

SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

by Tricia Berg

This article is intended as a Bible study on the topic of gay marriage. It was originally written shortly after the SCOTUS decision in July, 2015. Please take a moment to pray that the Holy Spirit will help you receive only truth and reject all falsehood before you continue reading. It is not my intention to use God's word as a hammer to make a point, but to illuminate Scriptures telling us what He has said. We are not called to forsake truth in the name of love.

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. EPHESIANS 5:1-17

How Did We Get Here?

Looking back, there has been a constant, progressive trend against morality and the principles God laid out in the Bible for many, many years now. One by one, they are worn down, presented as out-dated and gradually various sins have been normalized. We have seen society accept (or at least tolerate) removal of prayer in public places like schools and government meetings (but it's okay to fly the rainbow flag or light up the buildings with rainbow colors), cohabitation before or instead of marriage, abortion, gay marriage and before the decision on that was even handed down, gender itself came under attack through the transgender movement. Not only that, but reliable news sources report that a trio of men has been married in Thailand! (I don't know whether this next report is to be believed, but I also read that a woman claims to be a dog trapped in a human body...?)

The Root of the Problem

All of these issues have one question at their root. "Did God really say?" Genesis 3:1 Eve fell for that one in the Garden. It worked so well that Satan has been beating the same drum for thousands of years. Why change your tactics when you have already found something that works? We believers are told that we are narrow-minded and even downright ignorant to believe that God exists, that He really created the world, that He only made two genders--male and female (any anomalies are the result of damage to genetics due to this fallen world), that Adam and Eve were the first husband and wife and our pattern for marriage, that God's examples in nature of reproduction and instructions to humans to multiply (as He sees fit to bless couples) are relevant for today (Jesus specifically quoted from Genesis when asked a question about marriage), that humans were made in God's image and therefore very special (Genesis 1 & 2), that Jesus died for us on the cross and rose again from the dead, that He is the ONLY way to heaven, and that He will be returning for us some day. Yes, God really DID say!

FOR FROM HIM AND THROUGH HIM AND TO HIM ARE ALL THINGS. TO HIM BE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN ROMANS 11:36

FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND HIS MOTHER, AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE; AND THEY SHALL BECOME *ONE FLESH*. AND *THE MAN AND HIS WIFE* WERE BOTH NAKED AND WERE NOT ASHAMED. GENESIS 2:24-5

[JESUS] SAID, "SO THEY ARE *NO LONGER TWO, BUT ONE FLESH*. WHAT THEREFORE GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER, LET NO MAN SEPARATE." MATTHEW 19:6

FOR I DELIVERED TO YOU AS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE WHAT I ALSO RECEIVED, THAT *CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS* ACCORDING TO THE Scriptures, AND THAT HE WAS BURIED, AND THAT HE WAS RAISED ON THE THIRD DAY ACCORDING TO THE Scriptures. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4

JESUS SAID TO HIM, "I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; *NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER, BUT BY ME*." JOHN 14:6

"IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY ROOMS; IF IT WERE NOT SO, WOULD I HAVE TOLD YOU THAT *I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU?* AND WHEN I GO AND PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU, *I WILL COME AGAIN AND WILL TAKE YOU TO MYSELF*, THAT WHERE I AM YOU MAY BE ALSO." JOHN 14:2-3

A House Divided

The Church (not a building, but all true believers) seems to be divided on how to handle this latest affront to our beliefs. One side says to love the sinner as they are--that their behavior is between them and God. They say Jesus said "judge not." The other side says that God hates homosexuality and sometimes they state their case so vigorously that they give the impression that God also

hates sinners. As is often the case, neither extreme is helpful. Balance is needed. It is true that Jesus said to take the log out of your own eye *so you can remove the speck from your brother's eye*. Deal with your own sin first--put your own house in order *before* you tell anyone how to run theirs. Your vision is askew and it is hypocritical to judge someone else while ignoring your own issues. In another passage, Paul tells us not to judge others for sins *we do ourselves*. He is not suggesting that sin is acceptable. He is saying the same thing as Jesus--deal with your own sin first, then talk to your brother! Don't be a hypocrite. God has made it clear throughout the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, that He does indeed hate sin.

"WHY DO YOU SEE THE SPECK THAT IS IN YOUR BROTHER'S EYE, BUT DO NOT NOTICE THE LOG THAT IS IN YOUR OWN EYE? OR HOW CAN YOU SAY TO YOUR BROTHER, 'LET ME TAKE THE SPECK OUT OF YOUR EYE,' WHEN THERE IS THE LOG IN YOUR OWN EYE? YOU HYPOCRITE, FIRST TAKE THE LOG OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE, AND THEN YOU WILL SEE CLEARLY TO TAKE THE SPECK OUT OF YOUR BROTHER'S EYE." MATTHEW 7:3-5

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. ROMANS 2:1

LISTEN! THE LORD'S ARM IS NOT TOO WEAK TO SAVE YOU, NOR IS HIS EAR TOO DEAF TO HEAR YOU CALL. IT'S YOUR SINS THAT HAVE CUT YOU OFF FROM GOD. *BECAUSE OF YOUR SINS, HE HAS TURNED AWAY AND WILL NOT LISTEN ANYMORE*. ISAIAH 59:1-2

God Loves People But Hates Sin

Clearly, God loves people even though He hates sin. He wants the people, whom He loves, to turn from sin. That's the middle, reasonable ground we can all stand on. And before we go on, I want to make it perfectly clear that **no one in any way ever** could earn their way to heaven! What we are talking about here is our walk with God *after* receiving salvation. Jesus, the perfect Son of God, *the very embodiment of love*, laid down His sinless life for us. Is there anything that He could possibly ask of us that would be too much? For me, the answer is no, but each person has to decide for themselves the measure of love they want to give back to God. He told us what He wanted from us: that we love Him will ALL of our heart, soul, mind and strength. He said that the one who loves Him will obey. He said:

"WHOEVER DOES NOT *TAKE UP THEIR CROSS AND FOLLOW ME* IS NOT WORTHY OF ME." MATTHEW 10:38

"GOD SO *LOVED* THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM *SHOULD NOT PERISH* BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE." JOHN 3:16

FOR IT IS BY *GRACE* YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED, THROUGH *FAITH*—AND THIS IS NOT FROM YOURSELVES, IT IS THE *GIFT OF GOD*—NOT BY WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE CAN BOAST. EPHESIANS 2:8-9

“FOR THIS REASON THE FATHER LOVES ME, BECAUSE I LAY DOWN MY LIFE SO THAT I MAY TAKE IT AGAIN. *NO ONE HAS TAKEN IT AWAY FROM ME, BUT I LAY IT DOWN ON MY OWN INITIATIVE.*” JOHN 10:17

“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

Jesus answered a question as to how He would make Himself known only to His disciples instead of to everyone. This is crucial to understand. **Unless** you have His Spirit within you, which is what happens when you are born again, then you will not enter the Kingdom because He does NOT know you and you do not know Him. This is why it is critical that people understand the significance and sanctity of marriage and the two becoming one. Marriage is a physical pattern for a spiritual reality—by God’s design, not ours. He is faithful and we are to be faithful as well.

“*IF YOU LOVE ME, YOU WILL KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS. AND I WILL ASK THE FATHER, AND HE WILL GIVE YOU ANOTHER HELPER, TO BE WITH YOU FOREVER, EVEN THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH, WHOM THE WORLD CANNOT RECEIVE, BECAUSE IT NEITHER SEES HIM NOR KNOWS HIM. YOU KNOW HIM, FOR HE DWELLS WITH YOU AND WILL BE IN YOU. I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU AS ORPHANS; I WILL COME TO YOU. YET A LITTLE WHILE AND THE WORLD WILL SEE ME NO MORE, BUT YOU WILL SEE ME. BECAUSE I LIVE, YOU ALSO WILL LIVE. IN THAT DAY YOU WILL KNOW THAT I AM IN MY FATHER, AND YOU IN ME, AND I IN YOU. WHOEVER HAS MY COMMANDMENTS AND KEEPS THEM, *HE IT IS WHO LOVES ME.* AND HE WHO LOVES ME WILL BE LOVED BY MY FATHER, AND I WILL LOVE HIM AND MANIFEST MYSELF TO HIM. JUDAS (NOT ISCARIOT) SAID TO HIM, “LORD, HOW IS IT THAT YOU WILL MANIFEST YOURSELF TO US, AND NOT TO THE WORLD?” JESUS ANSWERED HIM, “IF ANYONE LOVES ME, HE WILL KEEP MY WORD, AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE HIM, AND WE WILL COME TO HIM AND MAKE OUR HOME WITH HIM. WHOEVER DOES NOT LOVE ME DOES NOT KEEP MY WORDS. AND THE WORD THAT YOU HEAR IS NOT MINE BUT THE FATHER’S WHO SENT ME.” JOHN 14:15-24*

Any faith, love or wisdom we have actually comes from His Spirit, so if we find ourselves lacking all we need to do is go to Him for more. He provides us with what we need to serve Him well and He never runs out of anything. (In case it helps anyone, I have found from personal experience that God does not usually answer requests for wisdom instantly. Be patient and keep paying attention while you’re waiting for an answer, but don’t go seeking “signs.” Stick with His Word.)

NOW IF ANY OF YOU *LACKS WISDOM*, HE SHOULD ASK GOD, WHO GIVES TO ALL GENEROUSLY AND WITHOUT CRITICIZING, AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO HIM. BUT *LET HIM ASK IN FAITH*

WITHOUT DOUBTING. FOR THE DOUBTER IS LIKE THE SURGING SEA, DRIVEN AND TOSSED BY THE WIND. THAT PERSON SHOULD NOT EXPECT TO RECEIVE ANYTHING FROM THE LORD. AN INDECISIVE MAN IS UNSTABLE IN ALL HIS WAYS. JAMES 1:5-8

"BUT THOSE WHO DRINK THE WATER I GIVE WILL NEVER BE THIRSTY AGAIN. IT BECOMES A FRESH, BUBBLING SPRING WITHIN THEM, GIVING THEM ETERNAL LIFE." JOHN 4:14

WWJD?

I've heard the question, "What would Jesus do?" repeated endlessly as if this will settle the matter. So let's see what the Bible, our only authority, actually tells us about that. Jesus was criticized for eating with sinners. His response was that the sick need a doctor, not the healthy. Now on the other hand Paul, bless his heart, told us not to even eat with "such people."

AS JESUS WAS HAVING A MEAL IN LEVI'S HOME, MANY TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS WERE EATING WITH JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES, FOR THERE WERE MANY WHO FOLLOWED HIM. WHEN THE EXPERTS IN THE LAW AND THE PHARISEES SAW THAT HE WAS EATING WITH SINNERS AND TAX COLLECTORS, THEY SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, 'WHY DOES HE EAT WITH TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS?' WHEN JESUS HEARD THIS HE SAID TO THEM, 'THOSE WHO ARE HEALTHY DON'T NEED A PHYSICIAN, BUT THOSE WHO ARE SICK DO. I HAVE NOT COME TO CALL THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT SINNERS.' MARK 2:15-17

BUT NOW I AM WRITING TO YOU THAT YOU MUST NOT ASSOCIATE WITH ANYONE WHO CLAIMS TO BE A BROTHER OR SISTER BUT IS SEXUALLY IMMORAL OR GREEDY, AN IDOLATER OR SLANDERER, A DRUNKARD OR SWINDLER. DO NOT EVEN EAT WITH SUCH PEOPLE. 1 CORINTHIANS 5:11

What gives? Is there a difference between the teachings of Paul and those of Jesus? No, there isn't. Jesus came to save the lost, which involves actually having contact with them. He ALWAYS told them to turn from their sin. He NEVER approved of their sin. We are to be "in" the world, but not "of" it. If you notice from the verse I referred to, Paul was referring to people who are already claiming to be saved, yet they continue *willfully* in their sin! Jesus said that it would be better to tie a millstone around your neck and drown than to be the one who causes people to stumble or fall into sin.

