

The Sign

by Tricia Berg

*"I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a **sign of the covenant** between me and the earth." Genesis 9:11-13*

This is God's intended meaning for the rainbow, and anyone using it for something else should consider whether they really want to do that. For those of us who believe the Bible and respect our Maker, the answer is obvious. (Jude 1:14-22, Rev. 11:15-18) For those who don't believe, then it is to be expected that they will not understand the things of God. (1Cor. 2:14, 2Pet. 2, Jude, 1John 3:10, 1Cor. 1:18-31, 2Cor. 4:3-6, 1Pet. 4:3-5, 2Thess. 2:7-12)

As for pride, let's look at what the Bible says about it. (1Cor. 5) The fact that this is a regular thing permeating our world is evidence of societal decline, just like former cultures that no longer exist today. (Rom. 1:18-31)

*The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. **Pride** and **arrogance** and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. Proverbs 8:13*

*Haughty eyes and a **proud** heart, the lamp of the **wicked**, are sin. Proverbs 21:4*

*The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. For the LORD of hosts has a day against **all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low**; against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan; against all the lofty mountains, and against all the uplifted hills; against every high tower, and against every fortified wall; against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft. And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. And the idols shall utterly pass away. And people shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth. Isaiah 2:11-19*

*It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their **deeds of ungodliness** that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that **ungodly sinners have spoken against him.**" These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are **loud-mouthed boasters**, showing favoritism to gain advantage. Jude 1:14-16*

*I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an **end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.** Isaiah 13:11*

*And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, **pride**, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they **defile** a person." Mark 7:20-23*

*"On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have **rebelled** against me; for then I will **remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones**, and you shall no longer be **haughty** in my holy mountain. But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD,"those who are left in Israel; they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For they shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." Zephaniah 3:11-13*

There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him:haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil,a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers. Proverbs 6:16-19

So we can clearly see that God despises pride and the above verse sheds light on what else He hates as well. (Psa. 28:3-5) But there is a way to make peace with God, and that is through Jesus. (Rom. 5:1-11, Eph. 2:11-22) There is no peace for the wicked (Isa. 48:22, 57:21), and we have ALL fallen short, but Jesus is the Way to be made into a new creation. (John 14:6, 2Cor. 5:17, Rom. 8, Gal. 6:15)

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God

through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for **all have sinned and fall short** of the glory of God, and are **justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.** This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by **faith** apart from works of the law. Romans 3:21-28

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever **believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but **whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.** And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." John 3:16-21 (Also see Eph. 5:11-17.)

We must believe in Jesus, but why also in Jesus' name? Because the name Jesus means "God saves." He alone can save us and has done everything needed to accomplish it. We only need to humble ourselves and accept the free gift. If we won't humble ourselves, then how can we admit we're sinners in need of a Savior, and how can we accept that God's way is better than our way and it's the ONLY way? What has been going on in our world is rebellion against God, and it's exponentially increasing. To go along with it is to join in the rebellion. How can anyone say they love and respect God if they do that?

"She will bear a son, and you shall **call his name Jesus,** for he will **save** his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

For by **grace** you have been saved through **faith.** And this is not your own doing; it is the **gift** of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:8-10

NOTE: Please read all of the Bible passages that are included in full below, and I also encourage you to get out your Bible (or visit an online version – but not a newer one that has been twisted to fit a particular angle, in the way that the majority of them have) and read more context – I can't do exhaustive studies in this blog post or it will never be finished. There is no perfect translation, but if you start with the ESV and then if you have the time or attention span (and I hope you do), then you could compare that with the NIV and NSB.

My point is that it's easy to twist Scripture and therefore change its original meaning if it's taken out of context, truncated, slightly rephrased, etc. Also, commentaries and Bible study notes can be helpful, but always go with what the Bible plainly says (in context, with related passages taken into consideration as well). There are some viewpoints in commentaries that have become "unquestionable truths" that are based more on tradition, and many that stick to a denominational line of thinking (sort of a "party line" if you will).

We need to be sure that we don't love our sin and what this fallen world has to offer more than God, such that we ignore Him when He prompts us to repent and return to Him and His ways.

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

*Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an **evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God**. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be **hardened by the deceitfulness of sin**. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." Hebrews 3:12-15*

The crowd does NOT know the way in this instance. Each will bear responsibility for his or her own decisions. (Rom. 2:6-11, 14:12, Col. 3:25, Heb. 4:13, 1Pet. 4:4-5) Can you imagine God accepting an excuse that we believed the words of unsaved (and therefore unregenerated by God's Spirit – not born again – John 3:3-8), worldly, fallen people rather than Him and His word? Do we want to be like those people on the Titanic who trusted those around them until the lifeboats were all full and they sunk with the ship? (In this analogy, there are not limited lifeboats, only limited time. There is ONE "ark" and that is Jesus.)

