

## **If**

by Tricia Berg

*The saying is trustworthy, for:  
If we have died with Him, we will also live with Him;  
if we endure, we will also reign with Him;  
if we deny him, He also will deny us;  
if we are faithless, He remains faithful—  
for He cannot deny Himself.  
2 Timothy 2:11-13*

I have often seen just the last part of the above passage quoted out of context, which then makes it contradictory. The people who do that don't like the context, so they leave it out. They only like the last part where we can do anything and still inherit the kingdom of God, but there are other "ifs" in the passage. "If we have died with Him..."

*Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.  
Romans 6:8*

We are dead to sin and alive to God, empowered by the Holy Spirit to live as NEW creations instead of the same way that we did before when our fruit was bad.

*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 6:11-23*

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1*

"If we endure..." We are heirs, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. Also notice that the promises are to those who are IN Christ, to whom the "if" applies in "if we live by the Spirit."

*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. Romans 8:12-19*

*And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:24-25*

The one who "conquers" or "overcomes" will receive the promises. These promises assume that we already believe, and above that, have been faithful.

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.' Revelation 2:7*

*Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.' Revelation 2:10-11*

Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it. Revelation 2:16-17

Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' Revelation 2:25-29

Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' Revelation 3:2-6

I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' Revelation 3:11-13

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so 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 eat with him, and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'" Revelation 3:19-22

They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful." Revelation 17:14

We should not be sluggish, but instead imitate those who are examples of perseverance for us.

*For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Hebrews 6:4-12*

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

*As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. James 5:10-11*

We're to press on toward the goal, which we have not yet obtained. So this obviously is not something that was accomplished merely by believing, or Paul would not say he had not yet attained it. In other words, it is not identical to salvation, which is a free gift to those who believe. (Eph. 2:8-10)

*Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not*

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

We're exhorted to run a good race and exercise self-control to win the prize, and reminded that there are rules. One can be disqualified by shrinking back.

*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. 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 9:24-10:13

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. 2 Timothy 2:3-7

I believe that the farmer receiving the first share of the crops refers back to the following passage, and also to the concept of firstfruits. There is more than one crop as well as different parts of the harvest of each crop in its own time. The Bible's annual feast calendar purposefully demonstrates this. (Lev. 23; Also see Rev. 14:14-20, Rom. 8:23, 1Cor. 15:23.)

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

One can be disqualified (as Paul mentioned more than once above), by shrinking back—whether in cowardice or to pursue the so-called “delights” of the world. (Parable of the Sower—Matt. 13, 1John 2:15-17)

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

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

*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 gathering, and to the assembly 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 12:18-29

As Paul said, we must exercise self control so that you're not disqualified. From what? From the unfathomable privilege of being among the assembly of the firstborn at Mount Zion, which I believe also entails being part of the first resurrection.

(Note: I am not convinced that everyone who is part of the second resurrection is unsaved. The Scriptures do not say so plainly, but rather say "if" their name is not in the Book of Life then they are thrown in the Lake of Fire. Salvation is a free gift to all who believe, but clearly there are rewards above and beyond it for those who are faithful unto death—worthy. Those who are part of the first resurrection have nothing to fear from the second resurrection and potential death resulting from that judgment. Rev. 2:11)

And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are **considered worthy to attain to that age** and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are **sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.** Luke 20:34-36

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. **They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.** Revelation 20:4-6

(Note: I believe the thousand years are literal because of the fact that the phrase "a thousand years is as a day to the Lord" is in both testaments, always in the context of the end times. (Psa. 90—"teach us to number our days," and 2Pet. 3.) I believe that the six days of creation followed by a day of rest are echoed in 6,000 years of human history followed by 1,000 years of peace and rest during the millennial rule of Jesus. Please see my other articles for more Bible study about His reign.)



This goes hand in hand with taking up our cross and following Jesus - or are we too ashamed of His "unloving" [according to this generation] words of truth to stand firm with Him?

*And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Mark 8:34-38*

*Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. Luke 6:22-23*

*Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. Matthew 7:13-14*

*The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." Luke 6:45-49*

Is it possible for God to be BOTH love AND truth, and yet we are not being loving if we quote certain things that He said? It absolutely is NOT possible!

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6*

*Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:8*

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. Ephesians 4:15-24

“If we deny Him...” Then He will deny us - so much for not needing to actually continue following Him, huh? They turned back from following Him because they were only after the bread—they only wanted “stuff” from Him.

*Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves." John 6:26*

*After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. John 6:66*

They weren't any better than Esau, who sold his firstborn inheritance for a bowl of soup. He threw away earthly honor and wealth, but we come to the assembly of the firstborn in heaven. (See the portion of Heb. 12 already quoted above.)

*It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no*

*"root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. Hebrews 12:7-17*

They went out from us because they were never really with us. In other words, they were not really children of God. By the context we understand that they love the world and all it has to offer more than God.