AND WHEN THE PEOPLE SAW IT, THEY ALL COMPLAINED, "HE HAS GONE IN TO BE THE GUEST OF A MAN WHO IS A SINNER." BUT ZACCHAEUS STOPPED AND SAID TO THE LORD, "LOOK, LORD, HALF OF MY POSSESSIONS I NOW GIVE TO THE POOR, AND IF I HAVE CHEATED ANYONE OF ANYTHING, I AM PAYING BACK FOUR TIMES AS MUCH!" THEN JESUS SAID TO HIM, "TODAY SALVATION HAS COME TO THIS HOUSEHOLD, BECAUSE HE TOO IS A SON OF ABRAHAM! FOR THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THE LOST." LUKE 19:7-10

"DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD NOR 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 LUST OF THE FLESH AND THE LUST OF THE EYES AND THE BOASTFUL PRIDE OF LIFE, IS NOT FROM THE

FATHER, BUT IS FROM THE WORLD. THE WORLD IS PASSING AWAY, AND ALSO ITS LUSTS; BUT *THE ONE WHO DOES THE WILL OF GOD LIVES FOREVER.*" 1 JOHN 2:15-17

"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

"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

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

To Each His Own

I have heard it said that "they" aren't hurting anyone and deserve to be happy. I'm not going to validate the idea that any kind of sin should somehow be needed to make anyone happy, and I feel that I have to disagree that no one gets hurt. I believe God. I believe what He said in the Bible. No good can come of changing society to match people's sense of right and wrong without the guidance of God's Word. Many immoral acts that have been made legal in the past and we have paid for those mistakes continually ever since. This "progress" is of Satan, the murdering father of lies, destroying our country from within. How clever! Look at the fruits of his work: Millions of babies have been killed, the divorce rate is sky high, babies born out of wedlock with only one parent to support them emotionally and financially are commonplace, crime rates are through the roof, diseases thrive, too many live in poverty and people die every day from lack of hope. They could have really used some truth--that *our great God designed ALL of creation and He loves them.*

YOU SIMPLE PEOPLE, USE GOOD JUDGMENT. YOU FOOLISH PEOPLE, SHOW SOME UNDERSTANDING. LISTEN TO ME! FOR I HAVE IMPORTANT THINGS TO TELL YOU. *EVERYTHING I SAY IS RIGHT, FOR I SPEAK THE TRUTH AND DETEST EVERY KIND OF DECEPTION. MY ADVICE IS WHOLESOME. THERE IS NOTHING DEVIOUS OR CROOKED IN IT.* MY WORDS ARE PLAIN TO ANYONE WITH UNDERSTANDING, CLEAR TO THOSE WITH KNOWLEDGE. PROVERBS 8:5-9

"*SATAN WAS A MURDERER FROM THE BEGINNING, NOT HOLDING TO THE TRUTH, FOR THERE IS NO TRUTH IN HIM. WHEN HE LIES, HE SPEAKS HIS NATIVE LANGUAGE, FOR HE IS A LIAR AND THE FATHER OF LIES.*" JOHN 8:44

The Greatest Commands

All of the problems of the world would be solved if everyone obeyed the greatest two commands—love God first and love your neighbor as yourself. What a perfect world it would be if everyone believed in and obeyed the one, true God! When we look around ourselves, though, we see that is definitely not the reality we live in. Stifling the voice of the Church will not lead to more truth and you can't separate the truth from love. God is both. Taking out parts of the Word that offend people is like dissecting and discarding part of Him. Jesus IS the Word. The two-edged sword has been dulled into a butter knife by "well-meaning Christians" (or are we listening to children of the devil disguising themselves as children of God?)! (1 John 3)

WHOEVER DOES NOT LOVE DOES NOT KNOW GOD, BECAUSE *GOD IS LOVE*. 1 JOHN 4:8

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*. HEBREWS 4:12

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE *WORD WAS GOD*. JOHN 1:1

"Freedom" from the Restrainer

We can see in the news the effect of restraining the influence of God's word. In Canada and the UK, it is considered hate speech to quote the Bible in public if it offends someone. (That will come here, too.) In Germany, it's illegal to home-school your kids because they want complete control over them. (That will come here, too.) Kids in the USA have been sent home from some schools with notes telling their parents they may not wear a cross to school or read their Bible during free time. High school salutatorians have had their microphones cut because they dared to thank God for His help in getting them to where they are. Bible groups in schools and college campuses have been told they can't use common areas that other groups use and that they have to accept atheists and others who do not share their values, not only as members, but as leaders.

The concept of discrimination has been abused in such a way that it trumps freedom of religious belief. Those in power have been using "equality" to confer special rights on some classes of people that override religious liberty. People have been fined heavily and forced to undergo "diversity training" for declining to host gay weddings, bake cakes or take photos because it violates their conscience. The penalties for heinous crimes carry special penalties if the motive is judged to fit into a particular category. Those crimes are deemed to

be especially bad because of the reason they were perpetrated, which suggests that it is not as bad to do them for any other reason than the ones on the "special" list? How does this make sense? Murder, rape or bullying are evil no matter why someone does it or who the victim is.

All of our rights, including freedom, come from God—not the government. Our founding fathers knew this. It goes like this: the truth will set you free, Jesus is the truth, Jesus is freedom. Freedom "from God" is freedom minus freedom = enslavement to the "god" of this world.

SO JESUS WAS SAYING TO THOSE JEWS WHO HAD BELIEVED HIM, '*IF YOU CONTINUE IN MY WORD, THEN YOU ARE TRULY DISCIPLES OF MINE; AND YOU WILL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH WILL MAKE YOU FREE. ... SO IF THE SON SETS YOU FREE, YOU WILL BE FREE INDEED.*' JOHN 8:31-32, 36

"It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and Bible." George Washington

*"Where an excess of power prevails, property of no sort is duly respected. No man is safe in his *opinions, his person, his faculties, or his possessions.*"* James Madison

*"If we restrict *liberty* to attain security we will *lose them both.*"* Benjamin Franklin

*"Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; *my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right.*"* Abraham Lincoln

The Bible says this about the future:

ALL NATIONS WHOM YOU HAVE MADE SHALL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, O LORD, AND SHALL GLORIFY YOUR NAME. FOR YOU ARE GREAT, AND DO WONDROUS THINGS; YOU ALONE ARE GOD. PSALM 86:9-10

Does Love Equal Approval of Sin?

So does the Bible say we should refrain from speaking against sin, because love means to *affirm all behaviors*? Actually, Paul said to *throw a man out* of the congregation at Corinth who was practicing sexual sin with his step-mother. He said:

AND YOU ARE PROUD! SHOULDN'T YOU HAVE BEEN DEEPLY SORROWFUL INSTEAD AND REMOVED THE ONE WHO DID THIS FROM AMONG YOU? 4 WHEN YOU ARE ASSEMBLED IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS WITH MY SPIRIT AND WITH THE POWER OF OUR LORD JESUS, TURN THAT ONE OVER TO SATAN FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH, *SO THAT HIS SPIRIT*

MAY BE SAVED IN THE DAY OF THE LORD. 13 PUT AWAY THE EVIL PERSON FROM AMONG YOURSELVES. 1 CORINTHIANS 5:2, 4-5, 13

God does NOT change. JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY AND TODAY AND FOREVER. HEBREWS 13:8 What He said in the Bible still stands today and forever. Jesus said:

"DON'T ASSUME THAT I CAME TO DESTROY THE LAW OR THE PROPHETS. I DID NOT COME TO DESTROY BUT TO FULFILL. FOR I ASSURE YOU: UNTIL HEAVEN AND EARTH PASS AWAY, NOT THE SMALLEST LETTER OR ONE STROKE OF A LETTER WILL PASS FROM THE LAW UNTIL ALL THINGS ARE ACCOMPLISHED. THEREFORE, WHOEVER BREAKS ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE COMMANDS AND TEACHES PEOPLE TO DO SO WILL BE CALLED LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. BUT WHOEVER PRACTICES AND TEACHES THESE COMMANDS WILL BE CALLED GREAT IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." MATTHEW 5:17-19

Grace to Do as We Please?

There seems to almost be an attitude of "thanks for paying for my sins, Jesus, I'll let you know if I need anything else" in this country! Jesus came to fulfill the law and so we are under grace--but we are not to use our freedom to indulge ourselves in sin. I have heard it explained that the passage from Hebrews below referred to people trying to keep the law after salvation. It just does NOT say that. It says after coming to the knowledge of truth (salvation) not to sin deliberately. The chapter goes on to remind us that our choices are: follow and obey Jesus no matter the consequences; or risk His displeasure with us when He returns. For people who "don't like" the Book of Hebrews, this concept agrees with the parables Jesus told in the gospels. Being "ready" for the Master's (our LORD's) return does not mean living as though we are not expecting Him at all, let alone soon.

HE DIED FOR EVERYONE SO THAT THOSE WHO RECEIVE HIS NEW LIFE WILL NO LONGER LIVE FOR THEMSELVES. INSTEAD, THEY WILL LIVE FOR CHRIST, WHO DIED FOR THEM AND WAS RAISED AGAIN. 2 CORINTHIANS 5:15

WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN? ARE WE TO CONTINUE IN SIN SO THAT GRACE MAY INCREASE? MAY IT NEVER BE! HOW SHALL WE WHO DIED TO SIN STILL LIVE IN IT? ROMAN 6:1-2

FOR YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED TO LIVE IN FREEDOM, MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS. BUT DON'T USE YOUR FREEDOM TO SATISFY YOUR SINFUL NATURE. INSTEAD, USE YOUR FREEDOM TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE. GALATIANS 5:13.

FOR IF WE GO ON SINNING DELIBERATELY AFTER RECEIVING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH, THERE NO LONGER REMAINS A SACRIFICE FOR SINS, BUT A FEARFUL EXPECTATION OF JUDGMENT, AND A FURY OF FIRE THAT WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. ANYONE WHO HAS SET ASIDE THE LAW OF MOSES DIES WITHOUT MERCY ON THE EVIDENCE OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES. HOW MUCH WORSE PUNISHMENT, DO YOU THINK, WILL BE DESERVED BY THE ONE WHO HAS **TRAMPLED UNDERFOOT THE SON OF GOD,** AND HAS PROFANED THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT BY WHICH HE WAS SANCTIFIED, AND HAS OUTRAGED THE

SPIRIT OF GRACE? FOR WE KNOW HIM WHO SAID, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY.' AND AGAIN, 'THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.' IT IS A FEARFUL THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD. HEBREWS 10:26-31

BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE COME TO KNOW HIM, IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. THE ONE WHO SAYS, 'I HAVE COME TO KNOW HIM,' AND DOES NOT KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, IS A LIAR, AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN HIM; BUT WHOEVER KEEPS HIS WORD, IN HIM THE LOVE OF GOD HAS TRULY BEEN PERFECTED. BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE ARE IN HIM: *THE ONE WHO SAYS HE ABIDES IN HIM OUGHT HIMSELF TO WALK IN THE SAME MANNER AS HE WALKED.*' 1 JOHN 2:3-6

"WHY DO YOU CALL ME, 'LORD, LORD,' AND DO NOT DO WHAT I SAY? LUKE 6:46

HE REPLIED, 'BLESSED RATHER ARE THOSE WHO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AND OBEY IT.' LUKE 11:28

"WHO THEN IS THE FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT, WHOM HIS MASTER HAS SET OVER HIS HOUSEHOLD, TO GIVE THEM THEIR FOOD AT THE PROPER TIME? BLESSED IS THAT SERVANT WHOM HIS MASTER WILL FIND SO DOING WHEN HE COMES. TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, HE WILL SET HIM OVER ALL HIS POSSESSIONS. BUT IF THAT WICKED SERVANT SAYS TO HIMSELF, 'MY MASTER IS DELAYED,' AND BEGINS TO BEAT HIS FELLOW SERVANTS AND EATS AND DRINKS WITH DRUNKARDS, THE MASTER OF THAT SERVANT WILL COME ON A DAY WHEN HE DOES NOT EXPECT HIM AND AT AN HOUR HE DOES NOT KNOW AND WILL CUT HIM IN PIECES AND PUT HIM WITH THE HYPOCRITES. IN THAT PLACE THERE WILL BE WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH." MATTHEW 24:45-51

Hyper-Grace

There are quite a few teachers out there these days who are taking the doctrine of grace to extremes—some call it "cheap grace" and others "hyper grace." In Googling this topic (to make sure that I understand it correctly myself to avoid writing anything in error), I found there is a term for this: *antimonianism*, which means "against works." You can read more about this unbiblical belief here: <http://www.gotquestions.org/antinomianism.html>

Another area of confusion is the topic of sanctification (and confusing it with justification.) THEREFORE, SINCE WE HAVE BEEN *JUSTIFIED* BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. ROMANS 5:1 BY THIS WILL WE HAVE BEEN *SANCTIFIED* THROUGH THE OFFERING OF THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST ONCE FOR ALL. HEBREWS 10:10 False teachers claim that because of these verses, we can live any way we want. They criticize people who say that we are to be holy, claiming it amounts to salvation through works (which would be horribly wrong). This confusion can be cleared up when we study the difference between *justification* and *sanctification*. Notice that the first verse says justified and the second verse says sanctified. Another rendering of the Greek that would be accurate is "made holy." (*Holy* is set apart, pure.)

God accomplishes both. However, justification is a one-time event the moment Jesus' sacrifice is applied personally to each one of us by grace through faith upon truly believing—we are declared innocent of breaking God's laws, and Jesus' perfect righteousness is attributed to us. (Col. 2:13-15) This is why Jesus declared "It is finished." (John 19:30) Whereas sanctification is a continuous process that began at that same moment, but which requires our cooperation with, and yielding to, the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 6, 2Cor.5:14-17, 1Thess. 5:19, Eph. 4:17-32) This is what is meant by "be holy as He is holy" (1Thess. 4:1-8, 2Cor. 6:14-18, 2Cor. 12:20-13:5, 1Pet. 1:14-19), the blood of Jesus cleansing us when we confess our sin (1John 1:5-10), keeping our garment on and unstained by the world (James 1:27, Rev. 3:4, Rev. 16:15), walking in a worthy manner not like the Gentiles or as enemies of the cross (Col. 1:9-10, 1Thess. 2:10-12, Heb. 10:26-39, Philip. 3:17-19, 1Pet. 4:1-5) and being conformed to the image of Christ. (Rom. 8:29-30, Rom. 12:1-2)

We MUST be holy in order to see the Lord and enter His kingdom. (1Cor. 6:9-20, Gal. 5:13-26, Heb. 12:14-17, Rev. 21:7-8) We are made so by the precious blood of Jesus and, therefore, we should not want to go back to being filthy again after we are cleansed. (2Pet. 1:5-12, 2Pet. 2:22) Again, only Jesus can cleanse us by His ONE perfect, finished sacrifice, but we should desire to be clean and holy, not longing for our old sinful life back. Whoever cares nothing about sanctification (holiness, being set apart for God instead of clinging to the ways of the old sinful self and the unsaved world) demonstrates that they don't really even understand who God is and what He is like, so how could their belief in God be genuine if they have invented their own version of Him? The result of saving faith is fruit of the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 7:21-27, Luke 6:43-49, James 1:22-27, James 2:14-26) "He is trustworthy to complete the work He began in you" does not mean "despite your best efforts to thwart His work in you." (Philip. 1:6) God didn't force us to believe and He doesn't force us to obey either.