But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear **his own** load. Galatians 6:4-5

"Enter by the narrow gate. **For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.** Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will **recognize them by their fruits.** Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.**' Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been **founded on the rock.** And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. Matthew 7:13-29

He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive to **enter through the narrow door.** For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets' But he will say, 'I tell you, **I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!**' In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from

north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last." Luke 13:22-30

Notice that empty words do not hold any weight with God, those who have His Spirit are the ones who belong to Him and walk IN His Spirit, abiding IN Him.

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only **do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh**, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh**. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as **I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God**. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And **those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires**. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:13-25

For those who live **according to the flesh** set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For **the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God**. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. **Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him**. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but **if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live**. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The

*Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that **the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.** For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. Romans 8:5-19*

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

*“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. **Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. **This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.** Greater*

love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. **These things I command you, so that you will love one another.** If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me." John 15:1-21 (Also see Rom. 13:8-14.)

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows **to the Spirit** will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Galatians 6:7-8

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. And **no creature is hidden from his sight**, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must **give account**. Hebrews 4:12-13

Make no mistake – the wonderful things God has prepared are for those who LOVE Him – just as He said. He defined who loves Him in John 14. This does not refer to following the letter of the law (notice above in John 15 the emphasis on love – but don't be tricked into thinking that truth is unloving or even hateful – see John 14:6 and 1John 4:16 – God is BOTH truth AND love. Our motive in speaking the truth – despite the strife it adds to our lives (because most people only want to hear what "resonates" with them, which is to resonate with the dead, unregenerated spirit) is LOVE for each precious soul. (1Tim. 1:5) We are to walk in the Spirit, which is to walk in the **spirit** of the law in the New Covenant, not the letter of the Old Covenant. (1Cor. 3:6)

*But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared **for those who love him**"—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10*

*"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. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**" John 14:15-26*

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

you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. 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 4:15-5:17 (Also see Matt. 25:1-13.)

"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must **worship in spirit and truth.**" John 4:23-24

Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may **bear fruit for God.** For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve **in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.** Romans 7:4-6

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a **new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.** Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory,

which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. 2 Corinthians 3:4-11

*Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has **fulfilled the law**. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are **summed up** in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore **love is the fulfilling of the law**. Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to **wake** from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us **cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light**. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, **not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy**. But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires**. Romans 13:8-14*

Please understand that Paul is not talking about a metaphor here when he says that we are to walk in the newness of life. Just like when Jesus said that good trees bear good fruit, this means that it will be VISIBLE, not imaginary. Would you eat fruit that is clearly rotten on the outside, assuming that it is good inside? I don't think so.

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

*its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? **Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!** Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were **once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart** to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. For **when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.** But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:1-23*

*"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for **the tree is known by its fruit.** You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. **The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.** I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12:33-37*

*"Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who **hears the word and immediately receives it with joy**, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, **immediately he falls away.** As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves **unfruitful.** As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed **bears***

fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." Matthew 13:18-23 (Also see John 15.)

"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own **fruit**. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. **The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.**" Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and **hears my words and does them**, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and **laid the foundation on the rock**. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who **hears and does not do them** is like a man who built a house on the ground **without a foundation**. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." Luke 6:43-49

By this my Father is glorified, that you **bear much fruit** and so prove to be my disciples. John 15:8

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have **put on the new self**, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:5-17

For **the love of Christ controls us**, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might **no longer live for themselves** but for him who for their sake died and was raised. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

For the time that is **past** suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but **they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead**. 1 Peter 4:3-5

Jesus IS returning, this time to judge – despite what anyone says. (2Pet. 3, Jude 1:14-22)

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. **The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.**" Revelation 11:15-18

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but **to save those who are eagerly waiting for him**. Hebrews 9:27-28

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful,

*and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and **hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?**" Revelation 6:12-17*

*Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he **judges** and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to **strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron.** He will tread the winepress of the **fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.** On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. Revelation 19:11-16*

*These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. They will make war on the Lamb, and **the Lamb will conquer them,** for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful. Revelation 17:13-14*

*Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the **wrath of God.** And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia. Revelation 14:17-20*

There are four instances that I can think of when the time is up for us to repent. The most obvious is upon our death. Secondly, upon Jesus' return should also be quite obvious that there's no more time to sit on the fence (as some have cleverly said – Satan owns that fence – the only safety is on God's side). We know from Revelation that many disturbing things will happen before that event, but that no matter what happens – eternal bliss with God is worth more than even our very lives here on earth. (Eph. 1:11-23, 5:5-17, Col. 1:9-23, 3:23-25, Heb. 9:15, 12:12-29, 1Pet. 1, Rom. 8:16-25, 1Cor. 2:9-16, Rev.

