

**Messages for Entering and Running the Christian Race
Faithfully**

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Introduction

This book is mainly derived from studies which were prepared for a group whom I had the privilege to do a weekly Bible study for. Most chapters are an individual study which had already been in print as a script for a spoken message to record by audio. I've edited these audio scripts to gear them towards being something to be read by a general audience. Though I did my best to make this adaptation, if there are places where the text seems like a transcript of a spoken message to specific individuals, you know the reason. I also added Appendix 2 specifically for the book to allow it to cover a wider range of important Bible related topics. This is overall intended to be a compilation of studies on key Bible topics, as well as Bible related issues where I believe there is currently a general lack of understanding and/or extremely widespread misunderstanding. When I have inserted my own commentary within Bible verses I have sought to distinguish that by using italicized words within parentheses. All Bible quotations are from the King James Version, though I have at times adjusted the spelling of certain words to be more comparable to their spelling in modern English.

Chapter 1: Judgment Day

All roads lead to standing before God on Judgment Day. Only one road leads to a favorable Judgment Day, but all roads surely do lead to Judgment Day. It is unavoidable, inevitable, and escaping is impossible. God will, according to His Word, reckon with every individual according to their works. If there were no Judgment Day, Christ's Gospel would be meaningless. There would be no need to prepare to meet God. Pursuing truth and righteousness would be a waste of time. And suffering for truth and righteousness would be downright foolish. We would rather do better just getting the most pleasure possible out of life. And the Apostle Paul said this much as he spoke about the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. And though many do not believe in an inevitable Judgment Day before the Holy God of the Bible, and though many who say they believe in this don't live like it, such are foolish. For those not ready it will be a day of regret, sorrow, and agony which will eclipse the worst of these things in this life to a measure that we cannot even comprehend!

In 2 Corinthians 5:10 we read: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

And you can see by looking at the context of 2 Corinthians chapter 5, Paul was speaking about every individual here. Part of the Christian's

responsibility in preparing for Judgment Day is to warn others about the terror of the Lord and persuade them to be obedient to Jesus Christ, in whom is the only atonement for sin and who is the only Mediator whereby one can be justified before God. Apart from Him all are dead in sin as God's enemies; and none can be reconciled and made alive to God without obeying His Gospel and living to righteousness in obedience to His Word.

1 Peter 2:24-25: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." These words were obviously spoken to Christians who had obeyed the Gospel and turned to Christ. And the book of 1 Peter, like the books of 1 and 2 Corinthians, is itself an example of the exhortation which Christians must give to each other so that they might actually endure in the faith of Christ to the end in order to have a favorable Judgment Day and inherit salvation through Him.

It is a great delusion to believe, as many do, that Christians will not be judged by the same criteria that everyone else will. It is thus a great delusion to believe that works which will send a non-Christian to hell will not send a Christian to hell also who does the same works. This is a common deception in Christendom (i.e. the realm of professing Christianity). No, though I can see how an argument might be made that

the timing of the Judgment of those whom God has decided to save might differ from the timing of the Judgment of those whom God has decided to condemn to hell, God's grace on Judgment Day will only be towards those who repented of their sins and wholeheartedly pursued righteousness according to the light they had until the end (reference Colossians 1:21-29, Acts 14:21-22, Matthew 24:9-13).

A faith that saves is obedient. Even the thief on the cross who came to believe in Jesus right before he died still walked in such a faith. If he had not confessed his just condemnation over his deeds and stood on Jesus' side and called on Him for mercy like he essentially did, Jesus would not have told him that he would be with Him in paradise that day.

Romans 2:4-16: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds: 7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: 8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; 10 But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good,

to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: 11 For there is no respect of persons with God. 12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; 13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”

We see again here that God deals with all men by the same criteria; and saves or condemns each person accordingly. If you look at Matthew 25:31-46, where Jesus speaks of the sheep and the goats, the sheep needed to do what they did to be saved; and the goats are damned for not doing what the sheep did! If God gave them all strict justice, they'd all go to hell. But God is gracious and willing to show mercy to those who will turn to walk in the light of His Word (i.e. obey Him by walking in the conditions of His covenant in Christ). We must exercise true faith in Christ which sides with Him, comes into line with His purpose, and regards His people as our own.

Hebrews 11:24-26: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a

season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”

Joshua 6:25: “And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.” James 2:25: “Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?”

Obviously a person who inherits salvation could yet have much regret on Judgment Day. The thief on the cross, when his spirit unites with his body and he stands before God in judgment, he will still somehow know the consequences of turning away from God and wasting approximately 99.999% of his life in sin. And it is clear in Scripture that sin is never profitable and every deviation from God's instruction has consequences. It is great to have more time to understand His whole counsel, walk in it, and continue in it for a great while. But obviously more time, more opportunities, and more understanding (more potential to understand is probably even more accurate) also brings greater accountability. And dying in sin and willful disobedience to light surely are where the line to damnation has been crossed.

We should consider in all our decisions that we are not only going to give an account to God for them, but we are also conditioning ourselves

for future decisions. Whatever profit we might be temporarily getting, or that we might think we're getting, from not doing what is right in God's eyes will surely be regretted. Vice-versa when it comes to suffering for truth. It is vitally important to remember this when pursuing truth leaves us in discomfort and/or pain and/or loss which we think would not have come to us had we not obeyed God's Word. Our feelings and circumstances "now" are not the true reference point whereby we should judge our decisions. That will be Judgment Day! And the irony is that, and we can be sure God has arranged it this way, or at least allowed things to be this way, pursuing truth by shunning sin and doing what we ought to be doing which is right before God will cost us at times in the short-term. And often vice-versa with living in sin. And that is the significance of faith or unbelief when you understand the obedient nature of true faith in Christ and the disobedient nature of unbelief in Him. Those who have happy Judgment Days will have known sorrow in life for making the choices they needed to make to have a favorable Judgment Day. Even the thief on the cross lost face (i.e. lost respect, suffered humiliation) before that crowd by siding with Jesus and became an object of scorn and derision *more than he already was in being crucified*. And those who will be damned on Judgment Day surely counted themselves happy to have continued in sin and avoided the suffering necessary to wholeheartedly pursue righteousness before God. But God will turn their laughter into mourning on Judgment Day, even if He didn't do so before like He has been known to do; and even if they died in peace in old age, having lived a basically happy, comfortable life.

Luke 6:20-26: “And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. 22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. 23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. 24 But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. 25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. 26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

Consider then the magnitude of importance which comes with intellectual honesty. Refusal to acknowledge God's existence, refusal to look upon and acknowledge the evidence of the Bible and history which connects God to being the God of the Bible and the Father of Jesus Christ, refusal to agree with clear Biblical evidence regarding a certain doctrine, tradition, action, or other topic, refusal to acknowledge one's own obligations in relation to these things, etc. Such will damn a person on Judgment Day- especially when blatant dishonesty, cowardice, and/or pleasure in any form of sin was involved with such refusal. No one can be forgiven unless they acknowledge their Creator as He has revealed Himself and agree with His verdicts concerning what is righteous and

unrighteousness/clean and unclean/holy and profane, etc- and turn to walk in the light of this evidence.

Revelation 7:13-15 says: ““And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”

But what if you in any way denied your need to be made clean before God? Or what if you called good, evil; and evil, good? And what if you were attached to the darkness and uncleanness which defiled you? Isaiah 5:20-21 says “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!”

Consider also the importance of knowing and understanding the whole counsel of God. How much Scripture do we want to risk standing before God ignorant of? Since “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” as 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, how much of this do we want to risk not getting the full benefit from? And at what

point do we want to risk being regarded as enemies of God out of line with Him due to insufficient regard for His Word?

Consider also how God is no respecter of persons. We ought to make sure that we are not seeking exceptions for ourselves due to our natural advantages OR disadvantages. No one will be saved due to their background. No one has any excuse for taking shortcuts around righteousness due to real or perceived oppression of their ancestors; or due to any real or perceived disadvantages which they believe they have inherited. Consider also how racial ties, natural family ties, and other associations could lead anyone into valuing such associations over God's commandments. Such inordinate affection leads to partaking in sin directly, as well as partaking in sin through making villains out of people for doing right; or making heroes out of people who were in the wrong. When there is a conflict between one of your family, race, or whatever other camp you are with someone from another group, you'd better judge righteously and take the side of the one in the right; and stand against the one in the wrong. Otherwise, you will have a super abundant weight of regret for this on Judgment Day when you are found out of line with God and cast into hell as a respecter of persons (Proverbs 17:15).

In Jude 14-15 we read: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these (*i.e. mockers of God, which the Book of Jude is speaking of*), saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly

committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

A note then about something related to the context of Jude 14-15. Enoch spoke these words especially about the Lord’s ultimate coming, but they were fulfilled in some measure by the flood which eventually happened in Noah’s time, several centuries later. Given the common long lifespans then, this was something which some who heard Enoch prophecy likely lived to experience. The Lord has throughout history given previews of Christ’s 2nd coming where He will assume His great power over the world, reign in righteousness, and destroy the wicked in judgment. The flood in Noah’s time was a great, notable example of such a preview. Christ didn’t personally come to reign, but His hand was in the flood in a special, extraordinary way.

Another such example is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 19:24-25: “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; 25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.”

Another obvious example is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70. Jesus spoke about this in His discourse on the Mount of Olives, recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. He spoke of His coming to judge Jerusalem in a way which parallels to a great extent His 2nd coming and the end of the age. Some of the things He said in this

discourse apply to the destruction of Jerusalem, in which He would be involved in a special, extraordinary way. And other things He said here are directly applicable to His 2nd coming. Yet many of the things He says here apply completely to both events, since there are great parallels and similarities between the two events. He left it up to us to discern what applies to each event; and to take it all for what it is worth in the context in which it was and/or will be fulfilled. The arrangement of events which left the Temple utterly destroyed, with not one stone left upon another; and how guilty Jerusalem was so utterly given over to horrible, unspeakable affliction gives even greater assurance about Christ's 2nd coming happening in the manner which the Bible says it will happen. It also proves the truth of 2 Peter 2:9 "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." All these things, and any other special judgments which Christ has given or might yet give, are ultimately loving, merciful actions to warn man to fear Him and give glory to the true God to prepare for His 2nd coming and the ultimate Day of Judgment.

And that will be a horrible day for those who are not prepared. A lot of people take comfort in the fact that Christ will come back to rule and reign in judgment. Yes, He will lay down the law by putting down evil and upholding righteousness as the Judge of all mankind. And that *should terrify* everyone who is not wholeheartedly seeking Him and striving to live in line with His righteous ways here and now (and that

includes most professing Christians)! Only those who are not at enmity with His reign, by currently living so that He'd have no controversy with them if He came back today, ought to take comfort in Christ's 2nd coming and the Day of Judgment which will basically accompany that.

1 Peter 4:12-13: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." No one will rejoice on that day otherwise!

Amos 5:18-20: "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. 19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. 20 Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?"

Matthew 24:29-31: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall

gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

There was this song back in, perhaps 2003 or 2004, about standing before Jesus and being overjoyed at His presence. It became very popular, not just among the contemporary Christian music crowd, it even crossed over into great mainstream music popularity. That popularity shows the deadly misconception that the professing Christian world, and the world as a whole, has of Jesus. They don't see Him as the utterly holy, uncompromising authority figure that He in truth is. They see Him as an all-loving, humanistic figure whose primary purpose is to make them happy and blessed. Or at least someone who'd never harm anyone—except for maybe those whom they consider the worst of the worst villains. The false conception of Jesus being an effeminate, hippie figure with long hair goes hand in hand with these things. Mountains of Scripture have to be ignored for such a picture to be maintained!

Hebrews 1:8-9: “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom. 9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

Just consider Jesus cleansing the Temple. To anyone who had been partaking in the selling, buying, or money-changing in the Temple; and even to anyone who was not already mourning over that and doing what they could to stand against that, Jesus cleansing the Temple would have

been a horrible, horrible sight! The Temple was the one place on earth where Jesus had jurisdiction at His first coming, since of course the Temple was His Father's house. Of course He owned everything then, yet He assumed limitations in His manhood, like Philippians chapter 2 talks about Him coming as a man to serve and to die. When He comes back in glory to judge, it will be the Temple cleansing times one billion (approximately:) and it will be for the ultimate destruction of His enemies! He will prove that He is not mocked and that those who persist in their resistance to Him are fools who imagined a mischievous device which they are not able to perform (see esp. Psalms 2 & 21). He will demonstrate the utterly evil and foolish nature of being His enemy by casting down His enemies in a show of terror which no man will be able to stand before.

Revelation 11:15-19: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. 16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the

earth. 19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

1 Thessalonians 1:8-9: “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

Luke 19:27: “But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.”

Revelation 20:11-15: “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

This last passage describes the judgment of the wicked; and we saw earlier how there is not a double standard. Those deemed righteous on Judgment Day will be saved by the grace of God because they turned to

God through Jesus Christ with a living faith which involved repentance and obedience- and thus they walked in a faith in Christ where their lives were governed by His Word and they obtained mercy by His atoning blood through His High Priesthood. That is the logical implication of receiving Jesus for all that He is- Lord and Savior- Prophet, Priest, and King. The works of those who are damned will prove a lack of faith in Christ; and thus their names will not be found in the Book of Life and they will be condemned. Even if there is a resurrection of the wicked after a literal millennial reign of Christ on earth, this (Revelation 20:11-15 quoted above) would only be a continuation of the wrath He poured out in destroying the wicked when He came back and destroyed them in His judgment. Revelation 20:11-15 is surely describing a resurrection unto damnation.

Don't miss the main points: Every man has an appointment with the Holy God of the Bible wherein he or she will be judged for their works in light of God's truth. While there is breath, there is a way for all to come into line with God through the atoning blood which Christ shed on the cross by exercising wholehearted repentance and faith in Jesus Christ who is the Lord and Savior. Preparation for that appointment will be closed to each of us when we die or when Christ comes back in person (if we are yet alive when that happens). Our eternity will surely depend on the outcome of that judgment. God will surely not save those who lived in sin by refusing to walk in the light they had in terms of knowledge of His expectations (1 John 1:5-10). There will also surely be

consequences of some kind for each one of our words and actions, even for those whom God saves and even though it is hard to know exactly what those will be and how it will all happen.

Hebrews 12:18-29: “For ye are not come (*and the writer of Hebrews is speaking about coming along in our understanding due to the revelation we now have that the Israelites at Mount Sinai did not have; the lessons at Mount Sinai still stand*) unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: 20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: 21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) 22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. 25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: 26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. 27 And this word, Yet once

more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: 29 For our God is a consuming fire.”

As the Niagara River (between the Canadian Province of Ontario and the American State of New York) flows towards the terrifying, inevitable monstrous experience that is Niagara Falls, everyone on earth is heading to an inevitable Day of Judgment before God! To most this will be a nightmare, as God’s righteousness and holiness, which they had cast aside in their lives through their rebellion and enmity towards Him, will sweep them away into eternal hell fire in a torrent of unstoppable wrath! If you want to picture the narrow way of Christianity, consider Niagara Falls (research it if you’ve never seen it) and consider how difficult it is to survive a trip over these waterfalls. The key difference of course is that if you are not diligent to prepare to meet God, you surely won’t have a favorable Judgment Day. And if you are as diligent as you ought to be, and you really do follow His instructions in the Bible wholeheartedly, you will surely make it despite the immense difficulty. It is wise to choose to live in light of this great and ultimate day. Don’t take any chances regarding what you believe about God nor about any topic related to worship and related to morality. Don’t take any chances by not acting upon the truth you know and the right which you know you

ought to do. To not live in light of Judgment Day is the ultimate form of denial. We need to warn people of these things.

Romans 14:10b-12: “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

2 Corinthians 5:9-10: “Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

Chapter 2: Divine Killing in the Bible

The Bible says in Psalm 34:15-16: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth."

Though these verses can apply in several different senses, especially to the new heavens and the new earth which God will leave to the righteous to inherit for eternity, it still is stating the general truth that God's wrath is in general against those that do evil. And there is a very literal sense in which He sometimes expresses that wrath in this life and cuts off evildoers by going out of His way to kill them. And that is what this study is about.

If you search on the internet regarding God killing people in the Bible, you will find a lot of websites criticizing and/or mocking this. People who are blatantly opposed to Christianity like to point to this topic to try to claim that the God of the Bible is morally inferior to themselves and so (they claim) the Bible is wicked or at least very misguided somehow. We should not (they claim) believe in and follow a God who acts like this. On the other hand many professing Christians, professing Christian churches, and websites that are said to be promoting Christianity avoid this topic like the plague.

Behind both the blatant unbelievers and enemies of the God of the Bible who like to bring to light His killings in Scripture, and behind the professing Christians who don't want to face this head on and not be ashamed of it, there is a humanistic spirit which values man's happiness over God's glory; or we could also say values man's well-being over truth

and righteousness. We could also say there is in each an unwillingness to recognize their Creator's right to vindicate what is true and right; and to expose and cast down that which is wicked and opposed to what is true and right. But obviously the God who made and owns everything is justified to do this in His own timing and by the means which He best sees fit. So whether someone blatantly is opposed to the God of the Bible, or whether someone wants to see Him primarily as a means to make man happy and blessed, either way they're not likely to see God's killing of people in Scripture as something righteous and holy which those who believe in Him should by no means be ashamed of.

There are also people who might, in their attempt to justify their anger, try to cite examples from the Bible as a means to justify their own aspirations to kill or injure people which they are angry at and have grievances against. And of course, the blatant unbelievers who openly oppose the God of the Bible will point to such people as an example of how (allegedly) dangerous the Bible is and how it should not be heeded. Yet people who murder others and think they are justified because of God's actions in the Bible are no different than the person who kills of his own accord- and then tries to say he is no different than a Government who kills those convicted of capital crimes through the due process of law. (And of course there are many who oppose even that, but they are wrong too). A person who takes it upon himself to be judge, jury, and executioner is a murderer himself and ought to be killed himself when convicted through due process of law.

Not all killings are murder. When a person who is convicted of a crime worthy of death, like murder or treason, through a fair trial under an impartial jury, it is not murder to then kill him. Killings resulting from a righteous Judicial process, and the killings of those who are evidently in

the process of doing harm to others which cannot be stopped except through potentially deadly force, are not murder. In the Ten Commandments, when God says "Thou shalt not kill", it is a reference to murder. The versions of the Bible which say "thou shalt not kill" would have been more accurate to say "thou shalt not murder." Nevertheless, anyone who studies the Law of God and doesn't just look for a verse here or there to justify whatever they want it to say, will see that the Law of God itself prescribes killing through the authorities for those justly convicted of crimes which God deems worthy of death. God had already said in Genesis 9:6 (*Genesis is also written by Moses and regarded as the first book of God's Law*): "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." So we see right there that:

- 1) All life belongs to God.
- 2) Human life is especially precious because man is made in God's image.
- 3) To take a life at one's own accord is murder.
- 4) To kill the one justly convicted of this is not the same thing as murder. It is rather just and righteous.

Since all life belongs to God, and since God is *totally* just and righteous, God cannot unjustly take away life by killing someone or by commanding someone to be killed on terms He has laid out regarding execution. And it is the concepts that our lives rightfully belong to God, and that God holds man accountable to live in accordance with His precepts (which His judgments are intended as a reminder of), that are especially uncomfortable and offensive to rebellious, sinful man.

We're going to almost totally focus here on times when God intervened directly and killed people in Scripture. To list every single instance of this is not realistic due to the constraints of time and the human attention span. But it is realistic to list a handful of these events and to analyze them for the lessons which we ought to take from them. As we go through these, keep in mind the principle of precedent. If God kills someone for an action, then that proves His wrath is against that action. It is surely an action which warrants damnation on Judgment Day and in eternity. His judgments in this life, as well as righteous law and order being carried out overall, are previews of Judgment Day and its eternal implications.

And keep in mind as we go on with this study that there are some basic groups of people which tend to especially be the objects of God's wrath.

- 1) Sinners among His people
- 2) Those who oppose His people
- 3) Nations and societies in general which are especially corrupt and evil before Him, whose judgment can serve as a reminder to the rest of the world of His wrath against sin and the horror which all sinners before Him will face on Judgment Day. Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

And I think it's also worth noting that considering the moral corruption of the earth, and considering how many people had lived by the first century AD (when the New Testament was written and the Biblical canon closed), it is an amazing demonstration of the long-suffering of God that the number of Biblical killings is not much higher.

It should also be noted that in the Bible we are given inside insight on whom God went out of His way to kill. People have been dying from natural disasters, accidents, heart attacks, etc from the beginning of human history. Those whom the Bible says God killed *were* killed by God. Otherwise, we should be really careful about saying such when someone dies. If God makes it obvious to thinking, reasonable logical people who acknowledge His sovereignty (i.e. His reign) over the Universe, with all the information they have considered, that someone who has died has been killed by Him, then that should be acknowledged. But we already have much reason to take heed and fear before Him by what He has surely already said and done in Scripture. Regarding anyone who dies a sudden and unexpected death, the perspective we should have is seen by what Jesus said in Luke chapter 13. His point there I believe is that we should be ready to meet God at all times—because anyone could potentially die at any time and go to face God in their sins if they are not ready to meet Him at that moment. That is a conclusion which is *always* reasonable to draw.