Did God Really Say? "The Sequel"

There are some who twist various Scriptures and say that they are not referring to homosexuality, but any verse in the Bible can be skewed to fit a different position if we try hard enough. The plain reading is obvious and it takes a stubborn, rebellious heart to make it say what we want it to instead of what God actually said. Do not trust a paraphrase "Bible," but rather compare several solid translations to get the true meaning. (I often use ESV, NKJV, NASB, for example.) The problem with paraphrasing is that it makes it too easy to put a spin on the interpretation all the while claiming to make it easier to understand. For that reason, I am totally against The Message, which perverts

the wording of all passages related to homosexuality into an entirely different meaning. For more detailed information, see my article "Do Not Be Deceived."

FOR THIS REASON GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO DEGRADING PASSIONS; FOR *THEIR WOMEN EXCHANGED THE NATURAL FUNCTION FOR THAT WHICH IS UNNATURAL, AND IN THE SAME WAY ALSO THE MEN ABANDONED THE NATURAL FUNCTION OF THE WOMAN AND BURNED IN THEIR DESIRE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER, MEN WITH MEN COMMITTING INDECENT ACTS AND RECEIVING IN THEIR OWN PERSONS THE DUE PENALTY OF THEIR ERROR.* ROMANS 1:26-27

But if we need more to believe it, consider the following passage:

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. 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11

***The footnotes indicate that the two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts.** If the Bible is only referring to adulterers, then why specifically name the act of homosexuality (and not only that, but condemn both partners in it)? Furthermore, how can anyone "practice homosexuality" if they have no choice in the matter? It is included in the other sins that are committed by failing to resist temptation. The gay community is being lied to that this issue is only about the fact they were not allowed to marry! The leaders of this movement deny not only God's design for marriage, but tend to believe in evolution rather than an intelligent designer. I find it hard to believe that their motivation is standing up for God in love and truth if they either think He does not exist or that He lies. Do you see the irony?

YOU HAVE WEARIED THE LORD WITH YOUR WORDS. BUT YOU SAY, 'HOW HAVE WE WEARIED HIM?' BY SAYING, 'EVERYONE WHO DOES EVIL IS GOOD IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD, AND HE DELIGHTS IN THEM.' OR BY ASKING, 'WHERE IS THE GOD OF JUSTICE?' MALACHI 2:17

AND WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD, BECAUSE ANYONE WHO COMES TO HIM MUST BELIEVE THAT HE EXISTS AND THAT HE REWARDS THOSE WHO EARNESTLY SEEK HIM. HEBREWS 11:6

Holy, Holy, Holy Is the Lord

Listen carefully. Paul said that the Church is the Body and Bride of Christ, in Spirit. A Bride shows that she loves her Bridegroom by obeying Him and remaining *pure and set apart only for Him*. (Remember, Jesus said those who *love Him* will obey...) There is a very deep, spiritual aspect of "the two become

one" between Jesus and His Body and Bride. He is holy and is not joining Himself with anything defiled. He will wash anyone clean of any sin, but the Bible makes it clear that anyone who continues *willfully* and *deliberately* in sin *does not have the Spirit* and is therefore NOT in Christ. (Only God can see inside them, so we can't judge against OR in favor—we need to point them to Him for the answer.) In the passage describing the marriage of the Lamb, it says she is clothed in fine, white linen, which stands for righteousness. True believers "practice" and are "enslaved to" righteousness, not sin.

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 5:29-33

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 6:13-20

THEN I HEARD WHAT SEEMED TO BE THE VOICE OF A GREAT MULTITUDE, LIKE THE ROAR OF MANY WATERS AND LIKE THE SOUND OF MIGHTY PEALS OF THUNDER, CRYING OUT, 'HALLELUJAH! FOR THE LORD OUR GOD THE ALMIGHTY REIGNS. LET US REJOICE AND EXULT AND GIVE HIM THE GLORY, *FOR THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB HAS COME, AND HIS BRIDE HAS MADE HERSELF READY; IT WAS GRANTED HER TO CLOTHE HERSELF WITH FINE LINEN, BRIGHT AND PURE*'—FOR THE **FINE LINEN IS THE RIGHTEOUS DEEDS* OF THE SAINTS**. AND THE ANGEL SAID TO ME, 'WRITE THIS: BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE INVITED TO THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB.' AND HE SAID TO ME, 'THESE ARE THE TRUE WORDS OF GOD.' REVELATION 19:6-9 (*SOME TRANSLATIONS SAY "RIGHTEOUS ACTS" OR "RIGHTEOUSNESS.")

BUT *PUT ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND MAKE NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH IN REGARD TO ITS LUSTS.* ROMANS 13:14

AS OBEDIENT CHILDREN, *DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THE DESIRES OF YOUR FORMER IGNORANCE.* BUT AS THE ONE WHO CALLED YOU IS HOLY, *YOU ALSO ARE TO BE HOLY IN ALL YOUR CONDUCT;* FOR IT IS WRITTEN, BE HOLY, BECAUSE I AM HOLY. 1 PETER 1:14-16

NOR SHOULD THERE BE *OBSCENITY, FOOLISH TALK OR COARSE JOKING*, WHICH ARE OUT OF PLACE, BUT RATHER THANKSGIVING. EPHESIANS 5:4

SINCE WE ARE RECEIVING A KINGDOM THAT IS UNSHAKABLE, LET US BE THANKFUL AND PLEASE GOD BY WORSHIPING HIM WITH HOLY FEAR AND AWE. HEBREWS 12:28

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. ROMANS 8:9

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. ROMANS 8:12-14

Yes, It Is a Sin

So since homosexuality is a sin, then what about the argument that God made some people *different*? Don't you think that would that be evil for Him to make some people prone to a sin that He specifically condemned? Anyone who actually thinks He would do that does not know Him. Period. As for "telling someone who they can 'love'," since when do we need to be able to have sex with someone in order to love them? There are many kinds of loving relationships that are not against God's design or the morals that He conveyed to us in the Bible. Believers are to consider one another family, as fellow members of Christ's Body. Sisterly and brotherly relationships include love, but not sex. Some people have aberrant attractions to children, close relatives or animals, but that doesn't mean they should be allowed by society to act on those impulses even if they claim they "need" to in order to be happy.

FOR YOU ARE NOT A GOD WHO TAKES PLEASURE IN WICKEDNESS; NO EVIL DWELLS WITH YOU. PSALM 5:4

LET NO ONE SAY WHEN HE IS TEMPTED, 'I AM BEING TEMPTED BY GOD'; FOR *GOD CANNOT BE TEMPTED BY EVIL, AND HE HIMSELF DOES NOT TEMPT ANYONE*. JAMES 1:13

LET THOSE WHO LOVE THE LORD *HATE EVIL*, FOR HE GUARDS THE LIVES OF HIS FAITHFUL ONES AND DELIVERS THEM FROM THE HAND OF THE WICKED. PSALM 97:10

ABSTAIN FROM EVERY FORM OF EVIL. 1 THESSALONIANS 5:22

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

WITH THE LORD'S AUTHORITY I SAY THIS: LIVE NO LONGER AS THE GENTILES DO, FOR THEY ARE HOPELESSLY CONFUSED. *THEIR MINDS ARE FULL OF DARKNESS*; THEY WANDER FAR FROM THE LIFE GOD GIVES BECAUSE *THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR MINDS AND HARDENED THEIR HEARTS AGAINST HIM*. EPHESIANS 4:17-18

He said that He would provide a way out of any temptation we faced, forgive us when we confess and repent of our sin, wash us clean and indwell us with the Holy Spirit to help us live in a way that pleases Him; and His Spirit would perform the work of transforming us into the likeness of Jesus when we yield to Him. The Holy Spirit knows what the image of Christ looks like—we need to let Him have the right of way and allow Him work, growing in our faith daily through the Word.

NO TEMPTATION HAS OVERTAKEN YOU BUT SUCH AS IS COMMON TO MAN; AND GOD IS FAITHFUL, WHO WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO BE TEMPTED BEYOND WHAT YOU ARE ABLE, BUT WITH THE TEMPTATION WILL PROVIDE THE WAY OF ESCAPE ALSO, SO THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO ENDURE IT. 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND RIGHTEOUS TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. 1 JOHN 1:9

DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOU ARE A TEMPLE OF GOD AND THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN YOU? 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16

SINCE YOU HAVE HEARD ABOUT JESUS AND HAVE LEARNED THE TRUTH THAT COMES FROM HIM, THROW OFF YOUR OLD SINFUL NATURE AND YOUR FORMER WAY OF LIFE, WHICH IS CORRUPTED BY LUST AND DECEPTION. INSTEAD, LET THE SPIRIT RENEW YOUR THOUGHTS AND ATTITUDES. PUT ON YOUR NEW NATURE, CREATED TO BE LIKE GOD—TRULY RIGHTEOUS AND HOLY. EPHESIANS 4:21-24

I AM SURE OF THIS, THAT HE [THE HOLY SPIRIT] WHO STARTED A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL CARRY IT ON TO COMPLETION UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST JESUS. PHILIPPIANS 1:6

BUT THE NATURAL MAN DOES NOT RECEIVE THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, FOR THEY ARE FOOLISHNESS TO HIM; NOR CAN HE KNOW THEM, BECAUSE THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED. 1 CORINTHIANS 2:14

ALL Of God's People Are to Be Holy

Let's be sure not pick on any one group of people—ALL of God's adopted children are to turn from sin. Professed believing heterosexual couples who are having sexual relations are also guilty of sinning against God (remember, our bodies are His temple - 1Cor. 6:18-20) and each other. (1Thess. 4:1-8) He doesn't even expect us to overcome through our own power! He provides His Spirit to help us. Jesus loves us so much that He laid down His life for us. Is living to please Him instead of the "ruler of this world" asking too much?

BUT WHEN THE SET TIME HAD FULLY COME, GOD SENT HIS SON, BORN OF A WOMAN, BORN UNDER THE LAW, TO REDEEM THOSE UNDER THE LAW, THAT WE MIGHT RECEIVE ADOPTION TO SONSHIP. GALATIANS 4:4-5

FOR IT IS GOD WHO IS WORKING IN YOU, ENABLING YOU BOTH TO DESIRE AND TO WORK OUT HIS GOOD PURPOSE. PHILIPPIANS 2:13

SO PUT TO DEATH WHATEVER IN YOUR NATURE BELONGS TO THE EARTH: SEXUAL IMMORALITY, IMPURITY, SHAMEFUL PASSION, EVIL DESIRE, AND GREED WHICH IS IDOLATRY. *BECAUSE OF THESE THINGS THE WRATH OF GOD IS COMING ON THE SONS OF DISOBEDIENCE.* YOU ALSO LIVED YOUR LIVES IN THIS WAY AT ONE TIME, WHEN YOU USED TO LIVE AMONG THEM. BUT NOW, PUT OFF ALL SUCH THINGS AS ANGER, RAGE, MALICE, SLANDER, ABUSIVE LANGUAGE FROM YOUR MOUTH. DO NOT LIE TO ONE ANOTHER SINCE YOU HAVE PUT OFF THE OLD MAN WITH ITS *PRACTICES* AND HAVE BEEN CLOTHED WITH THE NEW MAN THAT IS *BEING RENEWED IN KNOWLEDGE ACCORDING TO THE IMAGE OF THE ONE WHO CREATED IT.* COLOSSIANS 3:5-10

FOR THIS IS GOD'S WILL, YOUR SANCTIFICATION: THAT YOU *ABSTAIN FROM SEXUAL IMMORALITY*, SO THAT EACH OF YOU KNOWS HOW TO *CONTROL HIS OWN BODY* IN SANCTIFICATION AND HONOR, *NOT WITH LUSTFUL DESIRES*, LIKE THE GENTILES WHO *DON'T KNOW GOD.* 1 THESSALONIANS 4:3-5

The Word of God

It is our responsibility and privilege to study the Word (while we're still free to do so, unlike too many places where it's forbidden). Devotionals are nice, but don't neglect the Bible itself. There are many books out there that are lacking sound doctrine, so be careful what you choose. (There is more on that subject coming up.) Keep your faith strong—don't neglect it.

Most scholars interpret the oil in the Parable of the Ten Virgins as being the Holy Spirit, or faith. They all started out watching and waiting, but then the Bridegroom was delayed and they all fell asleep. The wise virgins had extra oil, but the foolish ones did not. Pray before reading your Bible, asking God to show you something He wants you to know. The Bible is not boring! We could study it a lifetime and never run out of new truths to discover. Here are some suggestions: Using multiple commentaries for comparison, study the Book of Ruth, the Song of Solomon, the meaning of names of people and places throughout the Bible, look at all of the prophecies Jesus fulfilled in detail. All of the exciting experiences that people are seeking when they fall for new age teachings are nothing compared to what God has planned for us!