21:7-8, 22:14-15) However, there is also the element of surprise, which is when He returns for His own prior to the judgment of the world.

*"Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. **You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**" Luke 12:35-40*

*"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. **Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.** For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' 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 25:1-13*

*Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and **repent.** If you will not wake up, I will come **like a thief,** and **you will not know at what hour I will come against you.** Revelation 3:3*

*Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that **the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.** While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then **sudden destruction** will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us **keep awake and be sober.** For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at*

night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, **then at his coming those who belong to Christ.** 1 Corinthians 15:22-23

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and **the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.** When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And **the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,** and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the

Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that **scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.** They will say, "**Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.**" For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are **stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.** But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But **the day of the Lord will come like a thief,** and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, **be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.** And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.** But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 3:1-18

NOTE: This next verse happens at the end of the bowls of God's wrath. Some will have survived even up until this point, and this is directed to them (also see Isa. 4:2, 10:20, 37:32, 45:20, 66:19, Joel 2:32, Matt. 24:22, Mark 13:20):

("Behold, I am coming **like a thief!** Blessed is the one who **stays awake,** keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!") Revelation 16:15

However, this following promise was made to the church (note the word is "wrath" – we were NOT promised to escape tribulation, which the early church can attest to – we can expect tribulations and trials – see Matthew 5:10-11, James 1:12-16, Philippians 1:29-30, all of 1 Peter, which includes references to suffering for Jesus' sake in every chapter):

*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*

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 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. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be **saved by him from the wrath of God**. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Romans 5:1-11*

*For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, **Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come**. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10*

*Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the **surpassing worth** of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may **share his sufferings**, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own.*

*But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I **press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus**. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the **example** you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as **enemies** of the cross of Christ. Their end is **destruction**, their god is their **belly**, and they **glory in their shame**, with minds set on **earthly** things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it **we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body**, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Philippians 3:8-21*

*Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. **Establish your hearts**, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those **blessed** who **remained steadfast**. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. James 5:7-11*

The third way to seal one's fate for eternity is to take the mark of the beast (which can't be done until after the beast begins his reign of terror). Contrary to what some teach, the Bible does NOT teach that this is reversible. How anyone could say that in light of what the Bible says, I have no idea. The only explanation I've ever seen is that He "has" to because otherwise how did those people in Rev. 7:9-17 get there? They ask this because they believe that the church has been removed from the earth before that point, so this "has" to be someone else who heard the Gospel from those in Rev. 7:1-8, which is possible, but not stated – it just says they were sealed prior to the trumpet judgments described in the following few chapters. There is no time period specified between the events of vv. 1-8 and those of vv. 9-17, and so we really can't know for sure.

No, I believe that the Bible is clear that those who take the mark are permanently sealed as children of the devil in a counterfeit way to how God's children are sealed with His Spirit. It is not merely a mark to allow buying and selling, but it's also required that they worship the beast instead of God, which

is idolatry. They fear and obey the beast instead of God. They care more about preserving their temporary, earthly lives than about pleasing God and about eternity.

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

*And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and **all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain**. If anyone has an ear, let him hear: If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it **deceives those who dwell on earth**, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might **cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain**. Also it causes all, both small*

and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that **no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark**, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666. Revelation 13:1-18

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "**If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.**" Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" Revelation 14:9-13

And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he **deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image**. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. Revelation 19:20

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And **the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done**. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And **if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire**. Revelation 20:11-15