Luke 13:1-5: "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Some Biblical Judgments Analyzed:

- The flood in Noah's time (Genesis chs 6-8): This is the foundational judgment in Scripture, and it has applications to everyone throughout history, including the common man or woman. It is a strong foreshadowing of Judgment Day and proof that if you just go with the flow of sin around you, *you will go* in the flood of judgment which the Lord will bring on all transgressors against Him. It also shows how when judgment comes, *it comes*. Noah had been preparing the ark and preaching for 120 years, longer than anyone reading this has lived. Life went on as normal, there were accidents and there was chaos induced by man's hatred and violence- but that all seemed normal. God intervening drastically did not seem normal. Some say it had never rained before the flood, but I think now that is hard or impossible to prove one way or the other. Yet it had certainly never kept raining in order to produce a worldwide flood! There is something called normalcy bias. People think things will always continue as they are because life has never drastically changed for them up to that point, even despite obvious evidence to the contrary. This was definitely a key factor in why Noah's warnings about coming judgment were not heeded by virtually everyone. And it was a key factor in why virtually everyone was so shocked when the flood finally came. That applies also now regarding people's apathy related to Christ's second coming, Judgment Day, and eternity. We have an even stronger basis to believe in these things now with the amount of revelation in Scripture, and the amount of its fulfilled prophecies, that are available to us. There is even less excuse to be unprepared. So people need to be warned and instructed from God's Word so that they will heed and get prepared. And though relatively few find the way to life, and even fewer endure thereon to the end to actually be saved, there is such a strong foundation to find eternal life available now with a completed Bible and the fullness of God's revelation in Christ

having been made known. It was possible and expected then with *much less* help available.

- Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them (Genesis ch 19): Jude verse 7 proves that God did indeed destroy these cities for practicing homosexuality. It says in Ezekiel 16:48-50: "As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters (*God is rebuking Israel here*). Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good."

Did the pride, the gluttony, and the sloth in Sodom do much to lead to its practice of homosexuality. *Of course*. And of course God hated these things as well. It can be seen throughout the world how haughty, rich nations who spend much money on luxury and trivial things, while taking virtually no care for the poor and needy (at least on an individual level in regards to majority of the people), have embraced homosexuality much, while it has not caught on nearly as much in 3rd world nations. Even those who say they are opposed to homosexuality are contributing to its increase by practicing these things.

- Lot's wife (Genesis 19:26): Don't forget about her. She was not a homosexual to our knowledge, but she valued the things of the world which were abundant in Sodom over righteousness. She even valued them so highly that she despised the warning by the angels to escape for her life in order to look back on the things of Sodom as it was being destroyed. When people are vain and attached to fashion, pleasure,

excessive comfort and/or situations for monetary advantage, they are under God's wrath. There is no hope for their salvation while they are in such a state.

Genesis 19:24-26: “ Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his (*Lot's*) wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.”

Luke 17:32-33: “Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.”

1 John 2:15-17: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love 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 pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

- Er and Onan (Genesis 38:6-10): “And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the Lord: wherefore he slew him also.”

I included this because it shows how people can be very wicked in God's sight when perhaps they didn't do anything which most people would be too bothered by. You have to consider here that God took a special care to purify Abraham's offspring in their earliest generations, and also of how these two young men would have had such a great knowledge about God's ways, since they were so close to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in terms of generation (they were Jacob's grandchildren). But nevertheless, Onan's zeal for his own name, his pride in dishonoring his father, and his overall lack of benevolence and bad character were things God took note of which caused God to intervene and kill him young. We don't know exactly what Er's sins were, but we do know that he was wicked in the sight of the Lord, despite not having anything on his record which was seen worth mentioning in Scripture- and that is very interesting and should be a push for us to carefully examine our own hearts before God.

- The multitude killed through God's plagues on Egypt; and the Egyptian Army killed in the Red Sea (Exodus chapters 7 to 14): It is important to understand that though not all the Hebrews were righteous (not even close), they were not idolaters like the Egyptians were. They did not worship the Egyptian gods (at least corporately, though obviously some violated the religion of their people on a personal level). The Egyptians identified the Hebrews with the God of the Hebrews; and to a great extent they hated them and treated them ill because of that association. The Egyptians thus despised the true God, and all who participated in the ill treatment of the Hebrews were wickedly opposing God, as well as wronging their fellow man. Many no doubt weren't actively involved in the enslavement of the Hebrews, but likely most cooperated with it by not doing all they could reasonably do to rebuke it and oppose it (like Moses did when he was still identified as an Egyptian- Moses was a defender, not a murderer). So even such were guilty through neglect and

omission. At this time God's worship was centered among the Hebrews as a people- a people which eventually, after their deliverance from Egypt, became the political entity of the nation of Israel. The Egyptians then who were involved in the enslavement of the Hebrews, as well as the nations later who attempted to subdue Israel and instill idolatry there, were essentially challenging God. They thus invited His righteous judgment (think also of David killing Goliath).

Some pity the Egyptians who died during the plagues and in the Red Sea. They portray God to be a villain who wrongfully killed them. The real villains though were the Egyptians- and those who pity them reveal their own bad character and hint at what they'd be doing if they were put in the same circumstances. Now God's worship is not centered on one concentrated people or on one nation, but is rather scattered among the nations in Christian churches. Governments who make laws that, in one way or another, would make being a faithful Christian illegal oppose God and mistreat His people at this very hour. They have thus put themselves in the same category as the Egyptians and the nations who opposed Israel while God's worship was centered there. In modern times these tend to be Communist nations and nations dominated by Islam- and many nations are rapidly on course to becoming one or the other also. There are also nations dominated by other religions and by leaders who hate Christianity that are also in this category. When a Government won't allow God's people to be faithful to Him and practice His worship without its opposition then all who enforce, cooperate with, and/or do not reasonably stand against such oppression are especially under God's wrath like the Egyptians and the nations which sought to subdue Israel when God's worship was centered there.

- A note about the Canaanites: When God deputized Israel as a nation to kill the Canaanites and take their land, this was not one person's idea which everyone else just complied with. God had pronounced His judgment on the Canaanites hundreds of years before when He promised the land of Canaan to Abraham's seed. God gave them many hundreds of years to repent. These were especially wicked murderers, idolaters, sexual deviants, etc who not only were exceedingly corrupt, but also knew very well how God had miraculously delivered Israel from Egypt by drying up the Red Sea and brought them out of the wilderness by stopping the Jordan River. Any one of them could have acknowledged Israel's God as the true God, forsaken their idolatry, turned against their own corrupt people, and been spared from death. They were dangerous idolaters (see Deuteronomy 12:29-32). We see in Israel's initial conquest of Jericho how God spared Rahab and those of her house who sided with her for Israel's God. It is possible other Canaanites repented and were spared also (we shouldn't expect every instance of this to be recorded in Scripture). The Canaanite people were so hardhearted and attached to their sin that they didn't surrender even after God miraculously brought down the walls of Jericho and delivered the people there to the Israelites. And Rahab's deliverance at this time was likely also well known. All who heard about it would have known for sure they could choose to side with the true God and be spared from death. Don't feel sorry for the Canaanites, and understand that since the Christian church is not synonymous with a political entity, God will not use the Christian church as the means to execute judgment on the world through the sword. This is one area in which some Roman Catholic theologians have erred greatly and justified murder in the name of God in an attempt to uphold their own corrupt religious entity. Earthly Governments, when acting righteously, will still execute people who are duly convicted of

many of the crimes which were commonly practiced among the Canaanites, especially murder.

- Those killed in relation to the Golden Calf (Exodus chapter 32): Since God so hates idolatry, and so judges those who seek to impose idolatry upon His people, and those who in anyway would seek to prevent them from worshiping God in the way He has prescribed, it makes sense that He would also furiously judge those who would try to corrupt His worship from within- especially by trying to mix it with idolatry. Hence we have in this chapter God commanding those chiefly involved in this idolatry to be slain and God plaguing the Israelites for accepting this great sin in His eyes. We also see in this chapter how easily idolatry can lead those involved in it to reconcile worshiping God with practicing lasciviousness, fornication, etc. God hates being represented by statues and other images- and hence He forbade this in the 2nd commandment. To change the glory of the incorruptible God into any likeness fashioned by man is wicked. And we see in Romans chapter one that this is a chief expression of man's refusal to properly recognize His Creator and give Him the glory and thanks which He is rightfully due. Man wants a god he is comfortable with. People give into this enticement through involving graven images in worship, but this can also be done simply through concepts of God in one's own heart and mind. Idolatry is rampant in the professing Christian world today. There are graven images being bowed to in certain segments for sure. Yet even when these aren't present, multitudes of professing Christians adopt an idolatrous concept of God by only receiving the passages and phrases in Scripture which they are comfortable with, while discarding (at least practically) Bible passages and plain truths which they are not comfortable with. And that is certainly a key reason why sin and blatantly improper worship are so rampant among professing Christians.

The judgments against those involved in worshiping the Golden Calf are a terrifying testimony against all such idolatry. Remember that idolaters don't usually label their idolatry as idolatry, just like most sinners give their sins a more generous name than the Word of God gives them. And that is probably true of idolatry even more than most sins due to man's great attachment to it and due to the fact that it is a key foundation stone for many other sins which man practices.

- 24,000 Israelites killed in a plague due to Israel's fornication and idolatry which the Moabites had seduced them to (Numbers chapter 25): These were people that had survived in the wilderness and were about to enter into the promised land of Canaan. God had said over and over that being in His favor and inheriting His promises are not unconditional. You see in the next chapter (Numbers 26) how God made sure to obliterate the unfaithful generation which would not go into Canaan at God's command 38 years earlier, except for the few who believed Him and tried to persuade Israel to go accordingly. You would think every Israelite would have learned its lesson by now! But many hadn't. They gave into the enticements of heathen idolatry and the fornication which accompanied that- and God thus made an example of them to purify Israel and to remind them that being in His favor and inheriting His promises are not unconditional. We have to exercise a living faith which submits to God, works righteousness, and denies the pleasures of sin to be in His favor! It is a lesson which Israel had trouble learning (though some did take it to heart, not all were wicked); and Israel's main reason for crucifying Jesus and rejecting His Apostles was their refusal to believe and to practically apply this lesson on the righteous terms of God's Law. Jesus preached against how Israel's leaders had subtly seduced them into accepting sin- even various forms of idolatry, lasciviousness, and fornication. He demanded the fruits of righteousness

from Israel, as did John the Baptist and His Apostles. They were all rejected by the nation of Israel as a whole- until God finally rejected them when He allowed the Romans to destroy their Temple in AD 70.

Mark 12:1-11: "And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.' And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?"

John 7:7 "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." Consider too here that Jesus only preached in Israel.

Acts 26:19-21: "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the

Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me." Note too that the same Gospel, with the same terms of being reconciled to God, is for both Jews and gentiles. There is no true hope or comfort for anyone in Christ's atonement who does not heed these terms and work righteousness in obedience to His righteous authority.

Luke 23:28-31: "But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

This judgment in Numbers 25 is another rebuke to introducing the idolatry of the nations into God's worship, as well as a rebuke to fornication and a demonstration of how it is utterly incompatible with His right and holy ways. Hebrews 13:4 "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

- Nadab and Abihu killed by fire for offering strange fire (Leviticus 10:1-3): The context is the inauguration of God's worship in the Tabernacle. God makes it clear that He is pleased with it, and will dwell there, as Moses and Aaron complete His instructions to inaugurate it. This is recorded at the end of Leviticus chapter 9.

Leviticus 9:22-24: "And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the

burnt offering, and peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces."

And now Nadab and Abihu want in on the action. Leviticus 10:1-3 "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace."

They had been doing their part ministering as these things went on, but they then chose to innovate. While the Bible never says specifically why they did this, the obvious effect would have been to generate a show- or in this case to add to the event which was happening already, which was not a show, but which a man looking to make a show might emulate or try to add to. There are churches now of all varieties, but I especially think of many megachurches and so-called Pentecostal churches, which could not exist without making a show! That is mainly how they draw people; and they would surely be out of business without this. They innovate in worship to produce a show for man, to gratify man, and to produce emotional experiences calculated to man's satisfaction. A church should rather just do what God has prescribed for corporate worship, and leave whatever effects that might produce, to Him. God has testified that His wrath is against showmanship in worship by the

example of Nadab and Abihu. As is the case with the example of Ananias and Sapphira which we'll look at shortly, the people who do this today are actually lucky that God is not really among them in a special way like He was among the Israelites in this example; and like He was with the Apostolic churches in the Book of Acts.

- Bear Attack (2 Kings 2:23-24): "And he (*Elisha*) went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them."

The one who was mocked and did the cursing here was the Prophet Elisha, who was mentored by the Prophet Elijah. The ones cursed, attacked, and (likely, at least some) killed here were not little children in the way we tend to think of little children. This was a gang of relatively young adults in their teens or twenties who lived in or around the idolatrous city of Bethel. They were mocking Elisha and mocking the great event which had recently happened (recorded earlier in this very chapter) of God taking Elijah to heaven in a chariot of fire. These were idolatrous thugs who were very hardened against God and bent on mischief. The word used to describe these "little children" in Hebrew is the same word Solomon used in 1 Kings 3:7 to describe himself when he was likely in his early or mid twenties. It often or always refers to a young adult between the ages of twelve and thirty, which was basically the Hebrew definition of a young man. God has creative ways to deal with malevolent young punks bent on mischief, especially should they oppose someone who has shown evidence of being a true servant of His. This judgment was a mercy to the rest of Israel to warn them to come to repentance and return to God's Law. Israel at this time had descended

into open idolatry and much other godless behavior. Books such as the Book of Amos describe such and testify against it. Sadly, Israel as a whole did not heed this judgment and was taken into captivity by the Assyrians not too long after this event happened.

- Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-14): "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)"

Ananias and Sapphira's sudden deaths here are evidence that God did not vacate His throne or cease to be a God of judgment in the era of the New Covenant. They deliberately misrepresented themselves to be doing a good work which they were not doing. They lied to enhance their reputation in the church- and God chose to kill them for this. A principle reason for this was to make all people *from then on* to know that being part of a true Christian church is a fearful thing which brings great accountability; and to know that lying to advance one's reputation, especially within the church, is a great sin which His wrath is especially against. Ananias did not have to give all the money from the land sale. He could have just given a part of it. He lied though because he forsook the fear of God and neglected to walk faithfully before Him in a quest to enhance his reputation. His wife complied with this and received the same judgment. This is also an instance in Scripture which proves that the wife should not submit to her husband when doing so would mean lying or being unrighteous in any way. One mark of a genuine Christian church following the Lord faithfully is that people fear to be a part of it and don't join themselves to it lightly. Many liars within churches now are very lucky that they are not part of a church which God actually regards as His own that He would go out of His way to keep pure. We also see here how a genuine fear of God being known through a church will keep people out of it for the right reasons *and* bring people into it for the right reasons as well (many modern churches would say that it would turn everyone away- and maybe that is actually true of everyone in *their* churches).

- Herod (Acts chapter 12): God proves here that He judges those without the Christian church, as well as those within it. We see in Acts chapter 12 how Herod persecuted Christians and killed at least one Apostle (James the brother of John). He also didn't give God glory when he was

called a god while making a speech (no wonder he persecuted the faithful Christians). His judgment is a reminder that God's judgments in the Old Testament against those complicit with suppressing His prescribed worship didn't end "back then" and still stand as a warning to all people in every generation.

- The Judgments in the Book of Revelation: God's character has always been the same. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). The same God who destroyed the ungodly by a flood of water has yet warned that He will destroy the ungodly at the end of time by fire. He will ultimately punish all the ungodly who refuse to repent and follow all His righteous ways in the fire of hell forever (Isaiah 66:24, etc). He has always been a God of Judgment who will by no means clear the guilty, which yet delights to show mercy to those who will take warning, forsake their sin, and turn to Him with their whole hearts (illustrated so well by the Old Testament Book of Jonah about a people whose destruction was imminent, but who yet were graciously spared because they repented at the warning of God's Word and brought forth works worthy of repentance).

God's description of His own character to Moses has never changed and never will change. Exodus 34:5-7: "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation (*implying they continue in the iniquities of their fathers and don't break off from them- so much sin is a*

continuation of the evil ways and habits of previous generations)." God's goodness and severity were always intended to be looked at together, as inseparable (Romans 11:22- see also 2 Peter 2:4-9 and 2 Peter chapter 3 in its entirety).

Matthew 24:37-39: "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Revelation 6:12-17: "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

The deeper and more habitual one's practice of sin is, and especially the more one hardens themselves against the light of Truth, the harder it then becomes to detach from one's sin. People should be warned to repent here and now because they may never get a better chance. And even if

they did, hardening themselves at the chance they have now might render them so hard that they will never repent, no matter what God does to them to testify against their sin (see Revelation 9:18-21 and Revelation 16:9-11).

There are many more examples and lessons related to this topic which we did not look at. Studies could also be done on the great goodness and mercy of God. The greatness of that does not depend on how many people end up saved or how many people end up damned. The point is that God's ways are right, man is accountable to Him, God has done great things to show mercy to man and draw man to Himself- and this includes His judgments in this life on those He sees fit to make examples of. So we should heed the lessons we can get from these for ourselves, for those we talk to, and further study to understand the rightness of God's ways and all the things He has given in His Word which He wants us to know. We should never judge Him and make assumptions about Him based on the ideas and errant ways of fallen man. That is a sure way to come to destruction. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The Bible says this in Proverbs 14:12; and then reiterates the same again quickly in Proverbs 16:25.

Psalm 76:5-12: "The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep. Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. Vow, and pay unto the Lord your

God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared. He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth."

Chapter 3: A Right View of Man on Earth

This study is going to be about Christian humility. We could also say that it's related to the limits of self-exaltation that might ever be proper for *anyone* in this life. There is a place for a church making rules about specifics when it comes to expressions of luxury, expenses that are obviously unprofitable and unnecessary, and the various ways that people might try to exalt themselves to get attention or applause or to seek vainglory somehow. But in this study we're going to focus on the heart a Christian should have about matters related to this. Getting insight into that can help us in many, many ways. And that would include knowing if doing this, or having that, is definitely improper for a Christian or not. And I think it is also a major help to being content and seeing whatever trials, or whatever mercies are before us, in their proper light. And quite possibly above all, it can simply help us have better Christian character and better trust God no matter our circumstances; *and* no matter what others think about our circumstances. Hopefully the things we'll look at here will not only protect us and give us better discernment, but also comfort us and strengthen us to do the will of God.

Luke 17:1-10: "Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! 2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. 5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. 6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up

by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. 7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? 8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? 9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow (*i.e. think*) not. 10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

Jesus gives a command here which could potentially be extremely difficult to follow. This causes His disciples to ask Him to increase their faith. It was basically like they were saying, "How can we possibly do this?" And in verse 6 Jesus basically tells them that they don't need this great, unattainable type of faith to do anything God commands. In verses 7 to 10 He gives them an illustration to help them have the faith that they actually need to do what He says. And it boils down to the fact that God can rightfully claim us as His servants. And we should indeed see ourselves, and reckon ourselves, as His servants in truth. This implies that His satisfaction supersedes our own wants and desires. We have needs, we have wants, but the Master's satisfaction is more important. Some people say that to be a Christian you must give up your rights- but this is not altogether true. A Christian has rights which often he can, and sometimes must, exercise. Yet what is true is that we must view any right which we might have in its proper place. The servant has a right to eat; but not when the Master is hungry. Even if the servant has worked much for the Master in the field, when he comes in and the Master tells him to prepare dinner, he has to prepare it and serve the Master before he eats his own dinner. And this is nothing extraordinary,

the Master isn't being too harsh and the servant isn't being generous in obeying Him to the point where he is doing his Master some favor. And Jesus is basically saying that if you find a commandment of God hard, and you need faith to do what God says, believe and take to heart this illustration. When we see God in His proper place and ourselves in our proper place, that eliminates any room to think that what God commands us is too hard or to think that we have any rightful cause to grumble that His commandment is unreasonable. We can even say that no one is going to be in heaven who didn't give God glory, and so put themselves in their proper place on earth, when there was temptation to go contrary to God's commandments and their constraints. Matthew 6:9-10: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Look at how the Apostle Paul basically reacted to the summary of the Gospel of Christ which he had just given in the Book of Romans. Romans 11:33-36: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

And along with these things, we are commanded in the Book of Philippians to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. And this is said in light of what Christ did to save us, and how God has raised Him up and gave Him a name which is above every name, so that every knee might bow to His name. And in the description of this is a truth that ought to define our attitude; and it's directly related to what Jesus

said about the Master and the Servant which we just read about in Luke chapter 17. But this goes even deeper because it shows that even Christ Himself took this attitude in His humanity before His Father.