WORK HARD SO YOU CAN PRESENT YOURSELF TO GOD AND RECEIVE HIS APPROVAL. BE A GOOD WORKER, ONE WHO DOES NOT NEED TO BE ASHAMED AND *WHO CORRECTLY EXPLAINS THE WORD OF TRUTH.* 2 TIMOTHY 2:15

"MY PEOPLE ARE BEING DESTROYED BECAUSE THEY DON'T *KNOW ME.* SINCE YOU PRIESTS REFUSE TO KNOW ME, I REFUSE TO RECOGNIZE YOU AS MY PRIESTS. SINCE YOU HAVE *FORGOTTEN* THE LAWS OF YOUR GOD, I WILL FORGET TO BLESS YOUR CHILDREN." HOSEA 4:6

SO FAITH COMES FROM HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF CHRIST. ROMANS 10:17

"AND WHILE THEY WERE GOING TO BUY, THE BRIDEGROOM CAME, AND THOSE WHO WERE READY WENT IN WITH HIM TO THE MARRIAGE FEAST, AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT. AFTERWARD THE OTHER VIRGINS CAME ALSO, SAYING, 'LORD, LORD, OPEN TO US.' BUT HE ANSWERED, 'TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, I DO NOT KNOW YOU.' WATCH THEREFORE, FOR YOU KNOW NEITHER THE DAY NOR THE HOUR." MATTHEW 25:10-13

False Teachers

If we don't even know what the Bible says, then how will we recognize it when someone tries to lead us astray with a false teaching? There are altogether too many "teachers" out there these days, making money on books, DVDs and the speaking circuit. We need to be good Bereans and test what they say against the Bible.

"AND DON'T LET ANYONE CALL YOU 'TEACHER,' FOR YOU HAVE ONLY ONE TEACHER, THE MESSIAH." MATTHEW 23:10

NOW THE BEREANS WERE MORE NOBLE-MINDED THAN THOSE IN THESSALONICA, FOR THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH GREAT EAGERNESS, *EXAMINING THE Scriptures DAILY TO SEE WHETHER THESE THINGS WERE SO.* ACTS 17:11

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

Not for Profit?

Peter tells the shepherds of the flock not to profit (presumably this could be both financial and power) by it and to be good examples. We have some preachers and teachers these days who are excellent examples of worldly materialism, but that is not what Peter meant by being an example! For some reason, the false doctrine that there is no need to turn from sin often (but not always) accompanies the prosperity gospel. I think that is because the wolves in sheep's clothing find that they receive more income from that message than from the truth.

SO I EXHORT THE ELDERS AMONG YOU, AS A FELLOW ELDER AND A WITNESS OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, AS WELL AS A PARTAKER IN THE GLORY THAT IS GOING TO BE REVEALED: SHEPHERD THE FLOCK OF GOD THAT IS AMONG YOU, EXERCISING OVERSIGHT, NOT UNDER COMPULSION, BUT WILLINGLY, AS GOD WOULD HAVE YOU; **NOT FOR SHAMEFUL GAIN**, BUT EAGERLY; NOT DOMINEERING OVER THOSE IN YOUR CHARGE, BUT BEING *EXAMPLES* TO THE FLOCK. 1 PETER 5:1-3

"BEWARE OF THE FALSE PROPHETS, WHO COME TO YOU IN *SHEEP'S CLOTHING*, BUT INWARDLY ARE *RAVENOUS WOLVES*." MATTHEW 7:15

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*. 2 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

Satan's Tricks

Some of Satan's favorite tricks are taking scripture out of context and cutting verses short. For example, people love to quote John 8:7: "LET HIM WHO IS WITHOUT SIN AMONG YOU BE THE FIRST TO THROW A STONE AT HER" but leave out the last part of John 8:11: "*AND FROM NOW ON SIN NO MORE.*" They also like to tell us what passages "*really*" say, point to grace as a license to sin, encourage us to accept supplemental teachings from outside the Bible that add to or change what the Word said, and so on. We have to be wise in these evil days. Paul warned us:

FOR THE TIME WILL COME WHEN *PEOPLE WILL NOT PUT UP WITH SOUND DOCTRINE*. INSTEAD, TO SUIT THEIR OWN DESIRES, THEY WILL GATHER AROUND THEM A GREAT NUMBER OF *TEACHERS TO SAY WHAT THEIR ITCHING EARS WANT TO HEAR*. THEY WILL TURN THEIR EARS AWAY FROM THE TRUTH AND TURN ASIDE TO MYTHS. 2 TIMOTHY 4:3-4

[THE APOSTLES] 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. JUDE 1:18-19

THEREFORE BE VERY CAREFUL HOW YOU LIVE—NOT AS UNWISE BUT AS WISE, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY, BECAUSE *THE DAYS ARE EVIL*. FOR THIS REASON DO NOT BE FOOLISH, BUT *BE WISE BY UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE LORD'S WILL IS*. EPHESIANS 5:15-17

Blinded

Notice the similarities in the following two passages. When the men of Sodom were blinded as they tried to attack the angels, it foreshadowed what would happen to homosexuals in this current time.

BEFORE THEY WENT TO BED, THE MEN OF THE CITY OF SODOM, BOTH YOUNG AND OLD, THE WHOLE POPULATION, SURROUNDED THE HOUSE. THEY CALLED OUT TO LOT AND SAID, "WHERE ARE THE MEN WHO CAME TO YOU TONIGHT? SEND THEM OUT TO US SO WE CAN HAVE SEX WITH THEM!" 11 THEY STRUCK THE MEN WHO WERE AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE

HOUSE, BOTH YOUNG AND OLD, WITH A *BLINDING* LIGHT SO THAT THEY WERE *UNABLE TO FIND THE ENTRANCE*. GENESIS 19:4-5, 11

FOR THIS REASON GOD *GAVE THEM OVER* TO DEGRADING PASSIONS; FOR THEIR WOMEN EXCHANGED THE NATURAL FUNCTION FOR THAT WHICH IS UNNATURAL, AND IN THE SAME WAY ALSO THE MEN ABANDONED THE NATURAL FUNCTION OF THE WOMAN AND BURNED IN THEIR DESIRE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER, MEN WITH MEN COMMITTING INDECENT ACTS AND RECEIVING IN THEIR OWN PERSONS THE DUE PENALTY OF THEIR ERROR. *AND BECAUSE THEY DID NOT THINK IT WORTHWHILE TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD, GOD DELIVERED THEM OVER TO A WORTHLESS MIND TO DO WHAT IS MORALLY WRONG*. 32 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. ROMANS 1:26-28, 32 The "reason" that God did this is given in the verse: they preferred their own version of "god" over the truth. So it is to be expected that many of them will not understand (i.e., be able to find the "entrance," which is Jesus). They must truly accept Jesus as Savior so that they can receive the regeneration of their spirit through the Holy Spirit, and be enabled to turn from their sin.

JESUS SAID, 'I AM THE DOOR; IF ANYONE ENTERS THROUGH ME, HE WILL BE SAVED, AND WILL GO IN AND OUT AND FIND PASTURE.' JOHN 10:9

DON'T BE MISLED—*YOU CANNOT MOCK THE JUSTICE OF GOD*. YOU WILL ALWAYS HARVEST WHAT YOU PLANT. THOSE WHO LIVE ONLY TO *SATISFY THEIR OWN SINFUL NATURE WILL HARVEST DECAY AND DEATH* FROM THAT SINFUL NATURE. BUT THOSE WHO LIVE TO *PLEASE THE SPIRIT WILL HARVEST EVERLASTING LIFE* FROM THE SPIRIT. GALATIANS 6:7-8

We don't know whose names are written in the Book of Life and so we consider no one out of God's reach. But I will say this—it is SO much harder to connect with people whom many churches have told that they are fine—no need to turn from sin. Satan loves that. If we really love people, won't we care more about their eternal souls than their "comfort" with our message during this short life? "Mercy triumphs over judgment" does not mean God wants us to approve of sin. It means that our attitude toward each other, including sinners (which we ALL are), is that of love, with concern to restore fellowship with God. (1John 1:5-10, 1Cor. 13:1-3)

ALL OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE EARTH WILL WORSHIP THE BEAST, EVERYONE WHOSE NAME HAS NOT BEEN *WRITTEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD IN THE BOOK OF LIFE* BELONGING TO THE LAMB WHO WAS SLAIN. REVELATION 13:8

FOR JUDGMENT IS WITHOUT MERCY TO ONE WHO HAS SHOWN NO MERCY. MERCY TRIUMPHS OVER JUDGMENT. JAMES 2:13

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

In Jesus' discussions about "not judging," the point was not to be a hypocrite or unforgiving, not to accept sin. (Matt. 18:15-17, Luke 17:3) Let's look at one passage in context:

"BE MERCIFUL, JUST AS YOUR FATHER IS MERCIFUL. DO NOT JUDGE, AND YOU WILL NOT BE JUDGED. DO NOT CONDEMN, AND YOU WILL NOT BE CONDEMNED. FORGIVE, AND YOU WILL BE FORGIVEN. GIVE, AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU. A GOOD MEASURE, PRESSED DOWN, SHAKEN TOGETHER AND RUNNING OVER, WILL BE Poured INTO YOUR LAP. FOR WITH THE MEASURE YOU USE, IT WILL BE MEASURED TO YOU." HE ALSO TOLD THEM THIS PARABLE: *"CAN THE BLIND LEAD THE BLIND? WILL THEY NOT BOTH FALL INTO A PIT? THE STUDENT IS NOT ABOVE THE TEACHER, BUT EVERYONE WHO IS FULLY TRAINED WILL BE LIKE THEIR TEACHER. "WHY DO YOU LOOK AT THE SPECK OF SAWDUST IN YOUR BROTHER'S EYE AND PAY NO ATTENTION TO THE PLANK IN YOUR OWN EYE? HOW CAN YOU SAY TO YOUR BROTHER, 'BROTHER, LET ME TAKE THE SPECK OUT OF YOUR EYE,' WHEN YOU YOURSELF FAIL TO SEE THE PLANK IN YOUR OWN EYE? YOU HYPOCRITE, FIRST TAKE THE PLANK OUT OF YOUR EYE, AND THEN YOU WILL SEE CLEARLY TO REMOVE THE SPECK FROM YOUR BROTHER'S EYE. NO GOOD TREE BEARS BAD FRUIT, NOR DOES A BAD TREE BEAR GOOD FRUIT. EACH TREE IS RECOGNIZED BY ITS OWN FRUIT. PEOPLE DO NOT PICK FIGS FROM THORNBUSHES, OR GRAPES FROM BRIERS. A GOOD MAN BRINGS GOOD THINGS OUT OF THE GOOD STORED UP IN HIS HEART, AND AN EVIL MAN BRINGS EVIL THINGS OUT OF THE EVIL STORED UP IN HIS HEART. FOR THE MOUTH SPEAKS WHAT THE HEART IS FULL OF. **WHY DO YOU CALL ME, 'LORD, LORD,' AND DO NOT DO WHAT I SAY? AS FOR EVERYONE WHO COMES TO ME AND HEARS MY WORDS AND PUTS THEM INTO PRACTICE, I WILL SHOW YOU WHAT THEY ARE LIKE. THEY ARE LIKE A MAN BUILDING A HOUSE, WHO DUG DOWN DEEP AND LAID THE FOUNDATION ON ROCK. WHEN A FLOOD CAME, THE TORRENT STRUCK THAT HOUSE BUT COULD NOT SHAKE IT, BECAUSE IT WAS WELL BUILT. BUT THE ONE WHO HEARS MY WORDS AND DOES NOT PUT THEM INTO PRACTICE IS LIKE A MAN WHO BUILT A HOUSE ON THE GROUND WITHOUT A FOUNDATION. THE MOMENT THE TORRENT STRUCK THAT HOUSE, IT COLLAPSED AND ITS DESTRUCTION WAS COMPLETE.**" LUKE 6:36-49*

Yes, Really

If we wonder God would really ever do such a thing as "blind" anyone, all we need to do is look at Israel today. Very few Jews have accepted Jesus and there is a very good reason for that. They are partially blinded as punishment for their rejecting and crucifying their Messiah—preferring to try to earn their own way through the Law, despite how they could clearly see it was impossible to keep perfectly and despite all of the miraculous signs Jesus performed to show them who He was. (John 10:37-38, John 12:37-40) Their leaders loved the power they had over the people. (Matthew 23) They also saw the miracles Jesus did and attributed them to a demon. God hates pride and disobedience, but *their temporary blinding is our eternal blessing*. The Bible tells us when that will end:

I WANT YOU TO KNOW MY BRETHREN, THIS MYSTERY, LEST YOU WOULD BE WISE IN YOUR OWN OPINION, THAT BLINDNESS OF HEART HAS FOR A LITTLE TIME COME TO ISRAEL *UNTIL THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES WILL COME IN.* ROMANS 11:25

"O JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM, *KILLING THE PROPHETS AND STONING THOSE WHO ARE SENT TO YOU!* HOW OFTEN WOULD I HAVE GATHERED YOUR CHILDREN TOGETHER AS A HEN GATHERS HER BROOD UNDER HER WINGS, AND YOU WOULD NOT! BEHOLD, YOUR HOUSE IS FORSAKEN AND DESOLATE. FOR I TELL YOU, YOU WILL NOT SEE ME AGAIN, UNTIL YOU SAY, '*BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.*'" MATTHEW 23:37-39

THEN A DEMON-OPPRESSED MAN WHO WAS BLIND AND MUTE WAS BROUGHT TO HIM, AND HE HEALED HIM, SO THAT THE MAN SPOKE AND SAW. AND ALL THE PEOPLE WERE AMAZED, AND SAID, "CAN THIS BE THE SON OF DAVID?" BUT WHEN THE PHARISEES HEARD IT, THEY SAID, "'*IT IS ONLY BY BEELZEBUL, THE PRINCE OF DEMONS, THAT THIS MAN CASTS OUT DEMONS.*'" KNOWING THEIR THOUGHTS, HE SAID TO THEM, 'EVERY KINGDOM DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF IS LAID WASTE, AND NO CITY OR HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF WILL STAND. *AND IF SATAN CASTS OUT SATAN, HE IS DIVIDED AGAINST HIMSELF.* HOW THEN WILL HIS KINGDOM STAND? AND IF I CAST OUT DEMONS BY BEELZEBUL, BY WHOM DO YOUR SONS CAST THEM OUT? THEREFORE THEY WILL BE YOUR JUDGES.'" MATTHEW 12:22-27

PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION, A HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE A FALL. PROVERBS 16:18

FOR JUST AS YOU WERE AT ONE TIME DISOBEDIENT TO GOD BUT NOW HAVE *RECEIVED MERCY* BECAUSE OF THEIR DISOBEDIENCE, SO THEY TOO [THE JEWS] HAVE NOW BEEN DISOBEDIENT IN ORDER THAT BY THE MERCY SHOWN TO YOU THEY ALSO MAY NOW *RECEIVE MERCY.* ROMANS 11:30

His Ways, Not Ours

God's ways are higher than our ways and we are not to question our Maker. His way is the right one. Walk in it. Submit to Him in ALL things and you will be rewarded. He said that those *who love Him* will do as He commands and "NO EYE HAS SEEN, NO EAR HAS HEARD, AND NO MIND HAS IMAGINED WHAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE **WHO LOVE HIM.**" 1 CORINTHIANS 2:9 He doesn't even ask us to love and obey Him by our own power—He provides the strength! He knows us, including our weaknesses, better than we know ourselves.