And the fourth and final way that I know of, which many also teach against, but this is happening more and more these days: To truly have known God, and yet turn back and forsake Him anyway. Most teach this is impossible, but again, that's not what the Bible says. PLEASE understand, however, that this is NOT quick or easy. God does not force anyone to believe, to behave as He wishes,

to repent, etc., but He continues by His Spirit to call the person back to repentance until they have utterly and tragically quenched Him and no longer can hear Him/utterly refuse to hear Him, which is to no longer have faith, since faith comes by hearing. ONLY faith saves, and ONLY faith in Jesus as our Savior. If your "faith" doesn't rely 100% on Jesus, then it isn't a saving faith. (John 3:18-21, 5:21-29, 6:27-28, 40, 47, 63, 10:25-30, Acts 4:11-12, Rom. 10:8-13, 1John) There is no such thing as reincarnation or earning any part of salvation. (Eph. 2:8-10) It is not possible to be a "good" person and yet reject Jesus or claim that He is only part of the equation (nor is it "loving" to invite people to STAY as they are, defiling the Body of Christ instead of repenting and making every effort to remain clean after having been washed – 1Cor. 5, 6:11, 1John 1:7, 1Thess. 4:1-8). That actually amounts to idolatry by making a way of your own choosing, or by choosing to believe those who contradict God's own words in the Bible. (2Cor. 11:3-4, Gal. 1:6-9, Prov. 30:5-6)

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.
Romans 10:17

*Do not **quench** the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:19*

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

*For if we go on sinning **deliberately after** receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of **judgment**, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the*

*blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore **do not throw away** your confidence, which has a great **reward**. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he **shrinks back**, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have **faith** and preserve their souls. Hebrews 10:26-39 (Also see 1John 2:28-29.)*

Some of the many people who are depressed these days could possibly be those who are grieving the Holy Spirit. If they would repent of their sin instead of just turning to psych meds and listening to the world affirming their sin as acceptable, surely they could feel the joy of the Lord. I am not a doctor and I am NOT giving medical advice, but I do know that psych meds are not an instant cure and carry their own set of serious side effects. My point is that a person may be able to avoid their mental health declining to such a sad state if they would seek and honor God (Psa. 119:2-3) – not through new age or other practices, but by believing in His Son and valuing the Scriptures – not other writings that twist them or barely touch on them, having so-called "authority" apart from God's word. Reassuring everyone that God loves them just as they are and made them the way they are is NOT helpful, because it's not true. God does love ALL of His creation and wants none to perish, but He does NOT love all actions and attitudes. He also did not make anyone in such a way that they have no choice but to behave in a way He hates, because that's "who they are." (1Cor. 10:13)

*And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:30*

***Seek the LORD** while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; **let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD**, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly **pardon**. Isaiah 55:6-7*

*Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but **joy** comes with the morning. Psalms 30:4-5*

And to those get tossed around by the popular trends in [man-made] theology (Jam. 1:5-8, Eph. 4:11-32, 1Tim. 1:3-16, Titus 1:10-16) and get lost in deep thoughts about philosophy (1Cor. 1:20, 25, 3:18-20, Jam. 3:13-18, Acts 17:21), there is no need to search for the meaning of life. God told us in Ecclesiastes, written by the person most blessed with intelligence in all of history (Jesus notwithstanding, since He is God – John 1:1-5, 10:30, 17:20-26; 1Kings 4:29-34, Matt. 12:42). Once having read what Solomon said, there are two simple rules, but these can be best understood by reading the Bible, especially [all of, but not only] the New Testament.

*"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.** For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:8-11*

*The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter; all has been heard. **Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.** For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12:11-14*

*And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall **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: 'You shall **love your neighbor as yourself.**' There is no other commandment greater than these." And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And*

when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions. Mark 12:28-34

Back to our discussion about believers falling away from God: To anyone who says that Hebrews was not written for us believers in the church age, then why is Heb. 10:25 continually used to insist that God has commanded us to meet "at church" (usually once a week on Sunday)? Note that the very verse before it says the purpose is to stir one another up to love and good works – corporate worship at a specified time is not specifically mentioned here, AND the very next passage refers to judgment against those who go on sinning deliberately, but that is said not to apply to the church. My friend, that is called cherry-picking verses to support a position (and perhaps the bottom dollar in some cases, but I'm not accusing anyone).

We believers ARE collectively the church, which is the Body of Christ, so we gather AS such, not AT a particular man-made place that we were [not] instructed to build, nor to call "church". This is not to say we shouldn't gather together. I am all for the gathering of the church together – just not under a business model – and the gathering was not meant to replace BEING the church at all times, wherever we are (Mat. 18:20) – encouraging one another, serving the poor, worshiping, praising, singing, learning from God – not just at one place or scheduled time, but as who we are and what we do.