Philippians 2:1-16: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men (*notice how being a human and being a servant are equated here*): 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. 14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain."

And we are obviously then supposed to relate to the Father through Christ the Son in the same way that Christ related to His Father:

John 15:10: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

Hebrews 5:7-19: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; 8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; 9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

So here are some things to consider in light of what we just read and the topic of this study: Since no person is ever beyond needing to reckon themselves as a servant before God who must consider God's will and God's satisfaction before His own, and since every person is obligated to follow Christ who left heaven to be a servant not only to His Father, but in a way a servant to all mankind, then this would prove that any riches or honor that any person might ever have would need to be consistent with these goals to not be ungodly. And any glory or honor which was certainly inconsistent with these goals would have to be vainglory which ought to be shunned.

Galatians 5:24-26: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."

Philippians 3:18-19: "(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)"

Hence there is an aspect to modesty which might have nothing to do with sexual lust. When we think of modesty we should think of moderation. Not provoking others to sexual lust indeed is one aspect to that, but other aspects are not showing off, not seeking to make ourselves the center of attention, not abusing the things of earth, doing what is in our power to not provoke others to strife, and not unnecessarily shaming others by our wealth, abilities, good circumstances, etc.

1 Timothy 2:8-10: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. 9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

1 Peter 3:3-5: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. 5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands." (Also consider here the harlot's attire in Revelation chapter 17).

1 Corinthians 7:29-31: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; 30

And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; 31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

1 Corinthians 11:20-22: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. 22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? what shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."

Even Israel's King, who was meant to be a picture of Christ in His glory, had restraints put on him by the Law of God in terms of obtaining riches and other expressions of power. He even had to write out his own copy of God's Law, something other men did not have to do. This was so he'd be reminded that he is still just a man despite his position, is still a servant, and even especially a servant, due to the advantages and opportunities he has to do righteousness, execute justice, and to help the needy in his position as a king.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20: "When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; 15 Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. 16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no

more that way. 17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. 18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: 20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel."

If we are brought low and we are restricted by poor health, by poverty, or by other strenuous trials, then we should know that any opportunity for release from our low state would likely bring upon us more obligations and responsibilities towards God. And likewise, if God exalts us and/or gives us much, then we are all the more indebted to Him and to our fellow men. We have greater obligations regarding service and faithfulness which we are accountable for. There is *never* any great blessing or fortunate circumstance which a person might righteously attain which doesn't in some way increase His obligations and accountability before God.

Luke 12:48b: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

1 Corinthians 7:21-23: "Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. 22 For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is

called, being free, is Christ's servant. 23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men."

Luke 21:1-4: "And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. 2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. 3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: 4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury (*extreme poverty*) hath cast in all the living that she had."

It seems good to say here that there are individuals who find themselves in circumstances with great poverty and/or affliction of some kind who also find themselves with many responsibilities and obligations anyways. And those in such a case should remember that if they are truly faithful to God, He will make it up to them in due time- because He is gracious. They are quite possibly storing up treasure in heaven at an accelerated rate and building Christian character likewise. And should they find greener pastures in this life, they are especially going to need the lessons that they are learning now to carry them through then. There are likewise lessons which we need to comprehend and hold onto if our lives abound with blessings that we will need going forward, whether those blessings continue or whether we should be abased and brought low. Christian contentment is a tricky course. We need lessons from when we lack to carry us should we abound. And we need the lessons that we ought to learn if we abound to carry us should we lack.

Philippians 4:10-13: "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I

know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Some practical lessons to draw from these things:

- We should always remember that riches tend to bring great problems. And rich people still get sick, rich people still die in car accidents, rich people still can be in great physical pain, etc. We shouldn't think that lots of money will make us happy or make our lives much easier or even make our spiritual lives easier- even though more money can be a great blessing when we really don't have enough. Those who have never lived in America should know that being in America can bring great problems. Having genuine Christian breakthroughs for the better is not the norm for those who come to America from other countries. Very far from it. That's not to say that no one ever comes to America in God's will. Yet if it happens, it is a great test and trial. Americans have their own obstacles to serving God. And those who come to western countries from poorer countries often lose great opportunities to serve God where they had been. And they also often gain a lot of added temptation and stress.

-- No one is ever beyond things like sweeping and cleaning toilets. There might be times when such things are our main jobs.. This gives us an especially great opportunity to learn Christian humility. But even when such things are not our regular jobs, we are *never* too great for such jobs. And beyond that, doing such jobs is never some great act of humility. For Christ, obviously doing such things was a great act of humility. But not for us. And amazingly, even Christ in glory is in

many ways still a servant! Luke 12:35-38: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; 36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. 38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

- There is great power for God's kingdom in being like others in terms of being on the same level. And that doesn't mean descending morally towards the immoral, but it does mean that if there is a difference in our economic or social status, that we don't flaunt it if we are better off; and that we don't have any resentment or malice over it if we are worse off. That much at least is reasonable and possible. Hebrews 2:16-18: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. 17 Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour (*come to the aid of*) them that are tempted."

- We have a duty to consider others in their low estate, their weaknesses, and their present emotional state- and to act appropriately towards them considering these things.

1 Corinthians 9:19-22: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are

under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

Romans 12:15-16: "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. 16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."

And though there are obviously aspects to sinners which we should not identify with nor sympathize with, we should not be envious of them. And we should remember that no matter how well they seem to be doing and no matter how happy they seem, there are miseries related to sin, as well as general problems of life, which they face that make their lives far from wonderful. And that is not even considering the Judgment Day which they are not currently ready for as they travel on the broad road of sin. In an interview with a popular musician which I recently heard, he mentioned that he once sarcastically said to his band-mate, as they finished listening to their then latest album "Those guys must be having a blast." Riches, fame, material comfort, etc are truly not as great as they often seem to those without such.

- When in doubt about what we ought to do and/or where we ought to go, we do well to take the low seat. And that can take a lot of different forms, but we sure shouldn't thrust ourselves into places and situations with the intent of receiving things like recognition and honor or money. There are plenty of ways to serve God out of the spotlight. We should

strive to be faithful before God in secret; and in places and situations where faithfulness isn't glamorous or considered too honorable. Being faithful in these situations, and learning not to waver in obedience to God, might put someone in a situation where doing so thrusts them into the spotlight despite their best attempts to avoid it otherwise. Consider David going to fight Goliath as an example. God's honor and Israel's security were *really* at stake. This was a dangerous job that no one else wanted and no sane person would ever do who hadn't been faithful in secret. The experience of seeing how God was strong on his behalf as he went forward in doing well before Him, seeking His honor and glory, prepared him for this insanely difficult battle which someone needed to fight.

- A lot of people need to abase themselves in certain ways. Yet some people need to see themselves as not as miserable as they might seem at the moment. It's important then to recognize the weak, frail, temporal status of *every* individual, rich or poor, strong or weak, great or small, or whatever other contrast we might make. We all have an appointment with death and with God on Judgment Day. You think you're special, this is you. You think you're not so special, you have the same appointment as the rich person, or the strong, or the beautiful, or whatever person who seems to have whatever you think you lack and need. In reality every living person is a miserable, temporary being headed for death. The one and only way to find glory, honor, and peace beyond the temporal, momentary, terrestrial state of fallen man is to identify with Christ in death to sin and self-interest to do God's will by submitting to His Word and walking therein. Suffering for the sake of righteousness on the terms of the Holy God of Scripture is what the natural man shudders and squirms at- and will often go to any length to avoid. And yet that is his only hope out of the death trap of life to a

happy resurrection on the other side and an incorruptible glory which will not fade away!

Luke 18:14b "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

James 4:14: "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

Psalm 39:4-6: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am. 5 Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. 6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them."

Psalm 103:15-18: "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. 16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. 17 But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; 18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

Nothing we would ever have to do to walk righteously before God and navigate our course to run the Christian race faithfully could, or should, ever be justly considered unreasonable. Hebrew 12:1-3: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto

Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Chapter 4: Study on Christian Baptism

Matthew chapter 3: “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, 6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: 9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: 12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. 13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. 14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? 15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. 16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17 And

lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

To the people their baptism was supposed to be a statement that they had been unclean and going in the wrong direction, but now they are turning to God, getting in line with Him, and are intent on demonstrating that by their deeds. Getting baptized was the initial deed to show their intent on obeying God and being in alignment with His ways. Baptism without such an intent is a meaningless show. And obviously one must bear the fruit of righteousness in their life after baptism- or their baptism is a display of hypocrisy. Yet the act of baptism itself cannot be neglected since that is how God had arranged it by John’s time, and has arranged it since then, that men are to publicly declare their repentance by this.

It’s interesting how the people in John the Baptist and Jesus’ time understood baptism. It must be because of its relation to how Israel’s Priests were set apart for service under the Old Covenant. And though obviously baptism had come to be applied to repenting sinners, and not just Priests for entrance or consecration for ministry, God evidently didn’t contest this but instead rather sent John to baptize men with water unto repentance. The practice of water baptism to proclaim repentance and a new life of obedience to God have also carried over as a Christian ordinance in the New Covenant. People are to get baptized in water now for the same basic reason that the people should have got baptized in water through John the Baptist’s preaching.

1 Peter 3:16-22: “Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. 17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. 18 For Christ also

hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: 22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”

With Jesus’ baptism by the way, obviously that had to do with the principles in which the Levitical Priests entered into ministry. Jesus, though He had never sinned and always lived in line with the Law of God, was now leaving His father and mother (probably just His mother at this point since Joseph was probably dead, but leaving His father’s household anyways), to serve in full-time ministry. In God’s wisdom there had to be a point where He went from living a common man’s life to entrance into public life as a Minister of God’s Word (to say the least). That point was at His baptism.

So the only differences in Christian baptism compared to John’s baptism have to do with the fullness of revelation of God, and the fullness of redemption now offered, due to the appearance and completed earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. Hence Christians are to identify with Jesus Christ in baptism; and they are promised the Holy Spirit in relation to a true baptism through faith in Christ- since He has now been revealed to be the Messiah who has suffered and died as the Perfect Lamb of God to make an atonement for sins; and He has risen from the dead and shed

forth His Holy Spirit to live in those that obey Him. Thus a true baptism now is identification with the Messiah whom John said that men should believe in. And the one who is baptized now can receive the Holy Spirit through the Messiah's full redemption which they have become a partaker of. The time between Jesus' resurrection and the Day of Pentecost was the only time in this transition where things would have been murky and very hard to sort out. Jesus thus specifically told His disciples after His resurrection to tarry in Jerusalem until they would be endued with power from on high. The arrival of the Holy Spirit upon those disciples was practically the birth of the Christian church, and why the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, when that arrival happened, is so significant.

Acts 2:32-39: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool. 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. 37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call."

Receiving the Holy Spirit in relation to water baptism is not a formula, it is a matter of an obedient, living faith in Jesus Christ where one believes in Him as the Son of God with the basic understanding that the authority of the Father and the witness of the Holy Spirit, the other two persons of the Trinity, abide in Him.

John 5:22-24:”For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: 23 That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

1 John 5:7-12: “ For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. 9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. 10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. 11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

Thus there is no contradiction between being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and being baptized in the name of all three persons of the Trinity. They all agree together! We read in Matthew 28:16-20: “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in

heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

Jesus is God as the 2nd person of the Trinity who represents the Godhead as the Judge of all mankind. Christian baptism is a declaration that one has come under His authority and is committed to keep all that He has commanded in His Word. It’s amazing to me that so many professing Christians will contest the Christian’s obligation to keep God’s commandments. They see Biblical terms like faith in Christ and the grace of God through a lens which is not derived from the Bible. From a Biblical lens there is no saving faith in Christ that does not submit to His authority and live by His Word; and the grace of God in Christ is only for those who do so! God expects us to do whatever it takes to come into line with His authority and receive His grace as help to overcome sin, rather than as a license to enjoy the pleasures of sin.

Scriptural baptism is actually a contract whereby one commits to learn and walk in God’s ways while shunning all the pleasures of sin in the hope of all the mercies, spiritual blessings, and exceedingly great promises which God has guaranteed to those who take hold of His covenant in Christ. Anyone who has been baptized with what they consider to be a valid Christian baptism has already essentially vowed, or you could say signed a contract through their baptism, that they would strive to walk within the boundaries of Christianity and to walk in all that God has commanded in His Word for a Christian to walk in. A proper Biblical Baptism is signing up to learn to observe whatsoever Christ commanded. And it is ironic that one group of people who frequently

fight against the thought that Christians actually need to live holy, avoid sinning, and overall walk worthy of God are those who are called Baptists.

And though many also think that they do in truth live by the Bible, note that it is one thing to pick certain things in the Bible which you like, which you think agree well with how you've chosen to live, which maybe you think you ought to emulate to be a better version of yourself, etc- yet it is quite another thing to let go and submit to all of God's Word's verdicts and instructions, whether you like it or not, whether it helps you or hurts you in your present circumstances, whether you feel better about yourself for it or not, etc. That is being a true Christian disciple. Doing that is denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus as He said we must do to inherit eternal life. *That is* the strait and narrow way that leads to life! And only those who do this can truly be said to keep the Word of God- and thus do the will of God.

Matthew 12:49-50: "And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! 50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Luke 8:20-21: "And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. 21 And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it."

John 8:51: " Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."

Along that same line of thought, we read in Romans 6:1-4: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God

forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

The whole of Romans chapter 6, and the train of thought in the Book of Romans, shows how the grace of God is given for no other purpose but to make people servants to God who are free from sin’s dominion. Obeying the Gospel of Christ is dying to sin with Christ in order to, through the promises of God, walk in new life as servants to God. Christian baptism represents agreement and alignment with this purpose! There is no grace offered otherwise, and no everlasting life promised otherwise, but rather the guarantee of death. Remember John 8:51 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.”

Along with that, we read in John 8:31-36: “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? 34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. 35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

So baptism is supposed to be the declaration that we are under His authority that henceforth we should not serve sin through the life He offers to those who serve God under His authority.

By the way here: Those who believe in baptism by immersion, and I believe baptism by sprinkling and immersion both are acceptable, but as a side note, those who believe in baptism by immersion should consider that baptism by immersion does not literally illustrate death and resurrection with Christ. Jesus was not buried at sea! If it was supposed to literally picture this, Christian baptism would involve being wrapped in linen, put in a tomb, having a stone rolled to the tomb, having the stone removed, the baptized unwraps the linen, folds it up, and exits the tomb. Obviously that is ridiculous and I think it's obvious that death and new life with Christ is pictured in a different way than that through the water of baptism. I believe sprinkling and immersion both get that point across.

Consider then more Scripture relating baptism with coming under authority: Leviticus 19:36-37: "Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt. 37 Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I am the LORD." Leviticus 20:26: "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine."

God brought Israel out of Egypt under Moses' leadership that they should be a holy people unto Him. Thus Israel as a nation was baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea as they left Egypt. And yet God was displeased with those who didn't live up to the purpose of their baptism- and destroyed them in His wrath. And look at how this passage from 1 Corinthians chapter 10 is applied directly to baptized Christian church members.

1 Corinthians 10:1-12: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed

through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

Titus 2:11-14: “11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

In baptism one professes receiving the true grace of God that brings salvation by heeding its instruction. And we are warned about what happens if we turn away from this instruction, especially since there are so very many who deny this instruction.

Jude 3-7: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old (*i.e. in the Old Testament*) ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. 5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. 6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. 7 Even as Sodom and Gomora, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Like we saw from 1 Peter 3:21, baptism is virtually essential, not due to the cleansing of the water itself, but in order to have a good conscience towards God. It’s intended as an initial act of obedience in entering into the whole package of Christianity. Things like infant baptism are evil because infants cannot have a repentant attitude and an obedient, ready mind towards Chris’s instruction- so baptism cannot represent to them what God intended it to represent. It is no different than with the little children who get coached into saying the sinner’s prayer, and then into baptism, in many evangelical and Protestant churches. It becomes a ritual that has a strong tendency to serve as a substitute for the entire package of Christianity, rather than as a knowledgeable, willing entrance into the whole package of Christianity, like it should be regarded as. This is no different than misusing the holy things in the Temple.

Those who would enter into the whole package of Christianity need to get baptized, both for making a declaration of this intent and in doing the ordinance whereby God has commanded that this declaration be made. And if they die before they can do it like the thief on the cross, while exercising a good conscience towards God in the ways they are able like he came to do, then they'll yet be saved by the true grace of God (who knows the hearts and knows all things). But you cannot be a faithful Christian and knowingly disregard getting baptized.

Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Consider the implications of Acts 8:35-38: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

So those who haven't been baptized *or* those who have been baptized but not for the right reasons, should get their heart right and get baptized for the right reasons. And anyone who won't be baptized for the right reasons is basically saying that they will not have this man to reign over them (that is, Jesus Christ- see Luke 19:27- His enemies who will get slain before Him at His 2nd coming said that, at least in their hearts). And if you have been under His rule, seeking to obey His Word and deny yourself the pleasures of sin as your ultimate aim, yet for some reason you have not been baptized yet to publicly declare this (maybe related to

how you were baptized before when you shouldn't have been and it didn't occur to you that you ought to do it in accordance with the Biblical reasons to do it), then certainly get baptized ASAP. There is no point putting it off any longer; and it would be disobedience and backsliding to put it off any longer in your case. I've known of people whose refusal to surrender to Christ and walk in all the truth was pretty obviously demonstrated by their neglect to get baptized as a Christian. And vice-versa. And that is how it is supposed to be when the lines of Christianity are drawn properly and understood, without counterfeit baptisms and confusion over baptism, in the mix.

In Psalm 2 we are told: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, 3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. 4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. 5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. 6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. 7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. 8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. 10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

To baptize someone outside of genuine repentance in laying down their arms of rebellion against the Lord and His Christ, to welcome and trust Christ's benevolent reign; or to baptize with a manipulated or shallow

understanding of this, is irresponsible and wicked. Yet to baptize someone who truly is obeying His Gospel, and thus is truly eligible for Christian baptism, is cause for great excitement and rejoicing! The baptized has truly shown up ready to run the Christian race. They are not finished, but they have truly begun.

In general, Spirit baptism will accompany a genuine water baptism, though there are cases, even right in Scripture, where God chose to give Spirit baptism before or after water baptism for reasons known to Him. In general though, one who is water baptized in obeying Christ from the heart will receive the witness from God's Spirit that He has accepted them in Christ. But the Holy Spirit will come as a fire to them, whereas with Christ the Spirit came as a dove. His race was run to save us. For the rest of us the Christian race, though it will involve helping others to find Christ's salvation too, is necessary to purify and save our own souls. And we just need to go forward in obedience to get a glimpse of how we need to grow in the grace and knowledge of God. In other words, to get a glimpse of how He must increase in us and we must decrease. He desires a finished product which He is seeking to obtain. Only those who run the Christian race to the end will be the product that He is after. We cannot finish right if we do not start right. That is why Christian baptism and its significance is such a critical topic.

Malachi 3:1-3: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. 2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: 3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as

gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.”

Note: The Book of Malachi was specifically directed at Israel’s Priests, but what is said here applies to Christians and His work in them; and His work in the Christian church to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Chapter 5: Study on the Controversial Passage of John 8:1-11

We're going to look here at a very well known passage of Scripture, which is also in my opinion one of the most misunderstood and most twisted passages of Scripture. And that would be John 8:1-11, where a woman caught in adultery is brought to Jesus. Many use this to try to justify a belief that Jesus actually rebuked the Law of Moses, to try to justify the common belief that Jesus does not condemn sinners, and/or to try to justify the common belief that any and all confrontation of sin, or opposition to sin, is equivalent to casting stones at people. We will see here how twisted and inaccurate such beliefs are. And hopefully we will see well what this passage of Scripture really is dealing with and comprehend some important lessons which we should really get out of it.

So in reading about this event recorded in John ch 8:1-11, it is good to use this as a reminder that the books of Scripture were written as books which contained no chapter breaks (nor verse numbers either). As we start John chapter 8 then, we are not dealing with a different time nor a different scene than what John chapter 7 ends with. There are obviously shifts in scenery and shifts in dates which are recorded within the books of Scripture. Yet the chapter breaks do not necessarily mark such. The text itself will mark out such shifts when they happen- and such shifts can happen within a certain chapter just as easily as they can happen from one chapter to the next. So in John chapter 7 Jesus is teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles. It is a very heated, controversial occasion marked by intense debate among the people about whether Jesus is the Messiah spoken of in the Hebrew Scriptures, scorn and derision from most of the Jewish leaders against Jesus and those who claim that He is the Christ, and even an attempt by some of the Jewish leaders to arrest

Jesus near the end of the feast which ends up failing. So please do read John chapter 7 to see John 8:1-11 in its proper context.