"FOR MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS, NEITHER ARE YOUR WAYS MY WAYS, DECLARES THE LORD. FOR AS THE HEAVENS ARE HIGHER THAN THE EARTH, SO ARE *MY WAYS HIGHER THAN YOUR WAYS AND MY THOUGHTS THAN YOUR THOUGHTS.*" ISAIAH 55:8-9

"*WHAT SORROW AWAITS THOSE WHO ARGUE WITH THEIR CREATOR.* DOES A CLAY POT ARGUE WITH ITS MAKER? DOES THE CLAY DISPUTE WITH THE ONE WHO SHAPES IT, SAYING, 'STOP, YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG!' DOES THE POT EXCLAIM, 'HOW CLUMSY CAN YOU BE?'" ISAIAH 45:9

OH, THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES AND WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS AND HOW INSCRUTABLE HIS WAYS! '*FOR WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO HAS BEEN HIS COUNSELOR?*' 'OR WHO HAS GIVEN A GIFT TO HIM THAT HE MIGHT BE REPAID?' ROMANS 11:33-35

I DELIGHT TO DO YOUR WILL, O MY GOD, AND YOUR LAW IS WITHIN MY HEART. PSALM 40:8

LET WHOEVER IS WISE UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS, AND WHOEVER IS INSIGHTFUL RECOGNIZE THEM. FOR *THE WAYS OF THE LORD ARE RIGHT, AND THE RIGHTEOUS WALK IN THEM, BUT THE REBELLIOUS STUMBLE IN THEM. HOSEA 14:9*

GIVE CAREFUL THOUGHT TO THE PATHS FOR YOUR FEET AND BE STEADFAST IN ALL YOUR WAYS. DO NOT TURN TO THE RIGHT OR THE LEFT; *KEEP YOUR FOOT FROM EVIL. PROVERBS 4:26-27*

THUS SAYS THE LORD: "*STAND IN THE WAYS AND SEE, AND ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, WHERE THE GOOD WAY IS, AND WALK IN IT; THEN YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. BUT THEY SAID, 'WE WILL NOT WALK IN IT.'*" JEREMIAH 6:16

MY SON, DO NOT TAKE THE LORD'S DISCIPLINE LIGHTLY OR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM, FOR *THE LORD DISCIPLINES THE ONE HE LOVES AND PUNISHES EVERY SON HE RECEIVES. IF GOD DOESN'T DISCIPLINE YOU AS HE DOES ALL OF HIS CHILDREN, IT MEANS THAT YOU ARE ILLEGITIMATE AND ARE NOT REALLY HIS CHILDREN AT ALL. 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. HEBREWS 12:5B-6, 8, 11*

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 3:3-8*

SEARCH ME, GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART; TEST ME AND KNOW MY ANXIOUS THOUGHTS. SEE IF THERE IS ANY OFFENSIVE WAY IN ME, AND LEAD ME IN THE WAY EVERLASTING. PSALM 139:23-24

THE SPIRIT OF A MAN IS THE *LAMP OF THE LORD*, SEARCHING ALL THE INNER DEPTHS OF HIS HEART. PROVERBS 20:27

Give an Inch, Take a Mile

There is a saying "give them an inch and they'll take a mile." If we think this will be the end of it now that "love won," we are severely mistaken. One hundred years ago, no one would have predicted that couples could live together outside of marriage and have it accepted by society or that abortion would EVER be legal. (We won't even talk about the atrocity of "partial birth abortion.") Fifty years ago, no one would have predicted that we would be forced by the courts to accept gay marriage across the country. This next

thought is going to really shock you (the same as those other things I just mentioned shocked people in the past). No one today would ever think that in another 50 years (or much less, at the rate we're going) that they will say that there is nothing wrong with pedophilia (which is another sexual sin that some people say they are unable to help themselves from committing. In fact, there have been studies showing that a great many homosexuals were sexually abused as children and/or exposed to pornography at a sensitive age—not that there is any acceptable age—it's evil).

What Next?

Anyone who says that society would never accept pedophilia can refer to the Bible verses at the end where the children of Israel accepted the evil practices of those around them and even participated in them. During several instances or time periods, some of them sacrificed their children as burnt offerings to false gods! Think the children are safe? Let me remind you that children are being taught as early as preschool in public schools in many places, against their parents' wishes and often without their knowledge, that homosexuality is normal and acceptable. Google it. Not only sexual identity but gender itself is being taught as an option. This is one of the reasons they made home-schooling illegal in Germany. They know if they control the children, they control the future of society. If you are raised always believing something and never questioning it, the battle is over. Christianity is always one generation away from being dead. All it takes is to prevent it from being taught to the children and God's enemies know this. We need to wake up and wise up! (Note: It is amazing as I update this article how much progress has been made in this country toward normalizing more sins and leading children astray in the two years since I wrote it, but Jesus said NOT to corrupt children. Luke 17:1-2)

AND THEY BURNED THEIR SONS AND THEIR DAUGHTERS AS OFFERINGS AND USED DIVINATION AND OMENS AND SOLD THEMSELVES TO DO EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD, PROVOKING HIM TO ANGER. THEREFORE THE LORD WAS VERY ANGRY WITH ISRAEL AND REMOVED THEM OUT OF HIS SIGHT. NONE WAS LEFT BUT THE TRIBE OF JUDAH ONLY. 2 KINGS 17:17-18

AND [KING MANASSEH] BURNED HIS SON AS AN OFFERING AND USED FORTUNE-TELLING AND OMENS AND DEALT WITH MEDIUMS AND WITH NECROMANCERS. HE DID MUCH EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD, PROVOKING HIM TO ANGER. 2 KINGS 21:6

MOREOVER, [KING AHAZ] BURNED INCENSE IN THE VALLEY OF BEN-HINNOM AND BURNED HIS SONS IN FIRE, ACCORDING TO THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE NATIONS WHOM THE LORD HAD DRIVEN OUT BEFORE THE SONS OF ISRAEL. 2 CHRONICLES 28:3

AND THEY HAVE BUILT THE HIGH PLACES OF TOPHETH, WHICH IS IN THE VALLEY OF THE SON OF HINNOM, TO BURN THEIR SONS AND THEIR DAUGHTERS IN THE FIRE, WHICH I DID NOT COMMAND, NOR DID IT COME INTO MY MIND. JEREMIAH 7:31

"AND YOU TOOK YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS, WHOM YOU HAD BORNE TO ME, AND THESE YOU SACRIFICED TO THEM TO BE DEVoured. WERE YOUR WHORINGS SO SMALL A MATTER THAT YOU SLAUGHTERED MY CHILDREN AND DELIVERED THEM UP AS AN OFFERING BY FIRE TO THEM?" EZEKIEL 16:20-21

"WHEN YOU PRESENT YOUR GIFTS AND OFFER UP YOUR CHILDREN IN FIRE, YOU DEFILE YOURSELVES WITH ALL YOUR IDOLS TO THIS DAY. AND SHALL I BE INQUIRED OF BY YOU, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL? AS I LIVE, DECLARES THE LORD GOD, I WILL NOT BE INQUIRED OF BY YOU." EZEKIEL 20:31

Are We Smarter Than That?

This is a VERY scary thought, but Ecclesiastes 1:9 says: "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun." If God's people could be persuaded that it is okay to sacrifice children in the past, how can we be assured that they can't be convinced that there is nothing wrong with "only" molesting them? There are already people who are saying they were born that way (as a pedophile) and that it doesn't actually *hurt* children. We see time and time again that released convicts re-offend so regularly that they made a "three strikes and you're in for life" rule. These disgusting ideas no doubt horrify you as they do me, but some of these depraved people even say that parents should groom their children for this kind of "love." This is no joke! These are the same sort of people who think that children can be disposed of even after they're born, and they can't agree on any sort of age limit for it! Seriously! Thank God there are very few who think like that for now, but *the homosexuals are in the minority as well. I am not mixing in homosexuals and pedophiles in the same category but saying that one attack after another is being made against God's ways and designs.*

But getting back to Israel, she was to be set apart and not partake of the evil around her. She was meant to be a light to the Gentiles. Likewise, the Church is meant to be a light in the darkness (having been grafted in as a wild branch to Israel's cultivated olive tree), but let's not fool ourselves—we're no better than the Israelites were in ancient times. We are not immune to being molded into the shape of the society around us UNLESS we're filled with the Spirit (which is something most of Israel did not have—only select individuals were chosen to receive the Spirit). Too many believers are not renewing their Spirits continually with the Word of God. They're not reading their Bibles and they're exposing themselves to all kinds of worldly media. Whatever does not build faith is at best a waste of time and at worst, tears down faith. THE WISE WOMAN BUILDS HER HOUSE, BUT WITH HER OWN HANDS THE FOOLISH ONE TEARS HERS DOWN. PROVERBS 14:1 Each person has to discern this for themselves through the lens of God's word—it's not one size fits all, but some of it is pretty obvious. It can't have escaped anyone's notice that there is an obligatory gay character in every

TV show and movie now and there is even a new series about a transgender dad. (There should be no need to even mention that many popular books and movies are not for Christians to look at.)

The church's track record stands for itself. We have been and are continuing to be molded, or at least the world around us is, despite our presence--and this has all been in the name of "love."

"I AM THE LORD; I HAVE CALLED YOU IN RIGHTEOUSNESS; I WILL TAKE YOU BY THE HAND AND KEEP YOU; I WILL GIVE YOU AS A COVENANT FOR THE PEOPLE, A *LIGHT FOR THE NATIONS*, TO OPEN THE EYES THAT ARE BLIND, TO BRING OUT THE PRISONERS FROM THE DUNGEON, FROM THE PRISON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS." ISAIAH 42:6-7

BUT YOU ARE A CHOSEN PEOPLE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, GOD'S SPECIAL POSSESSION, THAT YOU MAY DECLARE THE PRAISES OF HIM *WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS WONDERFUL LIGHT*. 1 PETER 2:9

BUT IF SOME OF THE BRANCHES WERE BROKEN OFF, AND YOU, ALTHOUGH A WILD OLIVE SHOOT, WERE *GRAFTED IN* AMONG THE OTHERS AND NOW SHARE IN THE NOURISHING ROOT OF THE OLIVE TREE, DO NOT BE ARROGANT TOWARD THE BRANCHES. IF YOU ARE, REMEMBER IT IS NOT YOU WHO SUPPORT THE ROOT, BUT THE ROOT THAT SUPPORTS YOU. THEN YOU WILL SAY, "BRANCHES WERE BROKEN OFF SO THAT I MIGHT BE GRAFTED IN." THAT IS TRUE. THEY WERE BROKEN OFF BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF, BUT YOU STAND FAST THROUGH FAITH. *SO DO NOT BECOME PROUD, BUT FEAR. FOR IF GOD DID NOT SPARE THE NATURAL BRANCHES, NEITHER WILL HE SPARE YOU*. ROMANS 11:17-21

BUT EVERYTHING EXPOSED BY THE LIGHT BECOMES VISIBLE—AND EVERYTHING THAT IS *ILLUMINATED BECOMES A LIGHT*. EPHESIANS 5:13

"NOW NO ONE AFTER LIGHTING A LAMP COVERS IT OVER WITH A CONTAINER, OR PUTS IT UNDER A BED; BUT HE PUTS IT *ON A LAMPSTAND, SO THAT THOSE WHO COME IN MAY SEE THE LIGHT*." LUKE 8:16

Great Signs And Wonders

Such convincing signs, wonders and delusions coming will be coming some day in the future to trick everyone but the elect of God into worshiping the beast and to taking his mark (which is meant to imitate the seal of the Holy Spirit believers have as a way of identifying they belong to God). (Revelation 13: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=rev+13&version=ESV>) There is NO redemption for anyone marked by the beast. They belong to the devil from then on and will share in his punishment. If we don't know our Bible, how will we recognize him for who he is? There is such severe persecution of believers coming such as has never been before (and it has been BAD in various parts of history—we see it really ramping up in the Middle East even now).

