John 14:21*

Eve allowed Satan to plant doubt in her mind about what God really said. She acted on those doubts and then suggested Adam do the same, which he did without questioning. People who wander off the narrow path today are doing the same thing—they listen to and follow someone other than the Good Shepherd. (Matt. 7:13-14, John 8:44, John 10:1-16, 1John 2:26-29)

But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. For you happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed. 2 Corinthians 11:3-4

*These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. But I am not surprised! Even **Satan disguises himself as an angel of light**. **So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.** In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15*

*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. Ephesians 4:11-16*

We can look around us and easily see the dire problems of this world—all caused by just a few deadly errors. There is not going to be another Savior. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. (John 14:6, Heb. 9:24-28) God's remedy for the sin-fallen world is already in place. Will we believe Him, and accept His Way, or will humanity continue to insist even after all this time having passed upon going our own way, even though we have hindsight in our favor? The Bible has already given us the answer:

*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. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men. You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. **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. 2 Timothy 3:1-17*

*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 4:1-5*

A lot of things have changed for the worse morally and ethically in our country just in the two short years since I originally wrote this article. But that doesn't mean that those of us who believe God have to be deceived and go along with the flow. The world changes, but God does not. (Heb. 13:8, Mal. 3:6) Those whose hearts are aligned with God's heart care about what He cares about. They will spend eternity worshiping and serving Him. (Mal. 3:13-4:3, 2Pet. 2:1-12, John 14:20-24) Those who claim to believe, but are actually putting their trust in a god who exists only in their imagination, need to wake up while there is still time. (1Cor. 15:34, Rev. 3:2-4, Rom. 13:11-14, 1Thess. 5:1-11, 2Thess. 2:9-12, Matt. 25:1-13, Matt. 7:21-29, Luke 6:43-49)

*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 3:1-18

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to **put off your old self**, which belongs to your **former manner of life** and is **corrupt through deceitful desires**, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. **Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths**, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption**. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:17-32

Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "**Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.**" 2 Timothy 2:19

Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that **you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked**—I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent**. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:17-20

Being willing to stand up for the truth, not shouting or calling names, but calmly, out of love for lost souls, is one way that we shine our lights and glorify our Father in heaven. (Phil. 2:14-16, 2Cor. 2:14-16, 2Cor. 4:1-6, Titus 2:7-8, 1Pet. 3:8-17) Instead of hiding our lamps under a bushel, we bear witness that the Word of

Truth has TRULY been implanted in our hearts. (Eph. 1:13-14) We season our speech with salt, because we're the salt of the earth—not "lose our saltiness" by compromising on the truth, or remaining silent out of fear of mere people, or straying from the truth ourselves. (Matt. 5:10-16, Eph. 5:6-17, Col. 4:5-6, Phil. 1:27-30, Matt. 10:26-28, Heb. 13:6, Eph. 6:10-20)

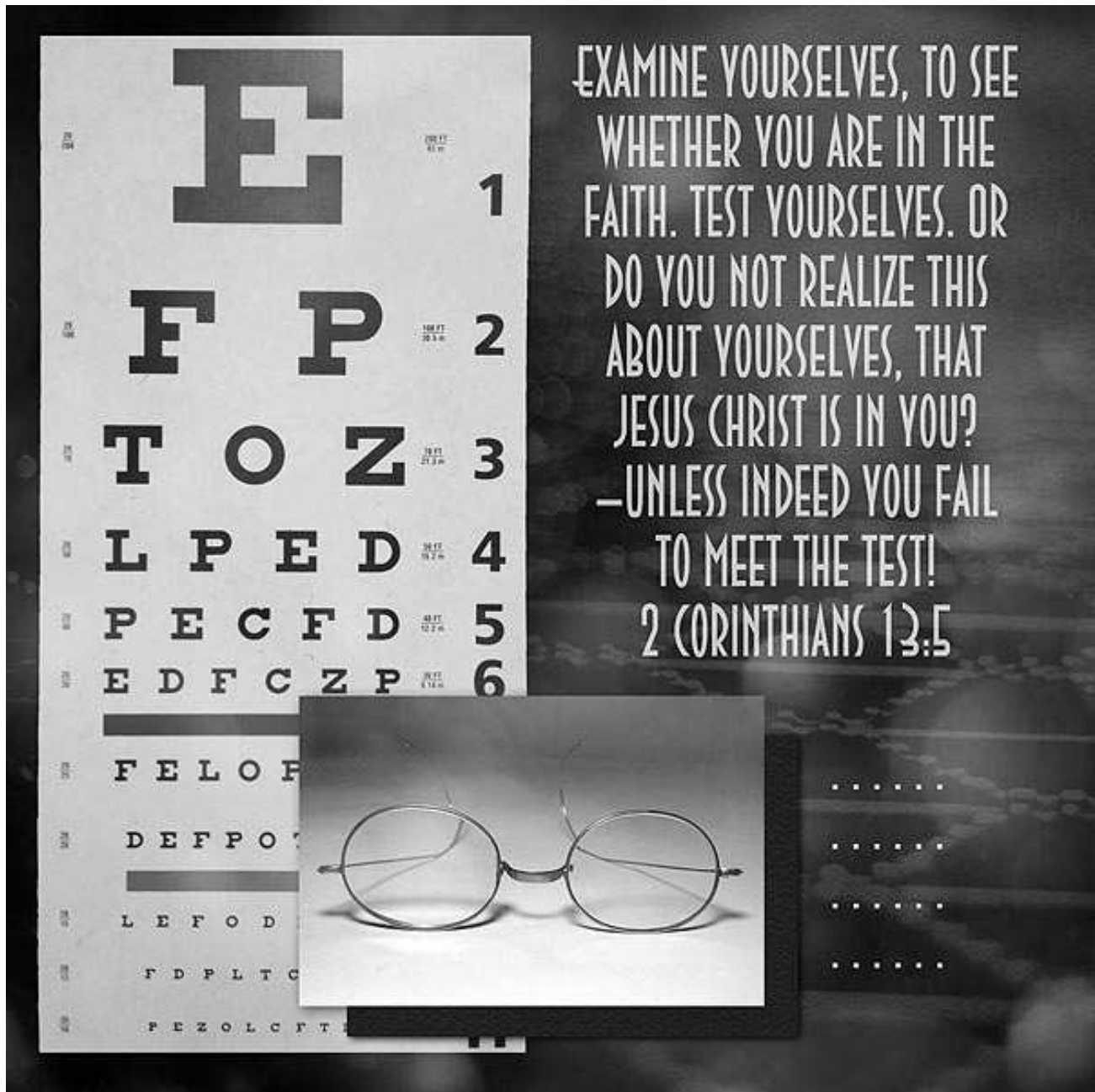
*Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore **put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. James 1:19-27*

As for me, my hope is not in this temporary, fading world, but in the next. I know that gaining the world is not worth losing my soul. (Mark 8:34-38) How about you?

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And **the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.** 1 John 2:15-17

*So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is **preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,** as we look not to the things that are seen but to the **things that are unseen.** For the things that are seen are transient, but the **things that are unseen are eternal.** 2 Corinthians 4:16-18*

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