The Feast of Tabernacles was, along with the Feasts of Passover and Pentecost, one of the three feasts which every Jewish man was required to attend each year. So many had come many miles from other places to Jerusalem for this feast; but for many others, Jerusalem was home and the intensity of the debate regarding Jesus did not end with the close of the feast. So Jesus sticks around Jerusalem and continues teaching in the Temple even after the feast is over. And many who had been hearing Him continue to come and hear Him. Some of the Jews who are His enemies are angry and jealous, but they are afraid to arrest Him because of their fear of the common people; and this is not an easy thing to do anyways since even the Temple's own officers, whom some of the leaders had commanded to take Him, didn't have the courage to do so. So they need a strong reason to arrest Him which the common people will be in agreement with and which the Temple officers will be compelled to comply with. Or perhaps, they might even cause Him to be arrested by the Romans. They hatch a plot, not to put the Law of Moses on trial- that would be considered ridiculous- but rather, a plot to entrap Jesus and make Him look like a villain before either the Jews or the Romans who ruled over the Jews. This plot would put Jesus into a tight place where (they thought and hoped) He would either have to deny the Law of Moses and directly get in trouble with the Jewish authorities OR He would say something which the Jews could accuse Him to the Romans over, so He would be seen as a rebel against the Roman Empire.

Reading then from John 8:1-6 (we'll get to verses 7 to 11 soon): "Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. 2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat

down, and taught them. 3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, 4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? 6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not."

Understand then that this was an insincere trial. These men are tempting Jesus and seeking to put Him on trial by how He handles this woman which they have brought to Him. We already saw in the previous chapter, and we see all over the Gospels, that Jesus' enemies are unjust men, who despite their professed zeal for the Law of Moses, were out of line with the Law of Moses. That is what made them hypocrites. They sought to abuse the Law to condemn Jesus, when the Law really testified against them and their unjust behavior. This basic truth is seen various ways, and said in different ways, throughout the Gospels.

So for those who don't know, the Judicial aspects of the Law of Moses were given to be executed under the oversight of Israel's judges. They were not things which people were to just independently carry out on their own. They were given also with the obvious implication that Israel is a sovereign nation not subject to any foreign rule. Israel was so when God gave the Law through Moses. God had threatened Israel that subjugation by foreign nations would be a judgment if it was disobedient to God. Such subjugation had happened at various times throughout Israel's history and was surely happening in Jesus' time. Israel was not an independent nation now, as it had been conquered by the Romans (it

wasn't really even known as Israel then, at least by the Romans- yet Judea, Galilee, and Samaria were Roman provinces that basically covered most of what had been considered to be the land of Israel. That entire region was under Roman rule). We also know from the Gospels, and from history in general, that the Romans recognized Judaism as a religion and basically allowed the Jews to practice their religion and follow their Law. But one key exception, and we see it by how the Jewish leaders delivered Jesus to the Romans when they eventually did wind up arresting Him, is that the Jews did not have the legal power to execute the death penalty. That was something which the Romans had to condemn someone to in order to legally happen under their rule. So the basic plot of those tempting Jesus is to either get Him to say that she should be stoned so they can deliver Him to the Romans as a rebel to their Empire OR to get Him to say she shouldn't be stoned to legitimize His arrest by the Jewish authorities, with the charge that He was speaking contrary to the Jewish Law. This is really *nothing but* an attempt to trap Jesus in His words and to make Him out to be a criminal to either the Romans or to the Jews. Furthermore, understand that though Jesus is the Judge of all mankind, and will act in that capacity when He returns, and even in some ways is acting in that capacity now, when He was a man on earth He was not a Judge in either criminal or civil matters. He would not then be one you brought an adulterer in front of if you were sincerely seeking to bring an adulterer to justice. And that would especially be so if you refused to believe He was the Jewish Messiah, like His enemies refused to believe.

So be clear that there is no sincerity on the part of the accusers here. Jesus' handling of this matter is not a pronouncement on whether the Law of Moses' prescribed punishment on adulterers is valid. Jesus is the one who gave the Law to Moses, He is the Word made flesh, and anyone

who believes He'd ever speak contrary to the Law of Moses is a Marcionite. *A Marcionite is basically anyone who would put Jesus at odds with the God of the Old Testament and the words which God spoke in the Old Testament. Marcion was a heretic who taught that the God of the Old Testament and the Father of Jesus Christ are different gods (Marcion also taught that the God of the Old Testament was really the devil). This is obviously a wicked and easily refuted heresy.*

The Law of Moses indeed commands that adulterers be stoned. But it also commanded that there be multiple witnesses, *impartial witnesses*, who initiate the stoning after the accused is found guilty. And it commands that all the parties involved in the adultery be stoned, not just one of them.

Leviticus 20:10: "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death."
Deuteronomy 22:22: "If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel."

And BTW: The Bible calls Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, a just man for wanting to put Mary away instead of having her stoned as a public example when they were betrothed and he found out that she was pregnant. And that must have to do with the fact that even though Joseph didn't understand that this baby had been conceived miraculously in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit when she was still a virgin, he still didn't know exactly what happened and there was no man he could accuse justly of committing adultery with her. So he assumed the best and sought to save Mary's life, knowing he didn't really

understand what happened. And he was considered by God a just man for this. However, many misled Jews with misguided zeal would have been forward to have her stoned if they had heard about her pregnancy.

So back to John 8, obviously *there was sin in this matter* among each and every one of these accusers. Otherwise, they would have brought the man to be stoned too. And since this was a set-up, and since they obviously didn't care to faithfully carry out the law, it is quite possible that they had a married man offer this woman, possibly a very poor woman, a very large sum of money for her service so they could catch her in adultery and bring her to Jesus. So there may very well have been enticement to sin here too, something which God's Law rebukes and forbids too. There was very likely at least some type of entrapment here and there was *surely* partiality here. And partiality in the Law, and the respect of persons which is inherent in such partiality, is something which God also warned against and rebuked Israel severely for when they practiced it.

Deuteronomy 16:18-20: "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Malachi 2:7-9: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. 8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the

Lord of hosts. 9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law."

Partiality in the Law was so unfitting and hideous in Israel's Judges and Priests because it is blatantly wrong for everyone. And though we don't know for sure what Jesus wrote on the ground as this woman was accused before Him, we know that the consciences of these men were convicted and they backed out of their scheme. It is quite possible then, and the best theory that I know of about this, is that when Jesus wrote on the ground here, He wrote verses from the Law and the Prophets which rebuked things along the lines of partiality in the Law and respect of persons. We know for sure that in everything Jesus said, did, and wrote (and I believe this is the only occasion in the Bible where we see Him writing as a human) He would have been in agreement with the Law of Moses and faithfully upholding it.

John 8:45-47: "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."

Psalm 119:142: "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth."

1 John 3:4-5: Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."

Matthew 23:1-3: "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,
2 Saying The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: 3 All therefore
whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after
their works: for they say, and do not."

No one can rightfully say that Jesus would have ever done or said anything contrary to the Law of Moses without being a hypocrite, and without Scripture's commentary as a whole regarding His character, being false.

Going on to John 8:7-11: "So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. 8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. 9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. 10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? 11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

Those who hear this should understand well then, by what has been said in this study to this point if they didn't understand already, that Jesus was not saying here that those who actually stoned people in accordance with the Law of Moses were hypocrites who should have never done such a thing. Nor was He saying that things were at this point changing so that an impartial, just stoning was morally unacceptable now, even if it might have been right before. God has still ordained human governments, inevitably composed of men tainted by sin, to carry out His principles of justice on earth. And God ordained the death penalty for certain crimes

that reach a certain level of severity in His eyes, which He deems the best remedy for to involve the death of the perpetrator.

And that is still true, even as God has sent the Gospel among nations with political Governments which are separate from His church (unlike when His visible people was the nation of Israel, which was both a political entity and had religious authorities which were also political authorities of the nation). We are to honor the political powers in our nations and agree with, cooperate with, and appreciate it when they carry out law and order in a way which is at least to some measure consistent with how He appointed Israel to be governed in terms of punishing crime and openly immoral deeds. And if a Government agrees with the Law of Moses that this or that crime is worthy of death, we should support the death penalty for that crime being carried out when the accused is deemed guilty through a fair trial (hence no partiality to our knowledge influencing the outcome of the trial) and the punishment is carried out under the authority of the same Government (i.e. not private citizens taking the law into their own hands). *Such is good and consistent with Christianity.* You cannot even be a faithful Christian if you do not agree with this nor if you obstruct such justice knowingly in any way (reference Romans 13:1-7). And this is all consistent with, and even obviously a necessary component of, our duty of love towards all men, as is then evidenced by reading on through Romans 13:8-14.

It is an eternal principle that righteousness before the true God means recognizing the distinction between things like right judicial action and the protection of the oppressed from oppressors versus personal revenge and taking the law into one's own hands. This is why it was right for David to kill Goliath but to spare King Saul. This is why Moses had stonings performed under his authority of blatant malignant rebels

(which God had prescribed and didn't require true witnesses to be perfect before they threw stones at them), yet prayed for Miriam and Aaron when they spoke against his own person. This is why Jesus as a man did good to His enemies, prayed for them, and even died to make a way for them to repent and be forgiven; yet as the judge of mankind He will still condemn His unrepentant enemies to the eternal fire of hell on Judgment Day.

And this distinction between righteous judicial vengeance versus sinful, personal retaliation is why you might meet someone who is thirsty and have a duty to give him drink, but yet have an obligation to play a part in condemning the same person to death someday if you should ever be a jury member, a judge, or an executioner as the same person, through due process of law, is proven guilty of a crime that warrants the death penalty. And this distinction also might mean that you would have an obligation to say that a certain person, who you hates you, is innocent and should be let go, if you were to ever be a juror at their trial where the prosecution failed to provide overwhelming evidence of their guilt in the crime which they are accused of. And those who don't recognize, understand well, and honor this distinction are virtually guaranteed to be promoters of unrighteousness somehow, in some way. This is truly a big deal. Look at those who use Jesus' command to love your enemies as a pretext for fighting against the death penalty and promoting illegal immigration. These are just as bad as those who don't follow Jesus' words about loving your enemies where it is proper to apply them.

So when Jesus said in John 8:7 "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her", He would have been speaking against the Law of Moses if He had meant that its verdict about stoning was wrong or at least impossible to carry out. Saying such a thing would have

actually provided an occasion for His enemies to accuse Him (like they were looking for) if that is what He meant. But obviously He meant that those who were without sin *in this matter* should be the ones to cast the first stones at her. This was speaking in accordance with the Law of Moses and clearing Himself of any wrongdoing before both the Jews and the Romans. If these witnesses were so zealous to carry out the Law of Moses' verdict about stoning adulterers (which they were pretending to be, but weren't) they should risk the wrath of the Romans in doing so. And if they are partial (and hence false) witnesses (like they were indeed), then they would be violating the Law of Moses by carrying out the stoning.

Deuteronomy 19:16-21 lesson: Those found to be false witnesses were to receive the same punishment which those they testified against would have got. Where is the man here? He was to die too according to the Law of Moses. Remember, God rebuked Israel for respect of persons and partiality in the law. Such bias inherently makes a person a false witness (consider: "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth"). Leviticus 19:15: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor." Remember also Deuteronomy 16:18-20 and Malachi 2:1-9 quoted above. Exodus 20:16: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

Were these men not telling the truth? They were not. Otherwise, they would have told the whole story- one that involved the man, the set-up, and their ultimate intent to destroy Jesus. Thus they had sin, not just sin in the past nor sin in a vague, general sense. They had sin in this matter here and now. And by how Jesus handled this they were convicted of their sin in this matter and awakened to the potential danger that they

would be in were they to proceed, and which they might even be in already, with both the Roman and the Jewish authorities (the latter were probably more corrupt than the Romans really, but even these feared the people enough that they had to at least feign being just). These men thus abandoned their plot and went away.

Jesus, who had been stooped down and writing, is left alone with the woman. He inquires where her accusers are and asks whether any man had condemned her, obviously knowing that no man had done so, yet for some reason wanting her to acknowledge this. She tells Him that no man has condemned her; and He tells her "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." (vs 11) Obviously in context, meaning that no man had stoned her and that He was not going to stone her now either. He surely knew that this was a set-up. He did not witness the adulterous act either. He yet made sure to tell her to "go, and sin no more."

I think that people now are more likely to assume that verse 11 says "I will never condemn thee; go, and sin some more." That's not what Jesus said though. And we know what "sin no more" means. And though many need better instruction about the true nature of sin and about the boundaries of sin, when you talk to someone, they know what you mean by the general principle of "sin no more." And *you know that they know* what this means. And many argue against the reasonableness of this principle and against the realistic expectation of the principle laid down here regarding man's obligation before God. By studying the contrast in the Bible between those whom God deemed righteous and those whom God deemed wicked; and how people turned from wickedness to righteousness and vice-versa, we will be equipped to better understand, define, and defend this principle.

God delights in showing mercy, but He doesn't offer mercy unconditionally. The need to surrender yourself to God through His Son the Lord Jesus, while totally breaking off from the pleasures and perceived securities which sin brings, is *the strict* condition of obtaining God's mercy through Jesus Christ. And one aspect of this is even agreeing to support the death penalty for those sentenced to death in a manner consistent with God's Law- even if they are your own relatives or friends. There is no other way to avoid partiality in God's Law and being a respecter of persons (reference Deuteronomy 13:6-11, Matthew 10:34-39, and Luke 14:25-33).

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." People often want to forget about this and misinterpret the passage about the woman caught in adultery so as to pit Jesus against Jesus, as people twist many passages of Scripture to pit Scripture against Scripture (remember that Jesus is the Word made flesh, so this is ridiculous). A key reason we are studying this passage is that those who deny this narrow way of salvation in Christ will twist this passage to promote Pacifism, Universalism, easy-believism, cheap grace, unconditional eternal security, and many other anti-christ doctrines. And many just plain want to minimize God's wrath overall and have an overall light view of God, as if He really ought not to be feared much. This passage has been so twisted that *now* someone who tells a sinner to go and sin no more might even be accused of casting stones at people.

This passage is also twisted to make it sound like punishing evil and standing against evil is outside of man's jurisdiction completely, when as

we saw, we each have a duty in certain capacities to do this. This passage then actually teaches that we should not be partial in God's Law, not act contrary to it, not use it to falsely accuse Jesus, and that any attempt which man may make to twist the Law of God to make Jesus sound inconsistent, or to seem in any way at enmity with the Law, will be cast down and proven foolish. Someone could actually do something similar today, such as approaching a Christian and saying "We've got an adulterer here (while pointing to himself or someone nearby). The Bible says to stone someone like this! Are you going to obey the Bible? If you don't stone this adulterer, you're a hypocrite." If something like that ever happens to you, you have the principles laid out in this study to protect yourself and to shed light on such a scheme so that it will be exposed as the foolishness that it really is.

It is true that this woman who got caught in adultery got a reprieve, as well as a wake up call. If she did not eventually obey and stick to Jesus' admonition to go and sin no more, then she also eventually went to hell despite this reprieve. All the patience and long-suffering of God with sinners is given with the intent that we come to our senses and be obedient to this admonition (reference Romans 2:3-11). So you can be sure then that no one who continues in adultery, or in any deed contrary to the Law of God and the glorious Gospel of Christ, will have any part in Christ's kingdom. The hammer of God's wrath, which the just stonings in the Bible carried out in accordance with God's Law previewed, will surely come down on them and they will be sent to the fire of hell with no remedy and no hope of escape. And that is why we call people to turn from sin and to seek God with their whole hearts before the Great Day of His wrath comes. No passage in the Bible, when rightly divided and understood, provides anyone who can understand this call with any discharge from siding with God in His great conflict with

man; and from needing to cooperate with His great aim of bringing man out of his sin to worship and serve Him, even to suffering and not loving his life unto the death. In Revelation chapter 4, before Judgment Day has come, we see a rainbow (and look at how that symbol has been hijacked now) around God's throne, symbolizing His patience with mankind and His offer of mercy to man on earth. But then in Revelation chapter 20, when all men small and great stand before God on His Great White Throne, that rainbow is gone.

Mark 9:43-44: "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Ephesians 5:5-6: "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

Chapter 6: Roman Catholic Church Teaching Contrasted with the Bible's

We should scrutinize every teaching, and every group, to see whether they align with God's Word. We are commanded in the Bible to “Prove (*i.e. test*) all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22) The Roman Catholic Church (from hence referred to as “the RCC”) opens itself up to scrutiny for an additional reason that some groups do not: It claims that the decisions given by the RCC Councils, and the decrees of the Pope on matters of faith and morals, are infallible. Any group that doesn't claim infallibility isn't necessarily lying if it's in any way wrong in its doctrine. Yet when the group which claimed infallibility for itself is wrong on anything it was supposed to be infallible on, then it is not only wrong, but also lying.

Most practicing Roman Catholics freely acknowledge that they don't agree with the RCC on everything, yet they have no problem staying in the Roman Catholic Church. The RCC claims that the Pope is “The Vicar of Christ” (meaning in the place of Christ- think of the word “vicariously” to get an idea of the weight of this claim). If the Pope really is the “Vicar of Christ” then he should be believed and followed wholeheartedly in everything- because that is how we are obligated to respond to Christ Himself (Ephesians 5:23-24). Yet if the Pope isn't who he claims to be, then he is an imposter, whom it would not be improper to call an anti-christ. It makes no sense to say that you believe that the RCC is Christ's church and that you accept the Pope- and yet disagree with the RCC *at all* in matters of faith and morals. If you disagree at all, you really are calling the church and the Pope liars. Most Catholics though have a religion that is a mixture of RCC teachings and their own

opinions in matters where their own church's teachings do not give room for such.

We'll go on with an article by Robert Green from britannica.com (I italicized certain phrases for emphasis):

"mass, the central act of worship of the Roman Catholic Church, which culminates in celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist. The term mass is derived from the ecclesiastical Latin formula for the dismissal of the congregation: *Ite, missa est* (“Go, it is the sending [dismissal]”). After the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), the form of the mass changed greatly, most conspicuously in the use of vernacular languages in place of the traditional Latin.

The mass consists of two principal rites: the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. The first includes readings from Scripture, the homily (sermon), and intercessory prayer. The second includes the offering and the presentation of bread and wine at the altar, their consecration by the priest during the eucharistic prayer (or canon of the mass), and the reception of the consecrated elements in Holy Communion.

The mass is at once a memorial and a sacrifice. In the eucharistic prayer, the church commemorates Jesus Christ and his redeeming work, especially his sacrifice for the sake of all humankind through his crucifixion. The church also recalls the origin of the Eucharist in the Last Supper, when Jesus, anticipating his imminent death, offered his disciples bread and wine, saying, “Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body, which will be given up for you,” and, “Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood,...which will be poured out for you.” Jesus instructed the disciples to perpetuate this banquet in his memory.

According to church teaching, Christ’s sacrifice is not only recalled in the mass, it is made present. In the eucharistic prayer, the church asks God the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine on the

altar so that by his power they may become the very body and blood that Christ offered on the cross (see transubstantiation). That change having occurred, Christ is offered anew to God the Father, and the church unites with him in that offering.

The community of worshippers, through participation in the mass, expresses unity and dependence upon God and seeks spiritual nourishment in the attempt to share the gospel, by word and deed, with all people. In the sacrificial banquet of the mass, the church accepts Christ's invitation to eat his body and drink his blood under the appearances of the consecrated bread and wine. By partaking in this sacred meal, the members of the church join in intimate fellowship with Christ and with one another. Having taken Christ's sacrifice into themselves, they are spiritually sustained and strengthened to make that sacrifice their own by serving God through serving others." (End of article: Green, Robert. "mass". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Invalid Date, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mass-Christian-religious-service>. Accessed 9 August 2022.)

The Bible declares on the other hand that Christ's sacrifice on the cross is unique in what it accomplished; and also in that it never will be (nor needs to be) repeated again. Hebrews 9:24-28: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin

unto salvation." Hebrews 10:11-14: "And every priest (*referring to the Levitical Priests under the Old Covenant*) standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

The Priesthood: The RCC is based entirely on its hierarchy and could not function without its Priesthood. The people receiving the sacraments is essential to the Roman Catholic faith; and these must be administered by RCC priests. There are two established Priesthoods spoken of in the Bible. The Priesthood of Aaron, Moses' brother (aka: The Levitical Priesthood) and the Priesthood of Melchizedek. You can see the two established Priesthoods of Aaron and Melchizedek compared in the Book of Hebrews chapter 7. The Priesthood of Melchizedek is reserved for none other than Jesus Christ, as a simple reading of Hebrews chapter 7 shows (by the description of Melchizedek there it is also obvious that the Old Testament character of Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ). This Priesthood has now negated the need for the Levitical Priesthood, which was a necessary institution for Israel until the fulfillment of God's promises in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, should be a reality. And even if this Levitical Priesthood were still valid, it was only open to male physical descendants of Moses' brother Aaron (see Numbers 16:40). Anyone who is not a natural Israelite, descended from the tribe of Levi through Aaron, would automatically be disqualified from this Priesthood anyway. In the Bible men were put out of this Priesthood simply for not being able to prove that their genealogy qualified them for the Levitical Priesthood (see Nehemiah 7:61-65). So where does that leave the RCC priesthood? It is utterly foreign to

Scripture. There is also the truth that God's people as a whole are called a royal priesthood (see 1 Peter 2:9) and priests unto God (see Exodus 19:6 and Revelation 1:6). Yet these passages are obviously speaking in a very general sense and apply to anyone who is a part of God's people, rather than to an established group of priests.