How will we remain faithful to Jesus even unto death if we can't even handle having people disapprove of us and judge us "for judging" in social media? Christians in other parts of the world die for their faith every day and not only by the hand of ISIS. If the world loves you, that is not actually a cause for rejoicing. If the world loves a teaching, then examine it carefully! Jesus said:

"IF THE WORLD HATES YOU, REMEMBER THAT IT HATED ME FIRST. THE WORLD WOULD LOVE YOU AS ONE OF ITS OWN IF YOU BELONGED TO IT, BUT *YOU ARE NO LONGER PART OF THE WORLD*. I CHOSE YOU TO COME OUT OF THE WORLD, SO IT HATES YOU." JOHN 15:18-19

"I HAVE GIVEN THEM YOUR WORD, AND THE WORLD HAS HATED THEM, BECAUSE *THEY DO NOT BELONG TO THE WORLD, JUST AS I DO NOT BELONG TO THE WORLD*." JOHN 17:14

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE *PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE*, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN OTHERS *REVILE YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU AND UTTER ALL KINDS OF EVIL AGAINST YOU FALSELY ON MY ACCOUNT*. REJOICE AND BE GLAD, FOR YOUR REWARD IS GREAT IN HEAVEN, FOR SO THEY PERSECUTED THE PROPHETS WHO WERE BEFORE YOU." MATTHEW 5:10-12

BUT REMEMBER THE FORMER DAYS, WHEN, AFTER BEING ENLIGHTENED, YOU ENDURED A GREAT CONFLICT OF SUFFERINGS, PARTLY BY BEING MADE A PUBLIC SPECTACLE THROUGH REPROACHES AND TRIBULATIONS, AND PARTLY BY BECOMING SHARERS WITH THOSE WHO WERE SO TREATED. FOR YOU SHOWED SYMPATHY TO THE PRISONERS AND *ACCEPTED JOYFULLY THE SEIZURE OF YOUR PROPERTY*, KNOWING THAT YOU HAVE FOR YOURSELVES A BETTER POSSESSION AND A LASTING 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 WAS PROMISED. HEBREWS 10:32-36

BELOVED, DO NOT BE SURPRISED AT THE FIERY TRIAL WHEN IT COMES UPON YOU TO TEST YOU, AS THOUGH SOMETHING STRANGE WERE HAPPENING TO YOU. BUT *REJOICE INsofar AS YOU SHARE CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS*, THAT YOU MAY ALSO REJOICE AND BE GLAD WHEN HIS GLORY IS REVEALED. *IF YOU ARE INSULTED FOR THE NAME OF CHRIST, YOU ARE BLESSED, BECAUSE THE SPIRIT OF GLORY AND OF GOD RESTS UPON YOU*. 1 PETER 4:12-14

NOT ONLY THAT, BUT *WE REJOICE IN OUR SUFFERINGS*, KNOWING THAT SUFFERING PRODUCES ENDURANCE, AND ENDURANCE PRODUCES CHARACTER, AND CHARACTER PRODUCES HOPE, AND HOPE DOES NOT PUT US TO SHAME, BECAUSE *GOD'S LOVE HAS BEEN Poured INTO OUR HEARTS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT* WHO HAS BEEN GIVEN TO US. ROMANS 5:3-5

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. 2 TIMOTHY 3:12-13

Refined by Fire

God tests and purifies His people through trials. Refusing to take the test because we're afraid someone won't like us if we disagree with them does not count as passing. God's opinion is the only one that matters. We are to obey and leave the consequences up to him. He sees who obeys and who doesn't—He will reward His own.

THESE WHO ARE WISE AMONG THE PEOPLE WILL TEACH THE MASSES. HOWEVER, THEY WILL *FALL BY THE SWORD AND BY THE FLAME, AND THEY WILL BE IMPRISONED AND PLUNDERED* FOR SOME TIME. WHEN THEY STUMBLE, THEY WILL BE GRANTED SOME HELP. BUT MANY WILL UNITE WITH THEM DECEITFULLY. EVEN SOME OF THE WISE WILL STUMBLE, RESULTING IN THEIR *REFINEMENT, PURIFICATION, AND CLEANSING* UNTIL THE TIME OF THE END, FOR IT IS STILL FOR THE APPOINTED TIME. DANIEL 9:33-35

HE REPLIED, 'GO YOUR WAY, DANIEL, BECAUSE THE WORDS ARE CLOSED UP AND SEALED UNTIL THE TIME OF THE END. *MANY WILL BE PURIFIED, MADE SPOTLESS AND REFINED, BUT THE WICKED WILL CONTINUE TO BE WICKED. NONE OF THE WICKED WILL UNDERSTAND, BUT THOSE WHO ARE WISE WILL UNDERSTAND.*' DANIEL 12:9-10

"JEREMIAH, I HAVE MADE YOU A *TESTER OF METALS, THAT YOU MAY DETERMINE THE QUALITY OF MY PEOPLE*. THEY ARE THE WORST KIND OF *REBEL*, FULL OF SLANDER. THEY ARE AS HARD AS BRONZE AND IRON, AND THEY *LEAD OTHERS INTO CORRUPTION*. THE BELLOWS FIERCELY FAN THE FLAMES TO BURN OUT THE CORRUPTION. BUT IT DOES NOT PURIFY THEM, FOR *THE WICKEDNESS REMAINS.*" JEREMIAH 6:27-29

FOR THE GODLESS ARE FULL OF RESENTMENT. EVEN WHEN HE PUNISHES THEM, THEY REFUSE TO CRY OUT TO HIM FOR HELP. THEY DIE WHEN THEY ARE YOUNG, AFTER WASTING THEIR LIVES IN IMMORAL LIVING. BUT *BY MEANS OF THEIR SUFFERING, HE RESCUES THOSE WHO SUFFER. FOR HE GETS THEIR ATTENTION THROUGH ADVERSITY.* JOB 36:13-15

IN THIS YOU REJOICE, THOUGH NOW FOR A LITTLE WHILE, IF NECESSARY, YOU HAVE BEEN GRIEVED BY VARIOUS TRIALS, SO THAT *THE TESTED GENUINENESS OF YOUR FAITH—MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD THAT PERISHES THOUGH IT IS TESTED BY FIRE—MAY BE FOUND TO RESULT IN PRAISE AND GLORY AND HONOR AT THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST.* 1 PETER 1:6-7

WE HAVE AN ALTAR FROM WHICH THOSE WHO SERVE THE TABERNACLE HAVE NO RIGHT TO EAT. FOR THE BODIES OF THOSE ANIMALS WHOSE BLOOD IS BROUGHT INTO THE HOLY PLACE BY THE HIGH PRIEST AS AN OFFERING FOR SIN, ARE BURNED OUTSIDE THE CAMP. *THEREFORE JESUS ALSO, THAT HE MIGHT SANCTIFY THE PEOPLE THROUGH HIS OWN BLOOD, SUFFERED OUTSIDE THE GATE. SO, LET US GO OUT TO HIM OUTSIDE THE CAMP, BEARING HIS REPROACH.* FOR HERE WE DO NOT HAVE A LASTING CITY, BUT WE ARE SEEKING THE CITY WHICH IS TO COME. HEBREWS 13:10-14

ENOCH, THE SEVENTH FROM ADAM, PROPHESED ABOUT THESE MEN: 'SEE, THE *LORD IS COMING WITH THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF HIS HOLY ONES TO JUDGE EVERYONE AND TO CONVICT ALL THE UNGODLY OF ALL THE UNGODLY ACTS THEY HAVE DONE IN THE UNGODLY WAY, AND OF ALL THE HARSH WORDS UNGODLY SINNERS HAVE SPOKEN AGAINST HIM.*' JUDE 1:14-15

BEHOLD, THE LORD GOD COMES WITH MIGHT, AND HIS ARM RULES FOR HIM; *BEHOLD, HIS REWARD IS WITH HIM*, AND HIS RECOMPENSE BEFORE HIM. ISAIAH 40:10

Suffer with Him, for Him

Many people have no worries because they're sure the rapture will occur before anything awful happens to them. I'm not sure how we can fit that in with the reality of what happened to the apostle and early disciples, and what is happening now in the Middle East unless we somehow think we're more special than they were or are. The fact that the "experts" don't agree with each other shows how complicated the interpretation of Bible passages regarding future events can be. I'm not going to get into that lengthy debate here, but what we are assured of is that anything called the "wrath of God" is not meant for us.

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. 1 THESSALONIANS 5:9-10

That does not mean we will not *suffer*—the Bible actually says it is our *privilege* to suffer.

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. PHILIPPIANS 1:29

FOR WHAT CREDIT IS IT IF, WHEN YOU SIN AND ARE BEATEN FOR IT, YOU ENDURE? BUT *IF WHEN YOU DO GOOD AND SUFFER FOR IT YOU ENDURE, THIS IS A GRACIOUS THING IN THE SIGHT OF GOD*. FOR TO THIS YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED, *BECAUSE CHRIST ALSO SUFFERED FOR YOU*, LEAVING YOU AN EXAMPLE, SO THAT YOU MIGHT **FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS**. 1 PETER 2:20-21

BE OF SOBER SPIRIT, BE ON THE ALERT. YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL, AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION, SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR. RESIST HIM, FIRM IN YOUR FAITH, KNOWING THAT *THE SAME KINDS OF SUFFERING ARE BEING EXPERIENCED BY YOUR BROTHERHOOD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD*. AND **AFTER YOU HAVE SUFFERED** A LITTLE WHILE, THE GOD OF ALL GRACE, WHO HAS CALLED YOU TO HIS ETERNAL GLORY IN CHRIST, WILL HIMSELF RESTORE, CONFIRM, STRENGTHEN, AND ESTABLISH YOU. 1 PETER 5:8-10

I SAID TO HIM, "SIR, YOU KNOW." AND HE SAID TO ME, "THESE ARE THE ONES COMING OUT OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION. THEY HAVE *WASHED THEIR ROBES AND MADE THEM WHITE IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB*." REVELATION 7:14

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO *WASH THEIR ROBES*, THAT THEY MAY HAVE THE RIGHT TO THE TREE OF LIFE AND MAY GO THROUGH THE GATES INTO THE CITY. *OUTSIDE* ARE THE DOGS, THOSE WHO PRACTICE MAGIC ARTS, THE SEXUALLY IMMORAL, THE MURDERERS, THE IDOLATERS AND *EVERYONE WHO LOVES AND PRACTICES FALSEHOOD*." REVELATION 22:14-15

He Keeps His Word

Regardless of the events and timeline of the rapture and tribulation, we know for sure that everything God said will happen. His timing and plan are perfect and He keeps His word.

THE LORD IS NOT SLOW IN KEEPING HIS PROMISE, AS SOME UNDERSTAND SLOWNESS. INSTEAD HE IS PATIENT WITH YOU, *NOT WANTING ANYONE TO PERISH, BUT EVERYONE TO COME TO REPENTANCE.* 2 PETER 3:9

"FOR YET A LITTLE WHILE, AND *HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME AND WILL NOT TARRY.* NOW THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; BUT *IF ANYONE DRAWS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.*" HEBREWS 10:37-38

FOR THE *REVELATION AWAITS AN APPOINTED TIME;* IT SPEAKS OF THE END AND *WILL NOT PROVE FALSE. THOUGH IT LINGER, WAIT FOR IT; IT WILL CERTAINLY COME AND WILL NOT DELAY.* HABAKKUK 2:3

Pick a Side

So getting back to our topic, we need to pick a side in this fight. We've all heard the quote: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." (Edmund Burke) The choices are: truth in love, or lies that lead to destruction of individual deceived souls and of our society. Love does not equal lies and truth does not equal hate (but there is NO place for foul language, name-calling or hatred of anyone). The truth is that God hates all sin and loves all people. He expects believers to turn from all sin, no exceptions. He understands that we slip, but there is a difference between "*practicing*" sin and *stumbling* but getting back up again. He is on our side! The victory has already been won—we just need to humbly walk in it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

CHOOSE FOR YOURSELVES THIS DAY WHOM YOU WILL SERVE. JOSHUA 24:15

"*WHOEVER IS NOT WITH ME IS AGAINST ME, AND WHOEVER DOES NOT GATHER WITH ME SCATTERS.*" MATTHEW 12:30

GENTLY INSTRUCT THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE TRUTH. PERHAPS GOD WILL CHANGE THOSE PEOPLE'S HEARTS, AND THEY WILL LEARN THE TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:25

[JESUS SAID], "I HAVE SAID THESE THINGS TO YOU, THAT IN ME YOU MAY HAVE PEACE. *IN THE WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION. BUT TAKE HEART; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD.*" JOHN 16:33

YOU, DEAR CHILDREN, ARE FROM GOD AND HAVE *OVERCOME THEM,* BECAUSE *THE ONE WHO IS IN YOU IS GREATER THAN THE ONE WHO IS IN THE WORLD.* 1 JOHN 4:4

Life Is Short

This life is short, whether it seems like it to us or not. After that is eternity and I want to be sure that I have not only "qualified for the prize" myself, as Paul said, but also that I tried to be a light to as many as I could through the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul said it was a race and to run it so as to get the prize. *Since you are saved from the moment you truly believe in your heart and confess with your mouth, that's not a race.* Paul was referring to our walk with Jesus—taking up our cross and suffering with Him, loving our brothers, making disciples (real followers of Jesus—not just “fans”).

IF YOU DECLARE WITH YOUR MOUTH, "JESUS IS LORD," AND BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART THAT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, YOU WILL BE SAVED. FOR IT IS WITH YOUR HEART THAT YOU BELIEVE AND ARE JUSTIFIED, AND IT IS WITH YOUR MOUTH THAT YOU PROFESS YOUR FAITH AND ARE SAVED. ROMANS 10:9-10

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 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. PHILIPPIANS 3:7-19

The Beginning, Not The End

Salvation is the **beginning**, not the end. Knowing that we are saved (and at such a high cost to our Savior) should inspire us to want to do anything He asks of us, relying on His strength to do His will through His Spirit inside of us. There is absolutely NO fear involved.