*For the husband is the head of the wife even as **Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.** Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:23-32*

*The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the **place** where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the*

*Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father **in spirit and truth**, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.. "The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." John 4:19-26*

As far as being permanently sealed, I couldn't say for sure, but I wonder in the case of those who turn back from following Jesus (they call this "deconstruction" these days), if they may have become "devoted to destruction." We have examples of this in the Old Testament. Once a vessel was devoted to God, it was irrevocable – and His calling is also irrevocable, but that does not mean we should ignore His warnings about what happens to those who bear thorns and thistles instead of good fruit. (Heb. 6:4-12)

*And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, **if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard**, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. Colossians 1:18-23*

*For the gifts and the calling of God are **irrevocable**. Romans 11:29*

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God**, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2*

*Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the LORD alone, shall be devoted to **destruction**. Exodus 22:20*

*"But no devoted thing that a man devotes to the LORD, of anything that he has, whether man or beast, or of his inherited field, shall be sold or redeemed; **every devoted thing is most holy to the LORD**. No one devoted, who is to*

be devoted for **destruction** from mankind, shall be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death." Leviticus 27:28-29

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Tell Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest to take up the censers out of the blaze. Then scatter the fire far and wide, **for they have become holy**. As for the censers of these men who have sinned at the cost of their lives, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar, for they offered them before the LORD, and they became holy. Thus they shall be a sign to the people of Israel." Numbers 16:36-38

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has said: "**Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.**" And Aaron held his peace. Leviticus 10:1-3 (Also see 2Cor. 6:14-7:1.)

But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for **honorable use**, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. 2 Timothy 2:19-21

"If anyone does not abide in me he is **thrown away** like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned." John 15:6

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be **thrown out** and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5:13-16

"Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is **thrown away**. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Luke 14:34-35

SO AGAIN, if you are concerned about this happening to you, then it HAS NOT happened to you. Those who have turned that far from God cannot be brought back to repentance, and they do NOT care. If you feel the urge to repent, then do it. You have not quenched God's Spirit such that you can no longer hear Him. That's GOOD. It's not too late! God will forgive anything and everything up until that point, and sins after that point will also be forgiven upon repentance (TURN from sin, not just "say sorry" but keep doing it) and asking Him to wash you clean again. (1John 1:5-10). Our purpose in being honest about these things isn't to wish for anyone to be condemned, but to encourage them to restore their right relationship with God ASAP if they have been deceived or just neglectful in honoring God with their lives. (2Cor. 7:10, 13:10-11) If this message makes you angry, that could be a warning sign that your sinful nature is striving against God. (Rom. 8:6-8)

*For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to **wallow in the mire.**" 2 Peter 2:20-22*

*Since we have these promises, beloved, let us **cleanse** ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. 2 Corinthians 7:1*

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

*And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must **believe** that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. Hebrews 11:6*

There are rewards that may be lost by those believers who did not invest their lives for God's glory, but salvation is NOT a reward. We could NEVER earn it – it's a free gift. (Rom. 5:15-17, 6:23) As for the concept of "losing" salvation, that is not what happens. God doesn't LOSE anyone (John 6:39-40, 10:27-30), but neither does He force His free gift on anyone – people can turn back if they insist upon it (Matt. 10:37-44, 2Pet. 2:17-22) – they are free to leave, but the Holy Spirit will strive with them until such time as they have so thoroughly quenched His voice that they no longer hear, and thus, no longer BELIEVE. We MUST believe in order to be saved.

*According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a **reward**. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. 1 Corinthians 3:10-17*

*For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23*

*And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy." "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." **Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.** "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life **without price**. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of*

this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. Revelation 22:10-21

*Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but **Christ is faithful over God's house as a son**. And we are his house **if indeed we hold fast** our confidence and our boasting in our hope. Hebrews 3:5-6*

We are warned repeatedly not to be deceived by the lure of sin and the treasures of the world (Mark 4, 1Cor. 6:9-11, Gal. 6:7-8, Eph. 5:3-16), and also not to be discouraged from remaining faithful by our troubles (or the problems of the world that many say prove God is either nonexistent or not good). But if we're honest, we know that God made the world originally good, and sin is what ruined everything. (Gen. 1-3) That is why Jesus came to save us. He's the only One who ever could. That is pure love. (1John 4:9-13)

*Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, **unbelieving** heart, leading you to **fall away** from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the **deceitfulness of sin**. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." Hebrews 3:12-15*

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. 1 Corinthians 15:33-34

*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*

*Blessed is the man who **remains steadfast under trial**, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. **Do not be deceived**, my beloved brothers. James 1:12-16*

*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*

In case you're wondering if this message is only for others and not for you:

*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who **desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 1 Timothy 2:1-6*

*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish**, but that all should reach repentance. 2 Peter 3:9*

*The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; **let the one who desires take the water of life without price**. Revelation 22:17*

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