The Eucharist/Communion: There is no doubt that Jesus established Communion (aka the Lord's Supper) as an act whereby His church was to remember His death until He comes again. As was seen from the Britannica article above, the RCC considers the Mass to be an actual repeated offering of the body and blood of Christ. The Catholic worshipers are then said to be literally eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ through the bread and wine. This is "receiving Jesus" by the RCC definition. Below is basically the most common passage which the RCC uses to justify their equation of taking its communion bread and wine with receiving Jesus.

John 6:51-58: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. 52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? 53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58 This is that bread which came down from heaven:

not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

Given the proof from Scripture which we looked at before that Jesus offered His body once and for all for sins, and is in heaven until He comes again, and considering the lack of Biblical validity for the RCC Priesthood, the concept that the communion bread and wine at the RCC Mass is literally turned into the body and blood of Christ (i.e. the concept of transubstantiation) could not possibly be true. Consider also that Jesus would go on to say later in the same chapter in John 6:62-63 "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth (*i.e. gives life*); the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

RCC apologists will say that Jesus turned the bread and wine at the last supper into His very blood and body. They quote Matthew 26:26-28 "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." What they are not likely to quote is the very next verse, Matthew 26:29, which proves that He had been speaking figuratively in the previous verses. "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." The bread and wine represent His body and His blood; they are not His actual body and blood. Here are some parallel passages showing what it means to eat and drink Christ's body and blood in truth, spiritually speaking (as Jesus said He intended to be understood).

John 15:1-6: I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

John 17:3: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

1 John 4:13-14: "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." (Reference also Romans 8:1-17).

We know that verse 13 of Romans 8 goes on to talk about the Garden of Eden principle. To have the life that Adam and Eve lost through the Fall we can't live by the same principle which caused them to lose that life. We have to abandon the independent attitude which reasons somehow that there is a better way for us than to live by what God has spoken and commanded. There is no shortcut around this. God's grace makes provision to be saved from past guilt in relation to this; and to live out the righteousness which God requires in the present in a way that is acceptable to Him. It doesn't offer shortcuts around this though- and whatever alternative may be sought as a way around this, it leaves those who seek it ineligible for God's grace and in spiritual death. And though

in the last 60 or years or so, many Roman Catholics have become evangelical and went after men like Billy Graham who preach, you might say, a Protestant or Evangelical insurance to complement the Roman Catholic System, which is basically "come to the altar, accept Jesus Christ, and now you're saved forever", this really only confuses things more. They are both together, and both taken individually, alternatives to an obedient, living faith which submits to God's Word, dies to self daily and crucifies the sinful patterns of the flesh, and thus forsakes the lusts of the world in order to live unto righteousness in, and through, the real Jesus of the Bible.

Romans 8:13: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Proverbs 21:16: "The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead."

John 14:21-24: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. 22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? 23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. 24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me."

Luke 9:23-26: "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life

for my sake, the same shall save it. 25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? 26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."

We need to partake of the life of Christ; and independently of Him we cannot live spiritually. We need to die to ourselves and obey His Word in subjection to His authority in order to be justified through His High Priesthood and live to God through His Holy Spirit. No ritual nor trip to the altar to "accept Jesus" can replace nor replicate this!

Ultimately, in contrasting RCC teaching with the Bible's teaching on these matters, the RCC is revealed to be an alternate authority to Christ which offers an alternate pattern of justification before God in contrast to His. Many already know that the term "anti" can refer to being in the place of; opposition by substitution. There is only one Gospel which can save. That is why it is not improper to call the whole RCC system anti-christ, as it is not improper to also call the Pope who represents it anti-christ.

Jesus is not only the only way to the Father (John 14:6); there are also many false ways to Jesus which will end in destruction, leaving those who take them rejected by Him and outside of His kingdom (Matthew 7:13-27, 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, etc). We'll now analyze some more RCC practices and beliefs which are incompatible with God's Word. I'll note though here that not everything the RCC believes and does is unbiblical. It could not even be an effective counterfeit if that were so. Some people try to throw out doctrines like the Trinity because the RCC teaches it. Yet the doctrine of the Trinity is illustrated and proven by the Bible. Our

goal should not be to differ from the RCC. Our goal should rather be faithful alignment with God's Word in everything.

Confession of Sins to a Priest (and this applies to Last Rites and prayers to so-called Saints as well): Jesus Christ is the only acceptable advocate and intercessor for man before God the Father. We must go to God through Him on His terms with a heart and mind which is totally broken over our sin, utterly contrite and alienated from it so that the principle of gratifying self is renounced and our principal aim is to now please God. The common pattern in Christendom (not just in the RCC, but also in Protestant and Evangelical Christianity) of sin today, confess it tomorrow, and then go and do it again will be broken when we truly do this. That does not mean that it is impossible to sin again nor that it is impossible to ever turn back from true repentance and faith in Christ. Yet it does mean that when there is true repentance and faith in Christ there will be true cleansing and a new life in the right direction of glorifying God and obeying His Word from the heart, with power over sin which was not there before. We can and must go directly to God through Jesus Christ for these things. No man can give them to us nor declare that we have them. This does not negate the fact that faithful church leaders must draw lines between what is righteous and unrighteous- and keep the church pure along those lines. Nor does it mean that true repentance and new birth can't be discerned by others who are judging based on the Word of God. But since we are talking about mediation and intercession, it does mean that we must deal with God directly through Christ in order to get right with Him and stay right with Him. The only valid witness that one is justified before God and reconciled to Him is when He comforts that individual by His Holy Spirit; and gives them further leading along the path of righteousness in line with His Word.

1 Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.."

Acts 15:8-9: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."

Hebrews 7:23-28: "And they (*the Levitical Priests of the Old Covenant*) truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: 24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. 26 For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. 28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." (Reference also Matthew 9:6 and 1 John 2:1-4).

Infant Baptism: This falsely makes people think that they've been a Christian "as long as I can remember" or "from when I was a baby." The Bible does not teach such a thing nor can any example of this be given from the Bible that does not involve much speculation and reading unwarranted conclusions into the text. When Jesus said "suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God", He was not teaching infant baptism. He was teaching that we should value children and that they have certain qualities which reflect God's kingdom that adults need to learn from and emulate in order

to inherit it. The basic requirement necessary for Christian baptism to be valid and significant in God's eyes is something which children, especially infants, do not have the mental capacity to exercise- a good conscience towards God (see 1 Peter 3:21 in its context).

The Pope: The Bible never mentions any kind of Pope-figure whom people must acknowledge in order to be faithful Christians. It's interesting that the New Testament would be silent about such a monumental position of authority. Catholic apologists will cite Matthew 16:13-19 here. "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:13-19)

Everyone should read that entire chapter and see how shortly after the verses just mentioned, Jesus would call Peter "Satan" (Matthew 16:23) because of the attitude he expressed about Christ's mission. The Bible says that there is no other rock except the Lord (Psalm 18:31, 2 Samuel 22:32). Jesus Christ Himself is the rock, the chief cornerstone, that His church is built on. The Apostle Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 3:11 "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Peter would repent and recover from this moment, as well as from his eventual denial of Christ, to go on to be a great Apostle. Yet in his epistles of 1 Peter and 2 Peter he would never call himself more than an Apostle (1 Peter 1:1) and an elder (1 Peter 5:1). In Acts 15 we have the record from a council of the leaders of the early Christian church at Jerusalem. There we find no special title or honor given to Peter, though he did speak at that council. The early disciple James would give the final sentence at that council instead of Peter (see Acts 15:19). We also see many clear-cut differences between the Apostle Peter and the RCC Pope. Peter had no silver and gold (Acts 3:6) unlike the RCC Pope, who has plenty of silver and gold (that's an understatement). Peter forbade a man from bowing to him (Acts 10:25-26), while the RCC Pope doesn't do that. Peter was married to a wife (Mark 1:30, 1 Corinthians 9:5), while the Pope is absolutely forbidden from being married at all. Another reason then that the RCC could not be Christ's church, even if Peter had been the first Pope, is because the RCC does not follow Peter's teachings and example in his faithfulness to Christ.

It is possible that in a way the rock which Jesus said His church would be built upon is the instruction and power of God that was recognized by Peter, revealing Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. This would not be inconsistent with Jesus Christ being the foundation of His own church, since it is an essential aspect of bringing individuals to savingly know Him and to be part of His true people. Peter surely understood himself and other faithful Christians to be small stones; and Jesus Christ Himself to be the Great stone who is the foundation of His Church. 1 Peter 2:4-8a: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 6 Wherefore

also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense..."

Priestly Celibacy: Another obvious way the RCC contradicts Scripture is in forbidding marriage to its leadership. God never in the Bible forbids marriage to the leaders of His people. In 1 Corinthians chapter 7 the Apostle Paul made it very clear that every man and woman is permitted to marry. He did recommend singleness to all who were still single (which is something that many other churches totally ignore), but insisted that all are permitted to marry (see 1 Corinthians 7:1-9). If this wasn't crystal-clear enough, shortly after in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, Paul spoke of his rights as an Apostle. He would go on to cite Peter and the other Apostles as a precedent of the right that Gospel ministers have to marry (1 Corinthians 9:5). *The Bible actually calls forbidding to marry a doctrine of devils* (see 1 Timothy 4:1-3). It also says in Hebrews 13:4 "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

Praying to Mary, devotion to Mary, etc: There is absolutely no precedent for this in Scripture. The concept that Mary is a matriarchal figure to Christ now in heaven (The Mother of God), and the concept that Mary is a mediatrix between man and Christ, are deceitful and damning. Some of the reasons for this have already been looked at. The RCC Hail Mary Prayer (quoted only for reference purposes): "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,

now and at the hour of our death. Amen." Never does the Bible give Mary a more exalted position than a great woman of faith nor command that she be prayed to or sought as a mediatrix. Like all praying to Saints that the RCC endorses, this is idolatry, since it is assigning powers to mere humans which belong to God alone (even though most Catholics will not admit to worshipping Mary, they might as well be by the powers they credit her with). Again, 1 Timothy 2:5 quoted above. Some key points about Mary which the RCC doesn't adequately recognize:

- Mary is praying with Jesus' disciples in Acts 1:14. They are not praying to her.

- Mary offered a sin offering in Luke 2:22-24 (Leviticus 12:6-8 proves that is so). This also proves the concept that Mary was conceived immaculately to be false. And if Mary had to be conceived immaculately to conceive Jesus without sin, then Mary's mother would have had to conceive her immaculately too. And that cycle would have to continue backwards, which is ridiculous.

- There is a lot of debate over whether Mary conceived other children besides Jesus, but a prophecy that the Gospels apply to Christ shows that she indeed did. Psalm 68:8-9: "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. 9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." Compare this with John 2:16-17.

- Mary gave the best counsel to the servants at the wedding in Cana. John 2:5: "His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

- Jesus basically said that being His disciple who obeys His Word is a greater relation to Him than the natural relationships He had with His earthly family (reference Matthew 12:46-50). Mary's relationship to Jesus as His disciple is greater than her relation towards Him as His earthly mother was.

Bowing before images, veneration of statues, etc: The RCC may not require such things, but it sure permits and encourages such. They will not confess to worshipping these things, but God said in Scripture that to represent Him by a statue or an image is a form of idolatry; and bowing down before images is idolatry, *period*. It is no wonder that the RCC eliminates the 2nd commandment, and substitutes for it by dividing the 10th commandment about not coveting that which is your neighbor's, in two. Exodus 20:4-6: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

No matter how upright a Catholic may seem, they are at the very least involved in a system which practices idolatry and promotes an alternate justification system to the one which God appointed in the Bible.

The Sufficiency of Scripture: The RCC doesn't believe in this- otherwise it would not regard the decision of its Councils and Popes as authoritative on the same level of Scripture, like it indeed does. 2 Timothy 3:15-17: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith

which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Matthew 4:3-4: "And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Can someone live by every word of God and esteem God's Word appropriately while being Roman Catholic?

Deuteronomy 4:2 "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."

Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Deuteronomy 13:17-18: "And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers; 18 When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the Lord thy God."

When the Bible speaks of cleaving to the traditions of the Apostles, it is speaking of cleaving to the traditions of the Apostles. We surely have these in the writings of the Apostles (remember that Christ's Apostles wrote the four Gospel accounts too). It does not command adherence to extra-biblical tradition. 2 Thessalonians 2:15: "Therefore, brethren,

stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." Yet the Bible does talk about extra-biblical tradition- harshly (reference Mark 7:5-9).

True Christian unity cannot be separated from agreement with, and adherence to, God's Word. John 8:31-32: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 17:17-21: Sanctify (*i.e. set them apart as holy*) them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

You cannot obey His voice and keep His Word if you are heeding a stranger who is not sent by the Chief Shepherd. John 10:1-5: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. 4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. 5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

And the most deceptive strangers are those that come in the Shepherd's name, yet have another agenda and offer another protocol, an alternative

which borrows a lot of language from the Shepherd's protocol, yet when examined, is very different and at odds with it. Matthew 24:4-5: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

Chapter 7: Study on Israel

The Apostle Paul devoted much of the Book of Romans to dealing with Israel as a nation in relation to God's plan of redemption. It is also clear that the Book of Romans is a letter explaining the most weighty things which every Christian in general ought to have a solid understanding of. The key to understanding the spiritual state of modern Israel, and of the modern Jewish people, is in understanding what God has already spoken concerning them in Bible times and how He has already acted towards them.

We know that God chose Abraham to raise up a people of his seed that he could use to demonstrate His ways to the world, to establish His proper worship among, and to ultimately bring forth His Messiah through. God only chose one of Abraham's multiple sons (Isaac) to continue that work through. He also then chooses one of Isaac's sons (Jacob) to yet continue that work through. We know that God eventually changed Jacob's name to Israel; and that Israel had twelve sons. Thus these twelve sons of Israel's descendants composed the twelve tribes of Israel. We know that Jacob and his sons went down into Egypt- and eventually the Egyptians enslaved their descendants. God brought them out of Egypt by the hand of His servant Moses at the Red Sea and led them into Canaan, the land which He had promised Abraham to give to his seed. In the wilderness between the Red Sea and Canaan, God made a covenant with the Israelites at Mount Sinai which involved promises to them that were conditioned on their obedience to His commandments. He gave them His Law at the same time (read Exodus chapter 19 and go forward in Exodus to see this in detail). The Israelites rebelled against God and did not hearken to His voice when the time came for them to go into Canaan (see Numbers chapter 14). God thus made them to wander

in the wilderness for another 38 years as a punishment for their disobedience (otherwise their journey in the wilderness would have only been a two year journey, but it became a 40 year journey). He raised up another generation in the wilderness which basically had learned from the sins of the previous generation, though God had to kill off ten thousands of these also to yet purify Israel before He brought them into Canaan (see especially Numbers chapter 25 and Deuteronomy chapter 4:3-4).

Right before He brought this generation into Canaan He retold his Law to them (the Book of Deuteronomy, which means "second law" or "repeated law"). Chapter 18 of this book gives one of the most definite statements about the eventual coming of the Messiah and the curse that would be upon those who did not heed Him. At that time He also gave warnings to them echoing what He had told them a long time ago at Mount Sinai (recorded in Leviticus chapter 26), about how though they would be blessed as a people if they hearkened to His Law and obeyed His voice; and of how they would be cursed as a people if they did not do so. Deuteronomy chapter 28 is basically a reiteration of this in different words. It is key to note that even though earthly blessings and curses were bigger factors in how God dealt with Israel under the Old (Sinai) Covenant, Deuteronomy chapter 28 still shows the principles and conditions for being in God's favor (grace) at all times. And we also see here how God would always deal with Israel as a nation. We see the principle of how Israel's redemption would be made void if they continued to disobey God's voice in Deuteronomy 28:68: "And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you." And by the way, we see that principle applied to Christians under

the New Covenant as well. 2 Peter 2:20-22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

So in the very final verses of the Old Testament Israel is left with this warning, which is the last prophetic statement in Scripture that God would make until John the Baptist showed up preaching as the forerunner to Christ, approximately 400 years later. Malachi 4:4-6: "4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb (*which is another name for Mount Sinai*) for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. 5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: 6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." We know by what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 11 that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of this; and we know by what was said of John the Baptist in Luke chapter 1 that this does not mean John the Baptist was a reincarnation of Elijah, but rather means that John the Baptist came in the spirit and in the power of Elijah, which was also Malachi's implication.

So because of what God had already warned of in the Law of Moses, what was said in Malachi chapter 4 was a warning that God was going to destroy the land of Israel if Israel as a nation did not walk in alignment

with God's Word and receive its Messiah when He came. Obviously an Israelite who received the preaching of John the Baptist would be in line with the word which God had already spoken so that they would be able to recognize and receive the Messiah when He came on the scene publicly. The statement in Malachi 4:6 "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" is, more than anything, a reference to turning the hearts of the Israelites back to faithfully worshipping the true God who was faithfully worshiped by their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob so that there would be an agreement in heart between the nation of Israel and the faithful men who were the foundations of their nation.

So then as we come to the ministry of John the Baptist, we have this key statement which he made that is recorded in Matthew 3:7-12: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: 9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham 10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: 12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Matthew 3:12 is in an ultimate way talking about Judgment Day and its eternal implications. Yet on an earthly level it also spoke of the

imminent judgment of the nation of Israel if the nation in general didn't repent and receive its Messiah, which we know from history happened at the hands of the Romans in AD 70, about or exactly 40 years after John the Baptist began preaching. This was obviously meant as a preview of Judgment Day and of the wicked being cast into the eternal fire of hell. Hear then what Jesus said along the same lines during His public ministry. This was as He was entering Jerusalem less than a week before He was crucified.

Luke 19:41-44: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. 43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

And then a few days later, while teaching at the Temple in Jerusalem, He said in Matthew 21:33-44:

"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: 34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. 35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. 37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38 But when the husbandmen saw

the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.³⁹ And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. 40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? 41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. 42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? 43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. 44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

So we see how Israel in general, especially its leaders, rejected its Messiah. And so the kingdom of God was indeed taken away from them, meaning away from Israel and the Jewish leaders, and given to a nation bringing the fruit of righteousness, which we know is the Christian church. But be careful here: The kingdom of God was taken away from Israel and given to the church, but the church's foundation is still the Jewish Scriptures, its original leaders the Apostles were Jews, and being a Jew who was taught the Law of Moses still would be a spiritual advantage. The problem with Israel as a nation is that they did not heed their own Scriptures; and thus did not follow the truth which they professed to believe (see John 5:37-47).

Take to heart then that Jesus is Israel's Messiah who came in line with the Jewish Scriptures and in fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures. Remember how He was called by Simeon in Luke 2:32 "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." And remember

how Jesus said in John 4:22 that salvation is of the Jews. Jews who reject Him miss salvation then because they are out of line with their own Scriptures and opposed to the God who raised Israel up as a nation. When the Jews rejected Jesus and delivered Him up to be crucified they said, recorded in Matthew 27:25, "His blood be on us, and on our children." So God about 40 years later brought the blood of Christ upon Israel and judged the unbelieving Jews in His wrath. This was a terrible judgment! An incredible number of them were killed by the Romans and many others died during the siege which happened prior to the Romans taking Jerusalem. A great many others were captured and sold into slavery throughout the world. They had been given centuries of warning and much opportunity to repent. The Jewish Christians escaped this judgment because Jesus had warned His followers to flee Jerusalem when they saw it compassed with armies- and they did escape when the opportunity presented itself after this compassing happened. How this unfolded is an amazing event which we won't look at in detail here for time's sake. And those who look a bit deeper into history can find that the recovery of the Jews in the land of Judea in the decades after AD 70 eventually resulted in even more slaughter and oppression at the hands of the Romans. This had much to do with how the Jews followed false Messiahs (especially Simon Bar Kokhba) in rebellion and war against the Romans.

This all sealed God's rejection of Israel as a nation and testified His wrath against the Jews for their unbelief in their King who had been sent to be their Savior. *There is no good reason at all to believe that God's attitude has ever changed towards the Jewish nation; and no reason to believe that His wrath has departed from Jews who reject their Messiah.* His blood is still upon them. So is modern Israel, a nation composed mostly of modern unbelieving Jews, a nation under God's favor? Of

course not. Is it any more proper to bless Israel now than it was in AD 70 when God was pouring out His wrath upon them through the Romans for their disobedience to Him and their cruel rejection of their King? Of course not. They have never as a people fulfilled the requirements given in the Law of Moses for their re-entrance into God's favor (i.e. grace) as they continue to harden themselves against their King and reject His reign over them.