THIS IS THE MESSAGE WHICH WE HAVE HEARD FROM HIM AND DECLARE TO YOU, THAT GOD IS LIGHT AND IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL. *IF WE CLAIM TO HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM AND YET WALK IN THE DARKNESS, WE LIE AND DO NOT LIVE OUT THE TRUTH.* 1 JOHN 1:5-6

THE NIGHT IS ALMOST GONE, AND THE DAY IS NEAR. THEREFORE LET US *LAY ASIDE THE DEEDS OF DARKNESS AND PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT.* ROMANS 13:12

NOW THE WORKS OF THE FLESH ARE OBVIOUS: SEXUAL IMMORALITY, MORAL IMPURITY, PROMISCUITY, IDOLATRY, SORCERY, HATREDS, STRIFE, JEALOUSY, OUTBURSTS OF ANGER, SELFISH AMBITIONS, DISSENSIONS, FACTIONS, ENVY, DRUNKENNESS, CAROUSING, AND ANYTHING SIMILAR. I TELL YOU ABOUT THESE THINGS IN ADVANCE—AS I TOLD YOU BEFORE—THAT *THOSE WHO PRACTICE SUCH THINGS WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.* GALATIANS 5:19-21

FOR THIS VERY REASON, MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO *SUPPLEMENT YOUR FAITH* WITH VIRTUE, AND VIRTUE WITH KNOWLEDGE, AND KNOWLEDGE WITH SELF-CONTROL, AND SELF-CONTROL WITH STEADFASTNESS, AND STEADFASTNESS WITH GODLINESS, AND GODLINESS WITH BROTHERLY AFFECTION, AND BROTHERLY AFFECTION WITH LOVE. FOR IF THESE QUALITIES ARE YOURS AND ARE INCREASING, THEY KEEP YOU FROM BEING INEFFECTIVE OR UNFRUITFUL IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. *FOR WHOEVER LACKS THESE QUALITIES IS SO NEARSIGHTED THAT HE IS BLIND, HAVING FORGOTTEN THAT HE WAS CLEANSED FROM HIS FORMER SINS.* THEREFORE, BROTHERS, BE ALL THE MORE DILIGENT TO *CONFIRM YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION*, FOR IF YOU **PRACTICE** THESE QUALITIES YOU WILL NEVER FALL. FOR IN THIS WAY THERE WILL BE RICHLY PROVIDED FOR YOU AN *ENTRANCE INTO THE ETERNAL KINGDOM OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.* 2 PETER 1:5-11

THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE; INSTEAD, PERFECT LOVE DRIVES OUT FEAR, BECAUSE FEAR INVOLVES PUNISHMENT. SO THE ONE WHO FEARS HAS NOT REACHED *PERFECTION IN LOVE.* 1 JOHN 4:18

Run This Race

Speaking of races, the prophet Jeremiah once complained that he felt God was taking too long to judge the evil doers in the land. God asked him:

“IF YOU HAVE RACED WITH RUNNERS AND THEY HAVE WORN YOU OUT, HOW CAN YOU COMPETE WITH HORSES? IF YOU STUMBLE IN A PEACEFUL LAND, WHAT WILL YOU DO IN THE THICKETS OF THE JORDAN?” JEREMIAH 12:5

We need to ask ourselves that same question. If we're already too weary to stand up for Jesus now, what will we do when the battle intensifies? Let's clarify here that the “horses” are not the deceived people being used unwittingly—the “horses” are the evil ones behind the scenes who are driving the agenda by a very well-orchestrated method. In this “race,” the Supreme Court says that people have the right to the pursuit of happiness, and therefore, to sin if that is what they need to do to be happy. Today, they were “born” homosexual—what will it be tomorrow that they can't “help” and therefore, we can't deny them their right to do it if it makes them happy?

Churches who have caved into the pressures of the world are telling people that they don't need to turn from sin after they're saved, but the Bible says that if we truly believe then we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who helps us recognize, avoid and repent of sin. **We have no way of seeing inside anyone's heart to determine whether or not they are saved** (and thus we are not to

condemn people, which is different from refraining from the endorsement of their sin), but the Bible tells us that there are fruits of the Spirit. If we don't see them, that is cause for concern.

BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS AND *SELF CONTROL*. AGAINST SUCH THINGS THERE IS NO LAW. GALATIANS 5:22-23

EVERYONE WHO MAKES A *PRACTICE* OF SINNING ALSO PRACTICES LAWLESSNESS; **SIN IS LAWLESSNESS**. YOU KNOW THAT JESUS APPEARED IN ORDER TO TAKE AWAY SINS, AND IN HIM THERE IS NO SIN. **NO ONE WHO ABIDES IN HIM KEEPS ON SINNING; NO ONE WHO KEEPS ON SINNING HAS EITHER SEEN HIM OR KNOWN HIM**. LITTLE CHILDREN, LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU. WHOEVER PRACTICES RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RIGHTEOUS, AS JESUS IS RIGHTEOUS. **WHOEVER MAKES A PRACTICE OF SINNING IS OF THE DEVIL, FOR THE DEVIL HAS BEEN SINNING FROM THE BEGINNING**. THE REASON THE SON OF GOD APPEARED WAS TO DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL. NO ONE BORN OF GOD MAKES A PRACTICE OF SINNING, FOR HIS SEED ABIDES IN HIM, AND **HE CANNOT KEEP ON SINNING BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN BORN OF GOD**. BY THIS IT IS EVIDENT WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL: *WHOEVER DOES NOT PRACTICE RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOT OF GOD*, NOR IS THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS BROTHER. 1 JOHN 3:4-10

By His Spirit

The Holy Spirit is grieved by sin and evil. We have seen verse after verse telling us that anyone *regenerated* and filled with the Spirit will not *continue in intentional* sin. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a deposit toward our salvation when we believe, but Jesus also said that the Father will give the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who ask. We're here to glorify Him through our obedience to His will (unto death if need be)—the Holy Spirit is our Helper in that endeavor.

DO NOT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD, BY WHOM YOU WERE *SEALED* FOR THE DAY OF REDEMPTION. EPHESIANS 4:30

AND IT IS GOD WHO ESTABLISHES US WITH YOU IN CHRIST, AND HAS ANOINTED US, AND WHO HAS ALSO PUT *HIS SEAL ON US AND GIVEN US HIS SPIRIT IN OUR HEARTS AS A DOWN PAYMENT*. 2 CORINTHIANS 1:21-22

IN HIM YOU ALSO, WHEN YOU HEARD THE WORD OF TRUTH, THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION, AND BELIEVED IN HIM, WERE *SEALED WITH THE PROMISED HOLY SPIRIT, WHO IS THE DOWN PAYMENT OF OUR INHERITANCE UNTIL WE ACQUIRE POSSESSION OF IT*, TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY. EPHESIANS 1:13-14

"IF YOU THEN, BEING EVIL, KNOW HOW TO GIVE GOOD GIFTS TO YOUR CHILDREN, *HOW MUCH MORE WILL YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER GIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THOSE WHO ASK HIM!*" LUKE 11:13

Paul warns us to inspect ourselves and the way we live our lives to make sure that we are really **in Christ**.

EXAMINE YOURSELVES TO SEE IF YOUR FAITH IS GENUINE. TEST YOURSELVES. SURELY YOU KNOW THAT JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU; IF NOT, YOU HAVE FAILED THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH. 2 CORINTHIANS 13:5

Know Them by Their Fruits

False "believers" may seem "good" on the surface for a while, but eventually they will show their true colors. This is the leaven that Paul said to remove from the Church. YOUR BOASTING IS NOT GOOD. DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT A LITTLE LEAVEN LEAVENS THE WHOLE LUMP? 1 CORINTHIANS 5:6 What Paul predicted has come true—instead of removing sin, the doctrine has been changed to accommodate it. All people have the sinful nature and there is NO way to overcome it without God's help. Are we pointing the way to salvation and God's help? If not, then there is a risk that people we should have reached will be told by Jesus:

"AND THEN I WILL DECLARE TO THEM, 'I NEVER KNEW YOU; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" MATTHEW 7:23

In case we aren't sure what lawlessness is:

EVERYONE WHO MAKES A PRACTICE OF SINNING ALSO PRACTICES LAWLESSNESS; SIN IS LAWLESSNESS. 1 JOHN 3:4

Open Your Eyes to See the Rebellion

This onslaught will not relent, because it's a rebellion against God. So long as He is on His throne, the attack will continue (until He returns Himself to put an end to all rebellion once and for all). The leader behind it all is Satan, the deceiver, who wants to BE God. It's so much easier to just go along and be "liked," but we're to value God's approval more than the world's. Try to picture what God would think of this: The Church participating in an LGBTQ parade, celebrating sin, waving rainbow flags and then eventually, that parade route ends up at the gates of hell. Are we going to stop and say "see you later" to those people or are we going in with them? Is either desirable or acceptable? We're supposed to be a light! God hates sin. He loves people and did not design hell for *people* to live in. It's for Satan and his evil fallen angels who rebelled against God and led humanity astray. We're not on Satan's side in this war, are we? This war isn't "against" a small group of "special" people. It's one of the *many* tools being used by Satan to take down society in order to hurt God. Don't we wish for the "good ole" [wholesome] days again? Is this progress? Needless to say, it depends how we define progress and what the goal is.

"YOU SAID IN YOUR HEART, 'I WILL ASCEND TO HEAVEN; ABOVE THE STARS OF GOD I WILL SET MY THRONE ON HIGH.'" ISAIAH 14:13

"THEN HE WILL SAY TO THOSE ON HIS LEFT, 'DEPART FROM ME, YOU CURSED, INTO THE ETERNAL FIRE PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS.'" MATTHEW 25:41

He Is Faithful

We don't know when Jesus is returning but we're told to be ready and watching so we are not caught by surprise.

"YOU TOO, *BE READY*; FOR THE SON OF MAN IS COMING AT AN HOUR THAT YOU DO NOT EXPECT." LUKE 12:40

BUT YOU ARE NOT IN DARKNESS, BRETHREN, FOR THAT DAY TO SURPRISE YOU LIKE A THIEF. FOR YOU ARE ALL SONS OF LIGHT AND SONS OF THE DAY; WE ARE NOT OF THE NIGHT OR OF DARKNESS. SO THEN LET US NOT SLEEP, AS OTHERS DO, BUT LET US *KEEP AWAKE AND BE SOBER*. 1 THESSALONIANS 5:4-6

FINALLY, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WHATEVER IS TRUE, WHATEVER IS NOBLE, WHATEVER IS RIGHT, WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY, WHATEVER IS ADMIRABLE—IF ANYTHING IS EXCELLENT OR PRAISEWORTHY—*THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS*. PHILIPPIANS 4:8

Different Gifts

I'm not suggesting that we are all called to serve the same function in the Body of Christ, or that we have all been given the same gifts of the Spirit. Each has its foundation in love. Each believer needs to pray on it and ask the Holy Spirit to provide wisdom. He will never lead anyone to believe or act contrary to the Word of God when we humbly allow Him to guide us, so we need to always compare what we received in our hearts and minds to what the Bible says to verify it's from Him.

THERE ARE *DIFFERENT KINDS OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS*, BUT THE SAME SPIRIT IS THE SOURCE OF THEM ALL. THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SERVICE, BUT WE SERVE THE SAME LORD. GOD WORKS IN DIFFERENT WAYS, BUT IT IS THE SAME GOD WHO DOES THE WORK IN ALL OF US. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-6

NOW THESE THREE REMAIN: FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE. BUT *THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE*. 1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

A Fire Inside of Us

No matter what we do, let's do it for the glory of God and shine our lights for Him. "BY THIS EVERYONE WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER." JOHN 13:35 Love is what is called for in all situations, but we need to use God's own definition of it. Jeremiah said, "BUT IF I SAY, 'I WILL NOT MENTION HIS

WORD OR SPEAK ANYMORE IN HIS NAME,' *HIS WORD IS IN MY HEART LIKE A FIRE, A FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES. I AM WEARY OF HOLDING IT IN; INDEED, I CANNOT.*" JEREMIAH 20:9 I don't think any Christian would say that Jeremiah was unloving to obey God. That needs to be our slogan: "Indeed, I cannot" refrain from sharing God's truth *in love* and *without hypocrisy* (pointing out the sin of others while remaining in ours). This is a scary world to navigate through without God's word guiding us.

AND WHATEVER YOU DO, WHETHER IN *WORD OR DEED, DO IT ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS*, GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM. COLOSSIANS 3:17

WHATEVER YOU ARE DOING, *WORK AT IT WITH ENTHUSIASM*, AS TO THE LORD AND NOT FOR PEOPLE, BECAUSE YOU KNOW THAT YOU WILL RECEIVE YOUR INHERITANCE FROM THE LORD AS THE REWARD. SERVE THE LORD CHRIST. COLOSSIANS 3:23-24

INSTEAD, WE WILL **SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE**, GROWING IN EVERY WAY MORE AND MORE LIKE CHRIST, WHO IS THE HEAD OF HIS BODY, THE CHURCH. EPHESIANS 4:15

LOVE FINDS NO JOY IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS BUT REJOICES IN THE TRUTH. 1 CORINTHIANS 13:6

Saved by Grace Through Faith

I feel that I need to reiterate once again that we do *not* do good works and live in a God-pleasing manner *in order to* be saved (including baptism and the Lord's Supper)—we do them *because we are saved*. Jesus is our Sabbath rest (from works). He suffered indescribable agony on our behalf, not only on the cross itself but starting in the Garden of Gethsemane and continuing non-stop until as He said, it was "finished," out of His unfathomable love for us. Can any of us picture standing before Him and admitting (and He knows even if we don't own up to it ourselves) that we loved the world more than Him? Or that we were ashamed of Him? Or we didn't think He was worth what He asked of us?