*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. 1 John 2:19*

*We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. 1 John 5:18-21*

*For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 2 Timothy 4:10*

Again, also see the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4)—many fall away due to persecution or the lures of the world. It's not about a false gospel where you earn or contribute to your own salvation. It's about your own behavior testifying for or against your claim that you are a child of God. I'm not going to quote all of 1John 1-5 and John 14-15 here, but I recommend reading them often and paying attention to the context. They are not about reverting to Judaism, but about how to live according to the spirit of the law by the Spirit. (Also see Gal. 5, Eph. 2:15, Col. 2:13-3:17.) It's not by mere outward appearances, according to the letter, but in truth and spirit. (Rom. 7:4-6, John 4:19-23, Rom. 6:17-23, Mark 7:20-23)

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

Those who make a practice of doing things God hates will NOT inherit the kingdom of God. (1Cor. 6:9-20, Gal. 5:13-26, Rev. 21:7-8, 22:14-15, Rom. 1:18-33) Remember that He disciplines those He loves. If we reject His discipline, which is to harden our hearts against Him, He will eventually allow us to go our own way that we insist upon. If we block Him out completely, then we risk our entire faith, which is by hearing. (Rom. 10:17)

*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." Hebrews 3:5-15*

The problem isn't that we slip and get back up— the problem is when we wallow in the mud, making excuses for our sin, continuing in the same patterns that caused us to slip in the first place, etc. (Jam. 5:19-20, Gal. 6:1)

*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*

We're not to embrace the fallen ways of the world. (1John 2:15-17, 1Pet. 2:11-12, Titus 3:3-8, Col. 3, Eph. 4:17-5:33, 1Thess. 4:2-8) We are warned repeatedly not to be deceived. (Eph. 5:6, 1John 2:26-28, 2Pet. 3:15-18, 1Cor.

6:9-10, 15:33-34, 2Cor. 11:3-4, Gal. 6:7-8, Jam. 1:12-16, Rom. 16:16-19, 1Cor. 3:16-18, 1John 3:6-10)

We would do well to heed that advice and read our Bibles for ourselves so that we'll know what it "really says" for REAL and not according to someone else's agenda-driven teaching—not according to someone receiving fame and riches for telling unregenerated people what they want to hear. (2Pet. 2:1-3, 2Pet. 3, 1Cor. 2:14)

*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 3:1-5*

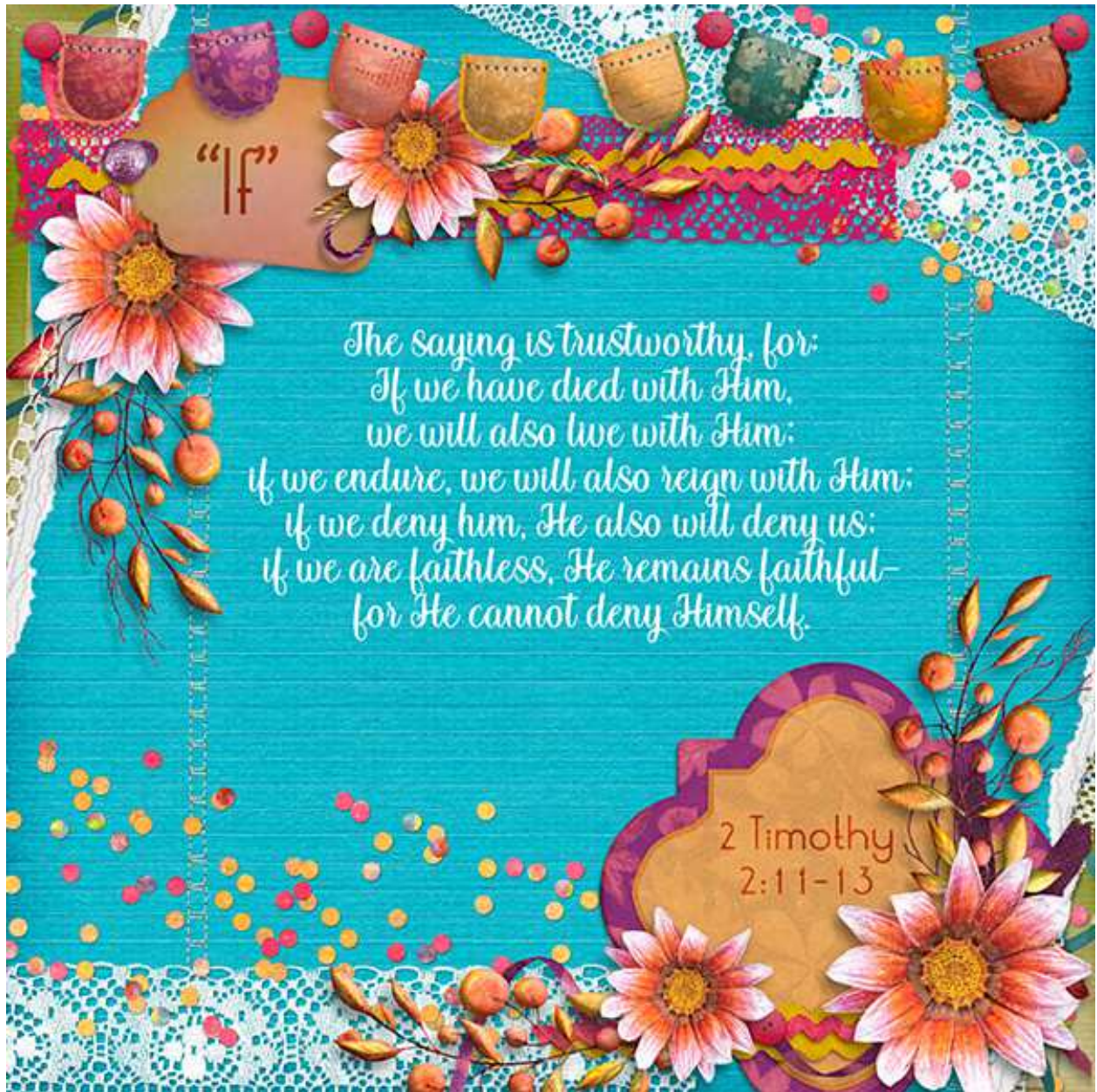
*For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 2 Timothy 4:3-4*

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

And as always, choose a normal translation, not a "special" one that tries to modernize the timeless Word of God, or to advance the teachings of a cult or worldly cause. Steer clear of the "YouTube prophets" who gain a following by posting every single dream they have and saying it's a message from God.

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