Leviticus 26:37-42: "And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies. 38 And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. 39 And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them. 40 If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; 41 And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: 42 Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land."

The commonly mentioned concept that the Jews have a birthright privilege to the land of Israel is rebuked by God in Ezekiel 33:24-29: "Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance. 25 Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? 26 Ye stand

upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbor's wife: and shall ye possess the land? 27 Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. 28 For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. 29 Then shall they know that I am the Lord, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed."

So what about Israel becoming a nation again in 1948 and the Jews returning in mass to the land? It's hard to say exactly, but they are not a people in God's favor. We know that sinners can prosper in their sin for a season. That is no sign that God has accepted them nor proof that they are being blessed by God. There is no coincidence that professing Christians who believe in a Prosperity Gospel and professing Christians who bless modern Israel are nearly synonymous (i.e. there is a strong overlap between those in these categories). Proverbs 17:15 says " He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD." In light of this Scripture, and what we have already talked about, we should not justify nor bless Israel in its hardened and blind spiritual state. It is a nation yet at enmity with God. Though they bless Him with their lips, their heart is far from Him. They yet deal treacherously with the Father by essentially saying "we will not have this man to reign over us" (see Luke 19:27) in rejecting His Son Jesus Christ, the Holy and Just One, as their Messiah.

Regarding Psalm 122: Praying for the peace of Jerusalem in this Psalm is connected to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. But God rejected

Jerusalem in AD 70, His house is no longer there, and Jerusalem is no longer the center of His worship. Jesus said in Matthew 23:37-39: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. 39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

Modern supporters of Israel will often call criticism of Jews and/or modern Israel "anti-semitism", no matter how appropriate such criticism is. Criticism and rebuke of Jews, and of the Jewish nation, can simply be rebuking the wicked without partiality and standing against Jewish supremacy. They are not so special to God that they can live in sin without condemnation because of their heritage. They are not above the law nor exempt from the terms of being in covenant with God. Any special privileges which the Jewish people have had will result in greater condemnation for them if they don't improve their talents and live according to the truth which their own Scriptures testify of. Beware though that there is such a thing as anti-semitism. Many hate Israel and the Jewish people because they have been used as a people by the God of the Bible; and because they have been a great impediment to the advancement of Islam. Many are influenced to hate Israel for unjust reasons due to the propaganda of those in these categories.

Many professing Christians also love to support Israel because of their own desire to have unconditional security. If the disobedient Jews are safe, then they think they are too. But if they are not safe from God's wrath (and they are not), then disobedient professing Christians are not either (reference Romans chapter 2:4-16 and Romans chapter 11). In

these referenced Scriptures we also see the fact that Jews can yet be saved if they will obediently repent and receive Jesus Christ as their Messiah in truth, identifying with Him against the stream of their own people's rejection of Him.

1 Cor. 10:1-12: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Since God has so dealt with the Jews before, He will yet deal with them now, since He never changes. And so will He deal with all who profess to know Jesus Christ.

Chapter 8: The Error of Judaizing

Does proper Christianity involve practicing Judaism? This seems to be getting more relevant to study since the Judaizing of Christians seems to be getting more and more common. It seems to be becoming more common for Christians to be attempting to keep the Jewish Feasts, the Jewish Sabbath, and other Jewish holy days as well as to emulate Jews in other ways like keeping Jewish dietary laws and other things. We're going to look here at why this is not proper and why this is about as serious a deception as anything can be. But we should do this in a way so that we don't, like many, just say "The Jewish law isn't for Christians. Christ abolished that." People who just assume that tend to not understand the whole counsel of Scripture and they don't apply the Jewish principles to Christianity which God intended to be foundational to Christianity. So like in most everything, there are two ditches to fall into related to this. We need to steer clear of both of them in order to go down the right road faithfully.

We know that God is eternal and that His character is unchanging. Whether a moral principle is pure or corrupt, it is such because it is either consistent with God's character or because it is inconsistent with God's character. The moral Law of God is unchanging and binding upon every moral agent because God is unchanging and human beings are created in His image, with an inherent obligation to walk in the ways of their Creator. It is always wrong to steal, it is always wrong to commit idolatry, it is always wrong to covet that which is your neighbor's, it is always wrong to act unjustly as a respecter of persons, etc. To act righteously and benevolently would mean acting so as to shun these evil things in doing the good and right that such evil things are contrary to.

We know that God chose Abraham and raised up a nation from his seed to demonstrate His ways to the world. We know that nation was Israel. And as corrupt as the Israelites became, God's righteous principles of morality and worship were still proclaimed and upheld in word among them. And that was despite how most of the people, and especially their leadership, did not even strive to live up to the principles which the Scriptures they claimed to believe actually taught (you just have to read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5 to 7 to see what Jesus taught the commandments of God really signified in contrast to the shallow applications of them taught by Israel's leadership).

Along with the eternal moral law which God sought to incorporate into Israel, He incorporated ceremonies into His worship there also. These things were not moral issues. They were only righteous and holy things because God had appointed them as such for the time being. Many things in the Law which God gave by Moses obviously fit into this category. We will see how the Jewish Sabbath is indeed in this category, though many claim otherwise. *A moral law is inherently right and holy; a ceremonial law is only right and holy by appointment.* It's not inherently right and holy to keep a certain day or a feast, yet when the Living God, the ultimate authority, tells you to do it, then you'd better do it! He obviously has a reason, even if you don't know it or can't even guess what that reason might be. In Israel's case, He obviously wanted to teach them spiritual lessons- especially about man's need of redemption, the coming Messiah's mission of redemption, and the principles by which that mission must be actualized in our lives. One example of such a spiritual lesson would be how God designed the Temple. The entrance was on the east, so as you approached the place of worship you'd enter with your back to the sun. This was a subtle rebuke to how the heathen idolaters would often worship the sun. God was

disassociating how He was to be drawn near from the idolatrous worship of the nations.

So right up until, and including the time of the Messiah, being a faithful Jew meant faithfully keeping both the moral and ceremonial laws of God. (By the way: Jew= of the tribe of Judah; Judah became the foremost tribe among Israel in dominance and in population; and eventually the terms Israelite and Jew became virtually synonymous). Nevertheless, most Jews were merely Jews outwardly. They kept the ceremonial laws to some degree of faithfulness, but they were not submitted to God's moral law. They thus kept an outward form of God's worship while they were alienated from Him in their hearts. This might have been reflected at times through their failure to keep His ceremonial laws, but this was especially reflected by their refusal to walk in the right ways of His moral law without self-imposed conditions and limitations. They were in most cases content to look faithful outwardly, while still pursuing the lusts of the world in secret and in ways that they were able to while still getting respect and esteem from their society as faithful Jews- something that obviously became easier and easier the more the society as a whole declined from walking in God's ways. One example would be how that by Jesus' time it was common and normal for a man to put away his wife and marry another (usually younger, more outwardly attractive wife) for reasons that were far from the standard of moral uncleanness, which was the only acceptable reason which God's Law gave for initiating a divorce.

One ceremonial law was in a sense the basis for all of them. This was circumcision. It started in Genesis 17 as a command which God gave to Abraham to keep, not only for himself, but also for all the males in his household. There were obviously several key spiritual principles

involved in circumcision, but obviously Abraham did not understand all of those at the time God commanded him to perform it. Abraham did this to himself and all the males of his household immediately because God told him to. This reflected the righteous faith and unconditional surrender which Abraham *already had* towards the true God. Circumcision itself obviously must be an illustration of this faith. Circumcision was later incorporated into the Law of Moses and it served to set the Jews apart as a people. But outward circumcision is unprofitable for the man who does not worship God and keep His law from the heart.

The Jews as a people and the Apostles (who were also Jews by the way) came to use the term circumcision in one context to describe all of the ceremonies of the Law of Moses, the entire package of them. One example is 1 Corinthians 7:18-19: "Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." And in another context, the terms Jew and circumcision came to both be words used to describe an overall faithful worshiper of God. In Romans chapter 2 the two different contexts of Jew and circumcision are brought together to make a critical point which is also very relevant to our topic. I explain this in italics in the midst of the text below.

Romans 2:17-29: "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,¹⁸ And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; 19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,²⁰ An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. 21 Thou therefore

which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? 22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? 23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? 24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. 25 For circumcision (*ceremonial law adherence*) verily profiteth, if thou keep the (*moral*) law: but if thou be a breaker of the (*moral*) law, thy circumcision (*ceremonial law adherence*) is made uncircumcision. 26 Therefore if the uncircumcision (*one without ceremonial law*) keep the righteousness of the (*moral*) law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? 27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision (*ceremonial law adherence*) dost transgress the law (*no faithful moral law adherence*)? 28 For he is not a Jew (*a faithful worshiper before God who is in His grace*), which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh (*it is not a sure mark of faithful worship towards God*): 29 But he is a Jew (*faithful worshiper of God*), which is one inwardly; and (*true, ultimate*) circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Another thing to point out in relation to these things is the priority of moral law over ceremonial law. Adherence to ceremonial law is useless, and potentially much worse than useless, when one refuses to walk in the moral law of God. Nevertheless carnal man often prioritizes ceremonial law over moral law, often giving greater weight to ceremonial law because of how doing this can make him feel spiritual- even though he has not really reckoned himself dead to sin to worship God from the heart and obey Him unconditionally as faithful men like Abraham did..

Amos 5:21-24: "21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. 22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. 23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. 24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."
(Reference also Isaiah chapter 1).

Proverbs 21:3: "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice."

1 Samuel 15:22-23: "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

Luke 10:25-37: The Priest and the Levite may very well have excused themselves from not helping the wounded man due to their ceremonial law adherence- and they may have even been going to perform ceremonial law related duties as they passed him by. But obviously they should have foregone such duties to help the wounded man because their moral duty in this case was greater. And by the way, Jesus' definition of keeping the Sabbath which got Him into trouble with the Jewish leaders was contrary to theirs because He valued the moral law of God over the ceremonial law of Sabbath keeping. Jesus knew that it was lawful to do well on the Sabbath Day. This was a fact that they did not recognize since their hearts were far from God.

While few or none will come right out and say it, many prove by their actions that they hope to actually use ceremonial law adherence as a substitute or a replacement for actually loving God and walking faithfully in His moral law, especially in the weightiest areas of it which matter most and which are most threatening to his natural interests. Keep this in mind as we talk about Judaizing; and as you think about the general course of false religion and the sense in which the Bible condemns salvation by works. This is all related. Why would a person be drawn to Judaism when they were not under it by God's appointment? Since the Jews so often abused and used out of place the ceremonial law which God gave to them to follow, how much more is a ceremony a danger when the requirement to do it has been lifted or the ceremony isn't derived from the Bible at all? So wouldn't reverting to Jewish ceremonies when they weren't binding upon you any longer be subversive to faithfulness to God? Most definitely!

Jesus was a Jew under the Law of Moses. To be the perfect Lamb of God He had to keep the entire Law of Moses 100 percent faithfully, both moral and ceremonial. He indeed did this and preached that others should do the same. His public preaching though was virtually 100 percent in regards to the moral Law of God because of the greater significance of moral law and because of how badly Israel's leaders had led them astray in that regard and taught licenses for unrighteous living in God's eyes. These supposed licenses for unrighteous living were often justified through the abuse of ceremonial law and the elevation of Jewish tradition (the Talmuds). You see in the Gospels how Israel's religious leaders who opposed Jesus would fear more to eat with unwashed hands than they'd fear to dishonor their parents in practical ways, something which Jesus rebuked them severely for.

Jesus did not correct the Law of Moses like some erroneously teach, but rather upheld the Law and taught its true application, vindicating it from the abuses which Israel's corrupt leaders had done to it. You can see this clearly prophesied in Malachi chapter 3. Anyone who teaches that Jesus' rebukes in the Gospels were to those honoring the Law of Moses, as if He were bringing a higher standard than the Law itself, are at best unlearned. They need to study their Bibles closer and regard those they've been listening to much less. Those who teach such things are sometimes called Marcionites, since Marcion was a second century heretic who taught that the God of the Old Testament was the devil and the God of the New Testament is the true God. Marcion of course had to blatantly write off the vast majority of the Bible to even attempt to say this, but modern Marcionites can seem more credible because they are not as consistent as Marcion. They will try to contrast Jesus to the Law of Moses sometimes, while still trying to say that He is also the God of Moses and of the faithful men of the Old Testament. How they try such gymnastics is incredible, yet there are different ways this is attempted. Those who don't think logically and don't look for consistency in those whom they hear teach Scripture can let such inconsistency slide. It happens a lot not only with this heresy, but also with others.

Judaizers think that they are opposing the Marcionites and have the consistent solutions to the errors of those influenced by Marcionism. This again can seem like the case to those who listen to their arguments and swallow them without testing them to all of Scripture. The Judaizers can seem so wise and be vindicated in their own eyes since many professing Christians have errors in other directions. Many professing Christians rightly reject Judaizing and don't see themselves as bound to the rituals of the ceremonial aspect of the Law of Moses. Yet they are still often wrong because they don't reject Judaizing on a Scriptural basis,

so in avoiding being Judaized they fall prey to other errors that are about equally as bad. They often lump the moral aspect of Moses' Law with the ceremonial- and consider themselves bound by neither. Thus they have standards of living which are not consistent with Christianity; and in many cases they have no definite standard of living at all. They think that the grace of God does away with binding to Law or think that the grace of God means that the only Law they're under is the Law of Christ (which they don't see as involving the moral Law of God like it really does). They perhaps rather see the Law of Christ as some mystic and indefinite leading, attributed to the Holy Spirit, which basically leaves every man to do anything that seems right in his own eyes. Yet they are in grave error. The Judaizers though aren't any better. We ought to understand how and why this is all so in order to avoid all these false ways.

The Judaizers will say that Jesus lived under the Mosaic ceremonies and upheld them in His teaching. They are right in that. Many of the Marcionites, and those who teach many of the various lawless gospels out there, might say Jesus abolished the ceremonial aspect of Moses' Law when He died on the cross. In a way, they are right, but it is not so simple (and many of these will also say that Jesus abolished the moral Law when He died on the cross; and of course they are surely deadly wrong about that). Though the ceremonial ordinances in themselves foreshadowed Christ and symbolized eternal realities, the Jews under these ordinances by God's appointment needed atonement for their failure to perfectly keep them like we all need forgiveness at least for our failure to live up to the standard of God's moral Law. The key difference between these Mosaic ceremonies and the moral Law of God is that they had a limited shelf life. Jesus provides the substance of what these things foreshadowed and pointed towards. But the moral Law of God

can never be fulfilled as long as there are moral agents, except by being done by those same moral agents. And even the Jewish ceremonies with their limited shelf life were things that God did not immediately discard after Jesus had fulfilled them by His death (or at least set in motion the fulfillment of by His death). There was yet a due season for them being done in light of what Jesus had done and who He was declared to be through His resurrection. God's appointment that Jewish Christians continue to do these things was not immediately lifted after Jesus' death and resurrection, nor even after His sending of the Holy Spirit upon His disciples on the Day of Pentecost many weeks later. And Judaizers will pounce on this obvious fact, yet they ignore how God in due time did indeed remove His appointment of these ordinances. We are about to see how this all happened.

For reasons known to God, but we can be sure at least to keep the church anchored on its righteous Hebrew foundations, God did not straightway release the Christian church from the practice of the Jewish ceremonies. And that is why for about 12 years after the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, recorded in Acts chapter 2, there had never been a convert to Christianity who had not already been a practicing Jew or who had not become a practicing Jew simultaneously with becoming a Christian. However, about 12 years after the Christian church was founded God chose to send the Apostle Peter to a Roman centurion named Cornelius, a man who feared the true God, the God of the Jews, but yet for some reason had not become a Jew through circumcision (we've seen how circumcision was basically the chief ceremonial law of Judaism which came to represent the entire package of the Jewish ceremonial laws).

We read in Acts chapters 10 that when Peter preached the Gospel of Christ to Cornelius, and those who were with him, the Holy Spirit fell on them in an unmistakable way. This shocked the Jewish Christians with Peter, and even Peter himself, because this had never happened before! Peter had them baptized with water immediately without simultaneously circumcising them. This was reported to the Christians at Jerusalem, who thought such a baptism to be unthinkable, until they heard Peter's firsthand account of the entirety of that event (recorded in Acts chapter 11). They (in general at least) accepted that the conversion of these physically uncircumcised to Christ was genuine; and received this as proof that God had granted physically uncircumcised gentiles repentance unto life (Acts 11:18). Then in the following verses in Acts chapter 11 you read about how there were Christians of Cyprus and Cyrene who had been living at Jerusalem, but were scattered due to persecution that arose in relation to the death of Stephen (see Acts chs 6 to 8). These had been preaching the Gospel to none but Jews only, but they eventually spoke to Grecians (uncircumcised gentiles) at Antioch, who then believed in Christ. The church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to visit them. Barnabas witnessed the grace of God upon these physically uncircumcised gentiles also. This would obviously have been an absolute total shock to him, and to the entire church at Jerusalem, except for what they had recently heard regarding Cornelius and his household.

So the Judaizers are right that Jesus taught and practiced the Mosaic ceremonies. If they claim that the Apostles did the same, they are also right about that too. But are they right to conclude that we yet ought to be Judaizing then? No! We know that following directions is very important to God. Mankind basically fell because Adam and Eve did not follow God's directions. And God makes it clear to His church through Cornelius, and then those gentile Christian believers in Antioch, that He

is now accepting people as Christians without conversion to Judaism (i.e. the Mosaic ceremonies). This would be a great test for the Jewish Christians. Would they accept God's verdict and regard these gentile converts as brothers and sisters in Christ without seeking to bring them under Judaism? Would they let the Mosaic ceremonies serve in the place which God regards as proper or would they exalt them to a measure which God would find improper considering the verdict which He has just given about this? Would the gentile Christians accept this verdict about themselves, even if they felt less spiritual for not having converted to Judaism? Would they perhaps seek the favor of the unbelieving Jews which disdained gentiles and/or the favor of the Jewish Christians which were contending with God's verdict about accepting them without conversion to Judaism? Though these were especially issues in the 1st century, they still have relevance to our topic which applies today.

So then as we go on in Acts chapter 11 we see that Barnabas goes to Tarsus to seek Saul (i.e. Paul), and he brings him to Antioch, where they assemble for a whole year with the church there and teach the church. This obviously goes very well, as the disciples are first called Christians at Antioch. After Paul and Barnabas go on a mission trip to Jerusalem to bring funds for the poor brethren at Jerusalem (recorded in Acts ch 12); they then return to Antioch. They are soon then sent out on a long journey where they travel many miles and plant many churches in gentile cities, most or all of which start with Jews from the local synagogues *and* local gentile converts as well who were not circumcised (i.e. Judaized) upon their conversion to Christ. You can read about this in detail in Acts chapters 13 and 14. At the end of Acts chapter 14 we see Paul and Barnabas back in Antioch declaring to the whole church what God had done with them on their mission trip and how He had opened

the door of faith to the gentiles (Acts 14:27). There has now been a large mass of gentiles converted to Christ without conversion to Judaism.

And then as Acts chapter 15 begins, we have a group from the church at Jerusalem visiting Antioch, but not representing the leadership of the Apostles, who say what the Judaizers are still saying today. Acts 15:1: "And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." They were obviously saying "They cannot be Christians whom God accepts unless they are brought under the Mosaic ceremonies". In Acts 15:5 that will be evident. Did these men not know about Cornelius and what the Apostles had learned through how God dealt with Cornelius? That seems hard to believe. But regardless, no one is going to have any excuse to Judaize gentiles after what unfolds in the rest of this chapter, so we will just read on, with my comments in italics within the passage.

Acts 15:2-32: "When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. 3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. 4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. 5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. 6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. 7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them,

Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. 8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? *(i.e. the Jews in general had been over-scrupulous about the Mosaic ceremonies and saw exact adherence to them as near, or altogether, as a means of justification. In that way they were impossible to bear; and I believe Peter is basically saying, 'What need is there to even expose the gentile Christians to this realm of problems which are among the Jews in relation to these ceremonies, when God has already accepted them apart from the Mosaic ceremonies?'* Consider how he continues in 15:11) 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they *(i.e. we Jewish Christians are not looking to these ceremonies for our justification before God, so there is no need to bring them under these ceremonies when God has clearly accepted them also through their living faith in Christ).* 12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. 13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Simeon *(i.e. Peter)* hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: *(i.e. in context of this quote from the Book of Amos, Israel will be brought under judgment and scattered among the nations, but God will bring a remnant back and restore His worship among these)* 17 That

the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (*i.e. God intended to count physically uncircumcised gentiles among His faithful worshippers from the beginning of the world; He even intended to count them as such after He had taken Israel as His people and bound them under circumcision and all the Mosaic ceremonies. This quote from Amos was looking forward to such a time*). 19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. (*i.e. These are entrance requirements for Christian baptism and church membership, not a summary of everything Christianity requires. They would yet need to be taught and disciplined after entering the Christian church. The thought is basically that while you don't have to circumcise them and make them practicing Jews outwardly for them to be Christian church members, you do need to be absolutely sure that they have indeed broken off from idolatry, fornication, and eating blood- and eating blood would also include eating things strangled since that is a way in which heathen kill animals so they can be ate with all their blood in them. The gentile converts need very specific instruction and warning about how these things are not consistent with Christianity. And by the way, this is all still true today!*) 21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. (*i.e. The books of Moses included the Book of Genesis where eating of blood was forbidden; and the moral aspects of God's Law are taught throughout the books of Moses. This instruction about what faithful worship (i.e. being a Jew inwardly) must necessarily involve is already known in every city and could then be known through the reading in the synagogues of nearly every city. The lack of the need to circumcise them*

doesn't relieve them of the need to follow this instruction. Their conversion to Christ rather enables them to understand it better and to fulfill it.) 22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas and Silas, chief men among the brethren: 23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. 24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: 25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. 30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: 31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. 32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them."