SO THERE REMAINS A *SABBATH REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD. FOR THE ONE WHO HAS ENTERED HIS REST HAS HIMSELF ALSO RESTED FROM HIS WORKS, AS GOD DID FROM HIS.* HEBREWS 4:9-10

BUT SOMEONE WILL SAY, 'YOU HAVE FAITH AND I HAVE WORKS.' SHOW ME YOUR FAITH APART FROM YOUR WORKS, AND I WILL SHOW YOU *MY FAITH BY MY WORKS*. JAMES 2:18

FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, CREATED *IN CHRIST JESUS FOR GOOD WORKS*, WHICH GOD PREPARED BEFOREHAND, THAT WE SHOULD *WALK IN THEM*. EPHESIANS 2:10

A Message of Encouragement

If someone reading this is struggling with sin, I would say first that God does love you. Absolutely, and so do God's truly born again children! You are special,

but your sin is not. God hates all sin, including yours. The devil loves your sin, though. That means that he will try to make sure you stay in it. He hates God and loves to hurt Him by hurting the people God loves. There are quite a few sins that affect the pleasure centers of the brain, and those become physiologically addictive—such as drugs, alcohol, gambling, pornography and sexual sin. People want the feeling that these behaviors produce chemically—it dulls the pain of whatever they’re trying to escape or makes them feel like they’ve found what they’re seeking, but only for a while.

The ONLY hope in defeating the power of sin, especially addictions, in *anyone’s* life, is God. He knows how each person arrived at the point where they are. He understands and will help *everyone* who sincerely *repents* and turns to Him in humility and trust—there is no need to live in fear. He does not delight in catching us misbehaving, but *He is holy and if we belong to Him, then we are meant to be like Him, with His help.* He knows we’re not perfect, but He does expect us to make an effort and care about what pleases Him.

BUT I RECEIVED MERCY FOR THIS REASON, THAT IN ME, AS THE FOREMOST [SINNER], JESUS CHRIST MIGHT DISPLAY HIS PERFECT PATIENCE AS AN EXAMPLE TO THOSE WHO WERE TO BELIEVE IN HIM FOR ETERNAL LIFE. 1 TIMOTHY 1:16

The better you truly know Him (from the Bible, not seeking supernatural experiences or trusting others’ opinions), the more you’ll realize that He is all that matters. His worth is so far above anyone or anything else here on earth or in heaven that desiring to please Him will become a passion and not an obligation. We were all designed to need Him more than anything or anyone. Surrender to Him. He is the solution to every problem or challenge you will ever face. I can tell you from personal experience that the more you know Him, the more you will love Him. The more you love Him, the easier it will be to trust Him. The more you trust Him, the easier it will be to obey Him. If you can trust Him with your very soul, then you can certainly trust Him in this short time on earth. Everyone in His Kingdom will most certainly love and obey God with every ounce of their being, but don’t wait—start now!

SURRENDER YOUR HEART TO GOD, TURN TO HIM IN PRAYER, AND GIVE UP YOUR SINS—EVEN THOSE YOU DO IN SECRET. THEN YOU WON’T BE ASHAMED; YOU WILL BE CONFIDENT AND FEARLESS. JOB 11:13-15

For Those Who Know Him

For those who already knew everything in this article, but you have loved ones you are concerned for, pray continually for them! God is the only one who can grant repentance and give the gift of faith. Pray that He will open their eyes so they can see they are being deceived. Pray for more workers in this harvest.

WHEN THE OTHERS HEARD THIS, THEY STOPPED OBJECTING AND BEGAN PRAISING GOD. THEY SAID, 'WE CAN SEE THAT *GOD HAS ALSO GIVEN THE GENTILES THE PRIVILEGE OF REPENTING OF THEIR SINS AND RECEIVING ETERNAL LIFE.*' ACTS 11:18

INSTANTLY SOMETHING LIKE SCALES FELL FROM SAUL'S EYES, AND HE *REGAINED HIS SIGHT.* THEN HE GOT UP AND WAS BAPTIZED. ACTS 9:18

THEN HE SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, 'THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL, BUT THE LABORERS ARE FEW; THEREFORE *PRAY EARNESTLY TO THE LORD OF THE HARVEST TO SEND OUT LABORERS INTO HIS HARVEST.*' MATTHEW 9:37-38

DAVID AND ASAPH RECORDED THE FOLLOWING PSALMS (WHICH ARE VERY SIMILAR) TO REMIND US THAT EVEN THOUGH IT SEEMS LIKE THOSE WHO DO WHATEVER THEY PLEASE SEEM TO BE HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS, OUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD WILL BE REWARDED AND THEIR DISOBEDIENCE WILL BE PUNISHED.

OF DAVID. *FRET NOT YOURSELF BECAUSE OF EVILDOERS; BE NOT ENVIOUS OF WRONGDOERS!* FOR THEY WILL SOON FADE LIKE THE GRASS AND WITHER LIKE THE GREEN HERB. TRUST IN THE LORD, AND DO GOOD; DWELL IN THE LAND AND BEFRIEND FAITHFULNESS. DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD, AND HE WILL GIVE YOU THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART. COMMIT YOUR WAY TO THE LORD; TRUST IN HIM, AND HE WILL ACT. HE WILL BRING FORTH YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS AS THE LIGHT, AND YOUR JUSTICE AS THE NOONDAY. BE STILL BEFORE THE LORD AND WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM; FRET NOT YOURSELF OVER THE ONE WHO PROSPERS IN HIS WAY, OVER THE MAN WHO CARRIES OUT EVIL DEVICES! REFRAIN FROM ANGER, AND FORSAKE WRATH! FRET NOT YOURSELF; IT TENDS ONLY TO EVIL. *FOR THE EVILDOERS SHALL BE CUT OFF, BUT THOSE WHO WAIT FOR THE LORD SHALL INHERIT THE LAND.* IN JUST A LITTLE WHILE, THE WICKED WILL BE NO MORE; THOUGH YOU LOOK CAREFULLY AT HIS PLACE, HE WILL NOT BE THERE. BUT THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE LAND AND DELIGHT THEMSELVES IN ABUNDANT PEACE.

THE WICKED PLOTS AGAINST THE RIGHTEOUS AND GNASHES HIS TEETH AT HIM, BUT THE LORD LAUGHS AT THE WICKED, FOR HE SEES THAT HIS DAY IS COMING. THE WICKED DRAW THE SWORD AND BEND THEIR BOWS TO BRING DOWN THE POOR AND NEEDY, TO SLAY THOSE WHOSE WAY IS UPRIGHT; THEIR SWORD SHALL ENTER THEIR OWN HEART, AND THEIR BOWS SHALL BE BROKEN. BETTER IS THE LITTLE THAT THE RIGHTEOUS HAS THAN THE ABUNDANCE OF MANY WICKED. FOR THE ARMS OF THE WICKED SHALL BE BROKEN, BUT THE LORD UPHOLDS THE RIGHTEOUS. *THE LORD KNOWS THE DAYS OF THE BLAMELESS, AND THEIR HERITAGE WILL REMAIN FOREVER; THEY ARE NOT PUT TO SHAME IN EVIL TIMES; IN THE DAYS OF FAMINE THEY HAVE ABUNDANCE. BUT THE WICKED WILL PERISH; THE ENEMIES OF THE LORD ARE LIKE THE GLORY OF THE PASTURES; THEY VANISH—LIKE SMOKE THEY VANISH AWAY.* THE WICKED BORROWS BUT DOES NOT PAY BACK, BUT THE RIGHTEOUS IS GENEROUS AND GIVES; FOR THOSE BLESSED BY THE LORD SHALL INHERIT THE LAND, BUT THOSE CURSED BY HIM SHALL BE CUT OFF. THE STEPS OF A MAN ARE ESTABLISHED BY THE LORD, WHEN HE DELIGHTS IN HIS WAY; THOUGH HE FALL, HE SHALL NOT BE CAST HEADLONG, FOR THE LORD UPHOLDS HIS HAND. I HAVE BEEN YOUNG, AND NOW AM OLD, YET I HAVE NOT SEEN THE RIGHTEOUS FORSAKEN OR HIS CHILDREN BEGGING FOR BREAD. HE IS EVER LENDING GENEROUSLY, AND HIS CHILDREN BECOME A BLESSING. *TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; SO SHALL YOU DWELL FOREVER. FOR THE LORD LOVES JUSTICE; HE WILL NOT FORSAKE HIS SAINTS.* THEY ARE PRESERVED FOREVER, BUT THE CHILDREN OF THE WICKED SHALL BE CUT OFF. THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL INHERIT THE LAND AND DWELL UPON IT

FOREVER. THE MOUTH OF THE RIGHTEOUS UTTERS WISDOM, AND HIS TONGUE SPEAKS JUSTICE. THE LAW OF HIS GOD IS IN HIS HEART; HIS STEPS DO NOT SLIP. THE WICKED WATCHES FOR THE RIGHTEOUS AND SEEKS TO PUT HIM TO DEATH. THE LORD WILL NOT ABANDON HIM TO HIS POWER OR LET HIM BE CONDEMNED WHEN HE IS BROUGHT TO TRIAL.

WAIT FOR THE LORD AND KEEP HIS WAY, AND HE WILL EXALT YOU TO INHERIT THE LAND; YOU WILL LOOK ON WHEN THE WICKED ARE CUT OFF. I HAVE SEEN A WICKED, RUTHLESS MAN, SPREADING HIMSELF LIKE A GREEN LAUREL TREE. BUT HE PASSED AWAY, AND BEHOLD, HE WAS NO MORE; THOUGH I SOUGHT HIM, HE COULD NOT BE FOUND. MARK THE BLAMELESS AND BEHOLD THE UPRIGHT, FOR THERE IS A FUTURE FOR THE MAN OF PEACE. BUT TRANSGRESSORS SHALL BE ALTOGETHER DESTROYED; THE FUTURE OF THE WICKED SHALL BE CUT OFF. THE SALVATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS FROM THE LORD; HE IS THEIR STRONGHOLD IN THE TIME OF TROUBLE. THE LORD HELPS THEM AND DELIVERS THEM; HE DELIVERS THEM FROM THE WICKED AND SAVES THEM, BECAUSE THEY TAKE REFUGE IN HIM. PSALM 37

A PSALM OF ASAPH. BUT AS FOR ME, MY FEET HAD ALMOST SLIPPED; I HAD NEARLY LOST MY FOOthOLD. *FOR I ENVIED THE ARROGANT WHEN I SAW THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED.* THEY HAVE NO STRUGGLES; THEIR BODIES ARE HEALTHY AND STRONG. THEY ARE FREE FROM COMMON HUMAN BURDENS; THEY ARE NOT PLAGUED BY HUMAN ILLS. THEREFORE PRIDE IS THEIR NECKLACE; THEY CLOTHE THEMSELVES WITH VIOLENCE. *FROM THEIR CALLOUS HEARTS COMES INIQUITY; THEIR EVIL IMAGINATIONS HAVE NO LIMITS.* THEY SCOFF, AND SPEAK WITH MALICE; WITH ARROGANCE THEY THREATEN OPPRESSION. THEIR MOUTHS LAY CLAIM TO HEAVEN, AND THEIR TONGUES TAKE POSSESSION OF THE EARTH. THEREFORE THEIR PEOPLE TURN TO THEM AND DRINK UP WATERS IN ABUNDANCE. THEY SAY, "HOW WOULD GOD KNOW? DOES THE MOST HIGH KNOW ANYTHING?" THIS IS WHAT THE WICKED ARE LIKE—ALWAYS FREE OF CARE, THEY GO ON AMASSING WEALTH.

SURELY IN VAIN I HAVE KEPT MY HEART PURE AND HAVE WASHED MY HANDS IN INNOCENCE. ALL DAY LONG I HAVE BEEN AFFLICTED, AND EVERY MORNING BRINGS NEW PUNISHMENTS. IF I HAD SPOKEN OUT LIKE THAT, I WOULD HAVE BETRAYED YOUR CHILDREN. WHEN I TRIED TO UNDERSTAND ALL THIS, IT TROUBLED ME DEEPLY TILL I ENTERED THE SANCTUARY OF GOD; THEN I UNDERSTOOD THEIR FINAL DESTINY. SURELY YOU PLACE THEM ON SLIPPERY GROUND; YOU CAST THEM DOWN TO RUIN. HOW SUDDENLY ARE THEY DESTROYED, COMPLETELY SWEEP AWAY BY TERRORS! THEY ARE LIKE A DREAM WHEN ONE AWAKES; WHEN YOU ARISE, LORD, YOU WILL DESPISE THEM AS FANTASIES.

WHEN MY HEART WAS GRIEVED AND MY SPIRIT EMBITTERED, I WAS SENSELESS AND IGNORANT; I WAS A BRUTE BEAST BEFORE YOU. YET I AM ALWAYS WITH YOU; YOU HOLD ME BY MY RIGHT HAND. YOU GUIDE ME WITH YOUR COUNSEL, AND AFTERWARD YOU WILL TAKE ME INTO GLORY. WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT YOU? AND EARTH HAS NOTHING I DESIRE BESIDES YOU. MY FLESH AND MY HEART MAY FAIL, BUT GOD IS THE STRENGTH OF MY HEART AND MY PORTION FOREVER. *THOSE WHO ARE FAR FROM YOU WILL PERISH; YOU DESTROY ALL WHO ARE UNFAITHFUL TO YOU. BUT AS FOR ME, IT IS GOOD TO BE NEAR GOD. I HAVE MADE THE SOVEREIGN LORD MY REFUGE; I WILL TELL OF ALL YOUR DEEDS.* PSALM 73

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