So there you have it. The Apostles, through the obvious implications of what God had already done among them, and through the prophecy of Scripture itself foretelling God accepting gentiles without conversion to Judaism, decreed that imposing the Jewish ceremonies upon gentiles was to cease! At the same time, their understanding of God's grace is that

subjection to God's law is necessary for one to be eligible for grace. Yet henceforth (and already at this point in Acts 15) gentiles could be Christians with subjection to moral law and Christian ordinances *without also* being subject to Jewish ordinances (like the Jewish Christians had been). God chose Peter's interaction with Cornelius as the turning point to make this so. Since ceremonial laws are things which are only right and holy by God's appointment, unlike moral laws which are inherently right and holy, then God can choose to cease causing ceremonial laws to be binding whenever He sees fit. And that is obviously something which He could not, and would not do, with moral laws.

However, both in the 1st century and up until today, many do not accept this God-ordained verdict regarding Judaizing which we just saw evidenced. And there are very bad reasons for this. These are what the Book of Galatians is dealing with. It is ultimately, if you read it all the way through, an instruction on how the ceremonies of the Jewish Law are not an alternative form of justification to the faith of Abraham, how they were never intended to be such at all, and how to take them as such is to preach another gospel. To Judaize then is to indeed elevate the Jewish ceremonies to the point where they are a form of justification through ritualistic works that serve in actuality as a substitute for a living faith in Christ. The book is ultimately an exhortation to walk in the Spirit by faith in Christ, in order to fulfill the Law of Christ, instead of walking the flesh (which is the same as fulfilling the moral law of God). The Judaizers did not sufficiently value this then and they do not today. If they valued it sufficiently, they would see no need to Judaize. Just consider what the Judaizers talk most about. It's not about keeping one's heart right before God nor about practical righteous Christian living which does good to others and demonstrates proper Christian character. It is rather preoccupation with ceremony and ritual. And whenever there

is such preoccupation, especially over ceremony and ritual which God didn't appoint or commanded to cease, then you will have an alternate justification system and devaluation of a living faith and practical righteousness before God. And no one who devalues such is going to faithfully endure on the narrow way that leads to eternal life.

Continuing in the timeline of the Book of Acts, in Acts chapter 16 we see the Apostle Paul going on a second missionary journey and giving this Apostolic decree to the churches he had founded on his first missionary journey. On that journey he recruits Timothy to join him and he circumcises him because of the Jews in the area they were in. Perhaps he did this because Timothy should have been circumcised before. He had obviously had a Jewish mother and a Jewish upbringing, though his father was a gentile. Even though the Jews crucified Christ despite His perfect keeping of the Mosaic ceremonies, and even though God intends Christ to be a stumbling-block to the Jews who don't heed the entirety of their own Scriptures, Paul obviously saw something about Timothy's case that made his lack of being circumcised an unnecessary stumbling-block to the Jews. It is obvious there was some reason this was an exceptional case. Paul was not compromising or violating the decree of the Apostles which he had been delivering to the churches here.

Eventually in Acts chapter 21, Paul again visits the Christians in Jerusalem and meets with the Christian leadership there. They have been informed that he has been telling the Jews in the churches he has planted to forsake the Mosaic ceremonies. This was a false accusation. The leadership in Jerusalem had stuck to its decree and Paul had also been faithful to the decree. *A lot* of people think that Paul was being deceptive in the passage we're about to read, but he wasn't at all. The Jewish Christians, including Paul, had continued to practice the Jewish

ceremonies. They could do this for the right reasons since God hadn't released them from these yet. Something would happen approximately a decade later to change this, but for the time this was the case.

Acts 21:17-26: "And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. 19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: 21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. 22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. 23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; 24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. 25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. 26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them."

So that means what it says. There is no deceit there at all. Paul was acting totally consistent with how God led the Christians through the

church at Jerusalem; and he had acted consistent with his own writings. 1 Corinthians 7:18: "Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised." Many Judaizers actually claim that Paul was a false Apostle and that his epistles are not God's inspired word. That is so ridiculous. They don't take into account Paul's unity with the other Apostles; and how the same Apostles he was in unity with also wrote the Gospels. To pit the Gospels against the NT Epistles and/or pit Paul against the other Apostles is insanity!

The passage we just looked at from Acts 21 happened around AD 60. We know that Biblical Judaism centered around the Temple at Jerusalem. And in AD 70 this Temple was destroyed by the Romans. The Jewish Christians had already escaped Jerusalem altogether at that point. The destruction of the Temple obviously made the practice of Biblical Judaism as a whole impossible, as the vast majority of the Jewish ceremonies required the Tabernacle which had become incorporated into the Temple, as well as a functioning Levitical Priesthood, to faithfully perform. The Temple has never been rebuilt to this day in spite of many plans to do so over the last 1,950 years. And the Jewish genealogy records have been destroyed, making a Scriptural Jewish Priesthood impossible to have going forward. God ordained that only men who could prove from these records that they were of the tribe of Levi, and descendants of Moses' brother Aaron, were to be Priests for the Jewish nation. And that is how the Jewish Christians were also practically released from keeping the Mosaic ceremonies. To this day then, God's rejection of the practice of Judaism, and the validity of Christianity, are both testified by the fact that Scriptural Judaism is impossible to practice while Biblical Christianity (which includes having local church, baptism, and communion- the Christian ordinances,

basically the simplified ceremonial law of Christianity) is possible to practice *anywhere* on earth.

On the Sabbath: Keeping the Sabbath is the only one of the Ten commandments not repeated in the New Testament. The Ten commandments are basically a list of some key points regarding God's moral law which are specifically localized in relation to Israel. The point about the Sabbath is only applicable to all people at all times in that it teaches the principle that we should honor the ceremonial requirements of the covenant with God that we are offered for the time in which we live. The Sabbath itself was a matter of the ceremonial law between God and Israel. Ezekiel 20:12 says "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." In reading Exodus chapter 16 we see how the Sabbath was introduced here (just a very short time afterwards God spoke the Ten commandments in Exodus 20). We can see here that the Sabbath was then new to Israel; and God did not judge the Israelites severely at that time who disobeyed His command about it in their ignorance and confusion. Sometime later in Numbers chapter 15, after there was no confusion about it and the commandment was clear as day to the whole nation, God ordered that a man be put to death who was caught gathering sticks on the Sabbath Day (and He also used this as an opportunity to teach us that there is no blood atonement that can be offered so that the presumptuous sinner can find mercy). So since the Sabbath was specific to Israel, it would obviously be included in the

ceremonial law. Thus the obligation to keep it would end in being released from the Mosaic ceremonies. Look at the things which the Sabbath days are categorized among in this passage. Colossians 2:16-17: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”

When people cling to a shadow when they could embrace the substance instead, they prove that they don't think having the substance is enough- or that they don't want the substance at all! Though the Judaizers will deny this, that is what they are doing. Beware of their error and cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. For those who want further reading on the subject, the Book of Galatians deals directly with the error of Judaizing. The Book of Colossians deals much with the practical dangers related to Judaizing, as well any form of unnecessary ritualism that can have an appearance of sanctity. And note especially as you read these books the spiritual goals which the things they rebuke are opposed to. Whether you are in danger of being Judaized or not, the main reason to avoid error is so you can reach the goals which the error would prevent you from reaching if you were to come under its influence. Failing to meet the goals IS spiritual destruction, no matter the reason(s) for that (reference Colossians 1:18-29).

Chapter 9: Tongues and Sins of Omission

These are two topics which at first don't seem to have much to do with each other, yet the widespread deception concerning the first potentially might facilitate the second. Here is a quick analysis summary then of what the Bible teaches about spiritual gifts- and specifically the gift of speaking in tongues. If you go to Luke chapter 11 you'll see the right reason or motive wherewith we should seek any gift from the Lord.

Luke 11:1-13: "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. 2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3 Give us day by day our daily bread. 4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. 5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? 7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. 8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. 9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If ye then, being evil, know how

to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

Obviously we should have the glory of God as our highest priority when we pray; and consistent with this, we should seek beyond our own needs and consider the needs of others as well. Any need of ours that we want God to meet we should seek to meet for others in our life. Jesus said in Matthew 7:11-12: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? 12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

And it is no coincidence that in the verses which follow the ones we just read, Jesus instructs about entering in at the narrow gate and walking the narrow way to life, while avoiding the broad gate and the broad way which lead to destruction. If we want to be right with God we need to keep His ways; and that means not withholding help from those who cry to us or those whom we otherwise see need help. Obviously God is good and God is a Father who is concerned to help the poor and needy in the multitude of ways that a person might truly be poor and needy. He calls us to walk in His ways. The Scripture says in Proverbs 3:27-28: "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. 28 Say not unto thy neighbor, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee."

So obviously we need to keep this in mind when we're seeking to understand the proper place of spiritual gifts in the Christian life; and also in discerning between spiritual gifts which are genuinely from God and fake spiritual gifts which are from another source. When Paul was dealing with this subject in instructing the Corinthian Church, he made a

foundational statement in 1 Corinthians 12:7 “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” Note the principle that God gives spiritual gifts to those in the body of Christ for the profit of others. A lot of people debate about whether this gift, or that gift, or all the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, were only for the 1st century or for beyond the 1st century as well. But to even discern a spiritual gift from God right, it is foremost necessary to understand that any other time a spiritual gift is genuinely from God, it will be given for the profit of others. When it comes to speaking in tongues then, this obviously proves that a genuine gift of tongues from God would be the ability to speak an actual foreign language on earth; and not rather some unintelligible babbling that could only (supposedly) profit the one speaking it. There were people in the Pagan Temples doing that in the first century, doing that before the first century, and there are *still* people following heathen religions who are doing that.

As Paul goes on dealing with spiritual gifts, he eventually comes to the ultimate point, a point which ultimately applies to everything in Christianity. If you get this you’ll seek God for the right reasons and seek Him for the gifts you truly need to minister to others. You’ll also be delivered from false spiritual gifts and the destructive false spirituality which accompanies these. 1 Corinthians 12:24-31: “For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked. 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29 Are all apostles?

are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? 30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? 31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.”

Spiritual gifts are *all* about the body being edified and the body operating towards its maximum potential. And what is that more excellent way? Obviously that is also the proper motivation whereby we should earnestly seek spiritual gifts. And that is ultimately no different than the man who had a friend in his journey come to him who sought to care for him well, like we read about in Luke chapter 11. Godly love seeks to meet the genuine needs of others!

1 Corinthians 13:1-10: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. 4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

Note also in verse 8 above: If Biblical tongues were a heavenly, angelic language, *then they would not cease- even in eternity*. This proves further that Biblical tongues are the languages of men on earth. And though we're not going to get into 1 Corinthians chapter 14 in detail, the verses there which seem to say otherwise are a reference to someone in a congregation who speaks a different language than everyone else there praying, speaking, or singing out loud in his own language. In that case the speaker is edified, but the rest of the congregation is not edified because they don't speak his language. That is one potential instance where the genuine spiritual gift of tongues would have a place if God were to give a person such a gift. This is proven well by the summary of spiritual gifts, and their relation to charity/love, which the Apostle Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 14:12: "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church." Every instance of the gift of tongues from God being exercised in the Bible involved the speaking of a language on earth, which could be verified as such by those who spoke that language naturally. Likewise, the gift of interpreting tongues from God would involve translating a language of earth into another language of earth- all of which could be verified by natural speakers of the same languages.

As we shift into the other topic now, I'll point out that one reason the counterfeit of the gift of tongues is so dangerous, and the reason that any counterfeit spiritual gift or experience can be so dangerous, is that there is really only one thing that can make a person godly and fit them for heaven- and that is by denying self and following Christ faithfully on the narrow way of submission and faithfulness to God's Word. All the conflict, the agony, the suffering, the loss, etc which that involves is inevitable for those who obtain, and maintain, authentic Christian experience. It is totally logical that one who digs deep and follows through with authentic repentance towards and faith in Christ will be

given God's Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32); and those who cooperate with God's Holy Spirit will take up their cross and die to their carnal appetites and desires daily in order to walk in Biblical holiness and fulfill the righteousness of the Law of God (Romans 8:4, etc). They will suffer, they will go through deserts (in a spiritual sense), they will be tempted, tried, frustrated, afflicted, etc for the Word of God's sake. Yet in continuing faithfully in that way comes spiritual maturity and increased faith. And eventually, in due season, brings greater authentic spiritual experience as they partake of God's mercy and goodness which follows them. And if they yet continue on this way to the end, they will be among the faithful who are ultimately saved, inherit eternal life, and dwell in God's house forever (Psalm 23, Matthew 24:13, etc).

But those who get the counterfeit tongues and other counterfeit spiritual gifts, they are prone to think they are walking with God and have a sign of authentic Christian spiritual experience because of this. Yet in actuality, they have come under the power of a hypnotic spell or perhaps have even come under the power of a seducing demonic spirit. And it's obvious that even the relatively less harmful fake spiritual gifts still are deceitful and will have a tendency to take those who embrace them away from their obligations, and the overall righteous living before God, which they should be occupied with. There is nothing that can happen in a short period of time that will ever be a substitute for genuinely taking up the cross daily and following Christ to do God's will over a long period of time. There is no experience that can happen in a day that will bring one to Christian maturity. All that can happen in a day is a soul turning around and getting on the right road of wholeheartedly obeying Christ and striving against sin. The big-time preachers and their shows, their gimmicks, their feel good manipulations, and their alleged secrets and keys to quickly getting to the height of Christian experience are vanities which deceive and ultimately let down. One example (and there

are many) of such is how they essentially substitute their fake gibberish tongues and/or being “slain in the spirit” (which they produce by hypnosis and other manipulative means) for one *really* being surrendered to Jesus Christ- and from there really laying down their life daily to serve God and make sacrificial choices to bless others in need. And it is submitting to this, and walking through the purifying process this puts one through, which ultimately qualifies them for genuine spiritual gifts and growth in the grace and experiential knowledge of God.

Philippians 3:7-21: “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law (*i.e. through the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Mosaic Law*), but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. 12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. 17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you

often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

2 Peter 3:17-18: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. 18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

To build on what has been said, this an especially appropriate place to talk about sins of omission. False spiritual gifts and experiences ultimately accomplish something dreadful- yet also something which we might very well let happen anyways, even if we can be free of those. We could yet find our own reasons and justifications for not doing all that the Lord has commanded us to do, which basically puts us in the same category as those subverted by the fake spiritual gifts and counterfeit spiritual experiences.

1 Peter 4:17-19: “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? 19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

Consider then how we started off looking at the right reason to seek spiritual gifts. We should have a heart and mind actively set on

glorifying God and meeting the needs of others. Most of the time we don't need even a specific gift from the Holy Spirit to do this. We know that the Holy Spirit inspired the Word of God; and we know that the Word of God is the Truth which testifies God's will which we ought to do. We need to seek God for grace to do what is right in His eyes, yet we must follow through and do it (even not praying for God's help and not having a right heart before Him are sins of omission). Why would God ever give a special spiritual gift to someone whose heart wasn't set on that; and who wasn't wholeheartedly pursuing that?

Luke 16:10-13:: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. 11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Note how active, and not passive, running the Christian race is. We are our brother's keeper. Hebrews 12:12-15: "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. 14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled"

Even not talking, when silence is appropriate, can take much effort in a way. We have to open our eyes to see the needs of the afflicted and needy. Since sin so easily besets and our flesh is weak, we have to watch

and pray to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. James 1:26-27: “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. 27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

Ezekiel 18:1-9: “The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, 2 What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge? 3 As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. 4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. 5 But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, 6 And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbor’s wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, 7 And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; 8 He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man, 9 Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God.”

Having a covetous heart will prevent one from doing good in God’s eyes. But those who don’t do the good which they know they ought to do resist God’s grace and live in sin, even if they are not living to get maximally rich. James 4:13-17: “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the

morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. 16 But now ye rejoyce in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. 17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

Titus 2:11-14: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity (*i.e. lawlessness*), and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

A great quote related to these things: “I shall pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do or any kindness I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.” -Stephen Grellet, 19th century evangelist

Note both Luke 10:25-37 and Luke 10:38-42: No one in a situation like either of these situations would hurt their reputation before men *by doing the wrong thing*. Yet God sees all and knows the whole story. Jeremiah 17:7-10: “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”

Faith with works which is alive, or we could say, a living faith with works, is diligent to obey God's instructions, active to side with God's verdicts, and ready to do good for God's people and any in genuine need (reference esp Matthew 25:31-46 and James 2:14-26 here). The Christian life is more than giving up your most destructive sins. It is a wholehearted turning from sin, striving against sin, and living commitment to learn and follow through with doing well before God, even to blood. Don't settle for a cheap substitute for this or anything less than this in any way! There is no other way to know God as a Father and friend; and no other way to obtain glory and to escape damnation. There is also no shortcut to Christian maturity, and all the good attributes which come with that, other than by pursuing this diligently, strenuously, and persistently- *over time*.

Isaiah 1:16-18: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Chapter 10: Warring Against the Jezebel Spirit

Not every woman is a Jezebel. And not every sin a woman might commit is necessarily related to being a Jezebel. Nevertheless there are plenty of Jezebel women around now and plenty of sins committed that are related to Jezebels. Don't see this study as an attack on women in general, because it is not. Know also though that the type of person most likely to claim that a study like this is an attack on women in general would be a Jezebel woman working to justify herself, and cover herself, after being exposed. And another big candidate to claim this would be a man who is under the power of a Jezebel woman.

Women ought to be respected and regarded as having potentially useful, and even great, insights. Some of the best insights I've ever been given have been from women who humbly and kindly told me things which I needed to hear- probably much more than they realized. I believe that every church leader should make sure that his church profits from the insights of the faithful women in the church who recognize their God-given place. I am not giving directions or advice on how to go about this, but it is proper to have times and places to ask the women what they think about a certain topic, situation, or Scripture passage so that the church as a whole can benefit from their wisdom. When handled wisely, that is a far cry from women teaching in front of the whole church, having leadership roles over men within the church, exercising control in

the church by manipulation behind the scenes, or otherwise seeking to exert power over men who teach and lead in the church.

It is important to know the marks of Jezebels and the types of sins which will lead a female into becoming a Jezebel. Men who resist those sins are not good candidates for being brought under the power of a Jezebel. And Pastors, fathers, and others in authority should know that Jezebels are not made overnight. They are formed by conditioning to receive attention and getting their way through abuse of their feminine qualities. It is important to rebuke and restrain these things when they show themselves, as well as to not allow circumstances for such conditioning to happen. And this should be done in a way where women are taught to resist men who truly seek to harm them and take advantage of them. There is such a thing as godly assertiveness which women ought to exercise occasionally. The Jezebel though, whether she is capable or not of assertiveness when it would be appropriate, is a predator herself who would rule and dominate all men through seduction and all manner of psychological manipulations. She connives, she threatens in blatant or subtle ways, and she is not content with the God-given roles of a woman. It is no wonder that there are modern feminists who boldly declare themselves to be Jezebels; and who actually praise the Jezebel of the Bible as a great woman.

The Jezebel may claim she is just as strong and capable as a man is, she may act aggressively, and yet she will cry abuse and victimization when

she is overpowered and subdued. She may begin to attempt a logical debate to show why she should get her way, yet she may throw a tantrum when logic has proved her to be in the wrong. She wants control, yet she does not want an equal playing field and to be left to the quality of her own merits in determining whether she will get it. Otherwise, she would not be a Jezebel. Instead, she plays an intricate mind game to cast off male domination and rule over men, while employing the powers of the male for her own ends. She is dangerous- and if she had her way, like the Jezebel of the Bible sought to do, she would destroy every faithful preacher of God's Word (in terms of influence at least, but quite possibly murder also).

No preacher can be faithful to God's Word without addressing the sins of women. The Bible has a lot to say about sins which are commonly practiced by women. Yet Scriptures which deal with such are often not touched, or at least not handled thoroughly and honestly, by modern churches. This is often due to the influence and intimidation of Jezebels. And yet such Scriptures are necessary to hold the lines of Biblical righteousness, to rebuke the Jezebels, to warn all of Jezebel's influence, to keep men from Jezebel's seduction, and to kill the deadly seeds of Jezebel characteristics in females which the influences of sin in their flesh and of society are powerfully watering. An example of such a Scripture would be Proverbs chapter 7, which describes the workings of the harlot. And not only a harlot, but a predatory Jezebel in action.

There is a connection given in Scripture between haughty women and superficial women who exercise power over men through fashionable clothing and overall vainglorious superficial, counterfeit beauty (reference Isaiah 3:8-24). This so well applies to high-minded Jezebels in our day who specialize in seduction and exalt themselves in their vainglorious fashion displays- ultimately to reaping God's judgment and their own destruction. A girl becoming obsessed with her appearance, a girl unwilling to abide in her house (as is seen regarding the Jezebel harlot in Proverbs chapter 7), these are key precursors to many sins and ways that a girl can easily be conditioned to turn out as a Jezebel. These are bad roots that need to be starved and killed- or they will yield very bad fruit eventually.

Where have society and churches most practically strayed from Biblical teachings? Quite possibly in areas which pertain to women. This is the result of feminist/Jezebel influence. Through the same influence men are generally vilified in churches while women in general are exalted. It is common knowledge that the normal thing in our day is for a church to preach a message on Mother's Day about how wonderful mothers are and how we should value them so highly. But then on Father's Day the normal message is a rebuke to fathers about what a terrible job they're doing and how so much that is wrong is their fault. Pastors also don't normally teach, much less do they enforce Biblical commands on modest dress and forbidding displays of vanity in fashion. They don't want an outcry from the Jezebels! So instead of dealing with their unpleasant

anger, and the likely next step of having to cast the ones that won't change out of the church, they back down and stay silent while the Jezebels get their way.

1 Peter 3:1-5: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands..." Since meek, chaste, modest women who are subject to their own husbands are of great price in God's sight, it is only logical that loud, dominant, mean-spirited women prone to draw attention to themselves (by dress or behavior or both) are ugly in His sight. Believing that should encourage us to war with such and not justify them nor back down an inch to them.

Note also the luxury, the costliness, and the vainglorious jewelry of the harlot church- the ultimate representation of Jezebel as an institution and corporate entity. Revelation 17:1-6: "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that

sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration." And by the way, look at her judgment in the next chapter, along with the insight into her wicked heart. Revelation 18:7-8: "How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."

Here are some very key qualities of men who are *not candidates* to be brought under the power of a Jezebel. Bringing men under her control is an essential aspect of Jezebel's mission. This defined the actual Jezebel of the Bible. Men described below are highly unlikely to be an Ahab brought under the power of a Jezebel.

- Men who quickly reject enticement by outward beauty, fashion, other feminine charms etc. Men who fully believe this *without wavering*: "Favor (*charm*) is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." (Proverbs 31:30) Delilah was a Jezebel in spirit before the actual Jezebel even existed. And Samson, despite all his physical might, was under her spell due to her beauty and charm. Look at what he lost due to that! And though the Philistines meant it for evil, it was a mercy to Samson that they put out his eyes (Judges 16:21), because his bent towards feminine seduction was thus starved. He was then able to recover in the Lord to have a good ending- at least a much better ending than he had been on track for when he was seduced by Delilah. Jezebels prey on superficial men by their own specialization in superficiality. Remember how when Jehu had just been anointed as King of Israel, and was coming to kill Jezebel, she painted her face (i.e. put on make-up) to try to seduce him. Jehu, unlike Samson, chose to be blind to the harlot and wasn't swayed by his mission due to this. This also gives insight into why it is right for parents and Pastors to forbid wearing make-up to those under their authority. Make-up gives the connotation (i.e. implied underlying message) of boldness, impudence, seduction, etc. Jezebels often rely on make-up; and it would be hard to find a Jezebel who didn't wear it (though such would be an especially subtle and dangerous Jezebel). Make-up, when understood at its roots, is not just about "looking good." It is also worth noting that it was two eunuchs who turned on Jezebel and threw her out of the window to her death at Jehu's command. There is a lesson there in how Jezebel couldn't

tempt the eunuchs. We need to exercise blindness to the things which seductive women use to seduce men, even if we are not literally blind like Samson became and even if we have not been castrated like those eunuchs. When a female sees you're not easily swayed by her seduction or pressure, and that you're not afraid to look like a bad guy because you're not attached to any type of image that you want others to have of you, she will very likely feel disarmed and not see you as a direct target for her schemes. If we are truly taking up the whole armor of God, and doing all to stand like we are commanded in Ephesians chapter 6, then we have the best protection from the Jezebels. Further related to that, we move on.

- Men who understand from the heart that the Bible shouldn't be interpreted through the norms of modern culture; and understand that modern culture is highly corrupt and highly corrupted by feminism. It is only because of feminist influence that the concept of a woman being a Pastor or a woman being President is not typically considered very improper and out of order. 1 Timothy 2:11-14: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." It is a violation of Scripture to sit in a church under a woman Pastor or in a church where there are women in any way exercising spiritual authority over men. And if that sounds strange to you, then you likely have been too trusting of modern culture,

and of culture in general, not sufficiently recognizing that the whole world lies in wickedness (1 John 5:19). The things that the Apostles would not suffer (i.e. not permit) we should not partake of in any way. When anyone, man or woman, sits under female leadership in a church (one area where we can surely individually decide whose authority we put ourselves under), they are suffering what the Apostles would not suffer, they are enabling the Jezebel spirit, and they are enabling what God calls disorder. This is rebellion to God's design of hierarchy. This is why Satan especially promotes woman leadership in the church, this is the root of feminism, and this is what Satan is ultimately after in pushing feminism. It is true that some female Pastors may not really know what they are doing, and maybe don't even know Scriptures like 1 Timothy 2:11-14, yet they ought to be informed. And if she is really that unfamiliar with the Bible, why is she preaching and/or leading in the church anyways? This matter is truly a big deal.

- Men who embrace authority which God has appointed for them and won't back down from that- even unto death if necessary. Men need to make decisions where they have been put in charge according to God's order. They need to hold and enforce Biblical lines- and not back down from doing so by anyone or anything. Consider how improper it would be for a Pastor to let a stranger come into his church and just take over teaching. That would not be a faithful shepherd. Consider how improper it would be for a father to let a stranger come into his home, sleep in his bed with his wife, and act like he were the father of his

children. We'd know he was majorly effeminate and a coward. And yet the man could not be much better who lets a woman, whether that be his wife or another woman, manipulate and/or contradict how he governs and guides his home or his church!

Revelation 2:20-23: "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

The church elder of Thyatira, whom Christ primarily addressed here, was probably not even letting this particular Jezebel teach during the church meetings. That would have been *really bad* and it would make Christ's commendations of the Church in Thyatira in the surrounding verses seem ridiculous. What this woman was probably doing was subtly teaching these things in the social times after church or in homes during the week. And the elder was *still* rebuked for not taking measures to stop this- and perhaps for not being diligent enough to know the extent of what was actually going on too. Church elders are expected to know about views being held and taught by their members which are not

Biblical, even when not taught formally during the church meeting. And women should not be leading nor forming church doctrine in unofficial ways either. Both church leaders and fathers need to understand what is really going on in, and related to, the places where they have jurisdiction. They need to put their foot down by forbidding improper influence, the promotion of ungodly concepts, and they need to enforce righteousness according to Biblical terms. This obviously can result in fights and carries the risk of looking like "the bad guy." Calling out Jezebel, rebuking her, and forbidding her seductive teachings (seductive in either the spiritual or natural realm) has always been controversial and has always potentially involved a fierce fight. And that is especially true in our day. Insecure men are very vulnerable to being stepped on by Jezebel and taken advantage of by her. But remember how the faithful are victorious over Satan. Revelation 12:10: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

By understanding our calling and our jurisdiction from God's Word, and by choosing to hold to these even unto death for Christ's sake, we will gain the security and courage, along with the wisdom and self-control, to fight Jezebel off according to the boundaries of God's law and man's law. Jezebel has been known to falsely accuse and feign harm to herself that isn't real, but we can and should cast ourselves into God's hands, trusting ourselves to Him in well-doing no matter the consequences. The fact is we have already lost and suffered irreparable harm if we let fear of

a fight and fear of a woman's rage cause us to back down from what is right in God's eyes. Jezebels are indeed angry women. They insist on having their way- and when they don't get it, they want to make the one stopping them to have to pay hell for it. Look at these pro-choice women protesting the overturning of Roe v. Wade. They don't resort to logic to make their point. They resort to rage and profanity. I have never, to my memory, heard an abortion supporter try to defend their stance without rage or profanity (and often both). They don't care about logical debate nor are they concerned about the immorality of abortion, because the issue to them is one of control. And control is their god. They don't care beyond that. Yet they also foolishly don't consider that they are under the control of a masculine spirit which hates them, wants to destroy them eternally, and uses them as a tool in his hand (whose name is Lucifer and Satan, by the way).

As ugly as Jezebel's rage is, it doesn't accomplish anything for her unless it causes those with the power to stop her to cave in and bow to her demands. And that is what we see in churches all over the place now. It is of note that when Jehu was coming to kill Jezebel and she threw an angry false accusation at him, he ignored her and spoke around her to those with her in the house who were in a position to cast her down out of the window. The people in our churches, and any whom we have authority over or the opportunity to influence should be warned about Jezebels, taught about their villainous ways, and guided in how to stand against them. Jezebel is very limited when the common people are

against her; and Jezebel will not be defeated until some common people resist her. Though we must war against Jezebel, we should never play her game. She thrives on seduction, emotion (especially anger), false accusation (especially when rage or seduction are things she sees aren't going to work), and all manner of conniving. Don't get into a heated argument with her and don't get emotional with her. I'm not saying there isn't a time to tell her a furious no and/or to tell her to get out, but I would make sure that God is with you, time this so that it is likely to work, and be ready to stand by such a moment afterwards so that you will not need to apologize for it. Regardless, Jezebel needs to be stood against, told a firm no, and then have her rage, false accusations, and threats ignored or dealt with appropriately and swiftly if/when just ignoring her isn't prudent. The people who are enabling her, or who at least have a chance to righteously restrain or punish her, ought to be exhorted to cast her down from her place of influence- and rebuked if they will not do so. If a Jezebel is troubling your home or church, and she has an enabling husband who is in the picture, contend with him. Call the police if she is breaking the law of the land and seek to hold them accountable so that they hold her accountable. Rebuke those under your jurisdiction who are heeding her, justifying her, defending her, etc and cast them out too if they won't repent and contend with her.

How powerful can a Jezebel's rage be? Proverbs 25:24: "It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house." And this is one of the very few Proverbs which is repeated

for emphasis (see also Proverbs 21:9). Even the Prophet Elijah fled for fear of Jezebel after the great victory and vindication of both God, and of himself, at Mount Carmel. This was not a good moment for Elijah, though here he didn't fail to the point of actually letting Jezebel corrupt his jurisdiction. He was in a complicated situation. Jezebel was a usurper in God's land who had been enabled by wicked Ahab and the wicked people. Elijah was a stranger there, though he was an Israelite, precisely because he was a righteous man. His situation is an example of how some dealings with Jezebels are not so simple to handle due to the fact that the righteous don't always have jurisdiction; and conditions in the world which wickedness has led to can enable Jezebels and give them a lot of power.

Psalm 11: "In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright."

Consider that the brawling and contentious woman probably never should have been in the home at all. If any single man is listening to this, and you are considering a woman for marriage, if you see wanton eyes (even towards you), if you discern a dominant spirit, if you see that she resents obeying her parents (especially her father), if you see that she *ever* throws a tantrum when she doesn't get her way, then do not marry her!! She is a Jezebel; and you will have an *awful* fight to keep your home pure and to raise your children right if you take her as your wife and so give her influence in your house. Ahab and Jezebel continued in power, and were strengthened and enabled in their wickedness, due to the sins, failures, and overall weakness of the vast majority of Israelites. Like we just saw, sometimes there are Elijahs who have to fight against a Jezebel whom they did not take home and whom they did not enable, but this is a cross they must bear in being faithful to the Lord, an iniquity of their people which gets laid upon them in their righteousness. We definitely have a duty to be faithful and uphold God's truth where we have jurisdiction; and if that brings us into conflict with a Jezebel, then we've got to be faithful and fight her wisely in the strength of the Lord. And these things should help us to do that well. We just may perish, but we also just may be instruments in bringing redemption to a seemingly hopeless situation that had been brought about due to the usurping of a Jezebel. And whatever happens with us, doing this may inspire and embolden others to stand firm as men who side with the Lord in a time corrupted by feminism, where men who act like men, especially men who do what godly men ought to do, are vilified and called all manner of

evil names. Consider these verses then in the context of this study. You may not have considered them before in this light.

Matthew 5:10-16: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Chapter 11: Long-term Christian Singleness

I believe that many fall away from the Lord, or fail to mature much in the Lord, due to problems in an area which to my knowledge would be very rare for a church to even try to tackle. Those facing prolonged singleness typically lack good counsel and guidance in how to manage staying single as they get older, since this is something which tends to get trickier as a person passes the age of 25 or 30 or so. Complications related to this can arise; and examples of those who have done what they are doing tend to get fewer as they get older and remain single. This study then is about handling the trials of prolonged singleness so Christians can be saved from great damage in relation to it and navigate through it in a way where God will indeed get glory.

Do understand that for most people who face this, it's indeed a real problem. The Apostle Paul, who in spite of the fact that he was single and recommended that others remained single as *an ideal*, understood that this is very difficult for most people. 1 Corinthians 7:1-9: "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.³ Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. 4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. 5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (*i.e. lack of self-control*). 6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. 7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another

after that. 8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. 9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn."

Note that Paul recommended marriage to avoid fornication. He didn't, in dealing with this with this subject, bring up obtaining children. When God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, the populating of the world depended on them doing that. The world *has* been filled with people, even in the first century it had been- and much, much more so now. So Paul primarily saw that prolonged adult singleness was typically not the best option for Christians because of the need to avoid fornication. Continually burning in temptation and lack of companionship can be the result of prolonged singleness, especially when Christian boundaries are maintained and Christian principles are held to. Though this is a problem, at the same time it is a problem that can be overcome righteously for as long as someone needs to remain single.

There are rare people who either don't have great desires in that way, or who at least have a knack of managing those desires and distracting themselves from them, so that prolonged singleness is not a great weight and overall difficulty for them. But this is not a gift that most have. At the same time, even if someone doesn't have such a gift, they can still play by the rules and live righteously before God as long as they are single- despite the great challenge which they face in doing so. Single people should really believe this, as it is certainly true. A long time ago (to me, in my limited perspective), I heard a man confidently and enthusiastically say that it's possible to stay pure and wait until marriage; and it is something I remember well that has been encouraging. Our society says otherwise- yet that is *a lie*. You can be faithful and pure in

this area- even if you don't get married in early adulthood and even if you don't have a special gift of singleness. It is a battle others have fought victoriously; and it is a battle others are fighting now. Knowing you are not the only one facing temptation like this, and that others have overcome great temptation related to this, really does matter.

Every Christian ought to be anchored in the fear of God so that even if it could be truly said that the temptations and trials they face are miserable (in this area or in any area really), it is still much better to endure misery for righteousness' sake than it is to relieve yourself through sin. It is very similar to where Jesus said to fear not them that kill the body but after that have no more that they can do; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. Even though it is better to marry than to burn, it is also better to burn in celibacy than it is to yield to sin to relieve that burning- and so damage yourself and offend against God. It is also better to burn than to enter into an ungodly marriage and/or a marriage which you know can't be God's best for you. Perhaps if you were to patiently wait a little longer a potential marriage partner would come who doesn't display red flags, even when you honestly look for such with the willingness to back off if you see any. Yet even if such a person doesn't come around anytime soon, and singless is your righteous lot for a while yet, that trial is still way better than entering into a marriage with red flags attached.

People facing the trial of long-term singleness should be taught to use the awareness of the spiritual danger they are in to work hard, to find good projects to do, godly missions to perform, and definite goals to obtain. When they do that they not only can use their singleness to do good works that are pleasing to God and to find ways to better themselves, they can also in these ways distract themselves from any miseries and

pains they feel in relation to loneliness, frustration, etc. These things will also help them to tire themselves out so that they sleep better. This will truly minimize their temptations and make it easier not to act on them.

Whether someone has a special gift of singleness or not, those with definite goals and missions will likely do better being single and feel much better about being celibate than others. Even lost people sometimes just skip over snares related to fornication and certain other vices simply because they are taken up with their studies, their job, sports, and/or some hobby that they are obsessed with. Though they are idolaters who are not serving God and are rather living in sin, they are at least being spared from a lot of damage (remember 1 Corinthians 6: he that commits fornication sinneth against his own body). And they also serve as lessons of how Christians can be active in ways that are consistent with serving God faithfully to indeed avoid the snares of sexual immorality and the bad habits which people often take up to compensate for the void they feel in relation to lack of romance, companionship, etc. I've also heard the testimony of a Christian man whose wife had recently died, who believed God had, in his mourning, shown him "Give me the affection that you would have given to her." Singleness gives opportunities to draw near to God, and even opportunity for a potential increase of quality in drawing near to God, that are not impossible for married people to find, but which the married may have a harder time finding due to distractions related to marriage.

So even if singleness is seen as a great disadvantage, like any disadvantage it is possible to spin it, overcome it, and use it to your advantage instead. Single people who are struggling definitely need encouragement and instruction along these lines. If you got married rather early on in your adult years, you shouldn't come across as if you

know exactly what those who are single past these years are facing. Nevertheless these are practical instructions which you can give them if you are in a position to help them. Encourage them that they can get through this righteously as long as they need to. They shouldn't make a vow to stay single for life (encourage those who have done so to retract it- too daunting and challenging, not necessary). But in the grace of God and by the grace of God, praying for His help through Jesus Christ one day, one week, one year at a time- this *can* be done.

What Does "Cannot Contain" in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 mean? 1 Corinthians 7:8-9: "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. 9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn."

Is this teaching that someone who is defeated by sexual sin should get married to solve the problem of their inability to exercise self-control? Some definitely think that. But if that were true, that would mean that the Apostle Paul is teaching here that the person marrying them would have to compromise Christian standards in their selection of a spouse. That is *ridiculous*. There is a way to understand this without having to come to such a ridiculous and unrighteous conclusion. It should be established that nobody ever needs to commit sexual sin, even if they are single and they find being single very difficult. And anyone who is yielding to temptation and lacking self-control will surely not be cured of this just by getting married. They will likely still be plagued by sexual sin after marriage. And even if they are not, they will still carry habits of being impulsive and intemperate which will manifest themselves in other ways (bad temper, talking way too much, improper eating, inability to handle finances, etc). If someone does not seek God and learn to take up their cross daily to overcome sexual sin by His grace while they are

single, then marriage will not cure them of their carnality. Marriage will only draw someone else into having to put up with their carnality in a very personal and continual way, even if their carnality can be better cloaked for a while due to some relief in one area that marriage might provide.

So what does the phrase "cannot contain" actually mean if it can only apply to faithful Christians who are righteously eligible to enter into marriage with another faithful Christian? Consider the Apostle Paul's main point in this chapter as he talked about the perspective which Christians should have about marriage. That point can be summed up well by 1 Corinthians 7:35: "And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction." Paul had been saying throughout this chapter that singleness, when one could handle it well, is a better state to attend upon the Lord without distraction. Marriage brings a set of cares and snares related to this life which are good to avoid. If someone is happy and prospering in the Lord while single, it is best that they stay single. And yet, going back to the opening nine verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 7, for many people this is not the case. Many single Christians find the weight of long-term singleness very hard to bear. They can overcome sexual sin and endure faithfully in this state as long as they need to by the grace of God- *yet they may find it so difficult that it is a weight and a care to them which is even greater than the weights and cares typically associated with marriage.*

Obviously the weights and cares of an unequal marriage yoke are way worse than the weights associated with being single would ever likely be, but that truth only strengthens the case that "cannot contain" here is referring to finding singleness to be a notable difficulty, not as a

reference to being overcome by sexual sin. Viewing it as the latter would mean that another Christian would have to compromise, and enter into a marriage that would be a tremendous spiritual weight for them, in order to help solve the other's sexual sin problems. That is a view which is neither righteous nor practical. Yet when "cannot contain" is understood as singleness being a weight that might hold someone back from serving the Lord as well as they might if they were to marry another faithful Christian, then that is both a sensible and righteous understanding of what Paul meant here. Such an understanding also lines up well with the main point Paul sought to drive home in this chapter related to how Christians should view and approach marriage.

Chapter 12: The Limitations of Money

There is a tendency in man's heart to think that the potential resources, and other advantages which more money offers, are able to accomplish more good than they are really able to. Even one wicked choice involved in obtaining money will undo all the good which that money could possibly do- *and worse*. Whenever we neglect spiritual wisdom, and neglect to do whatever the whole counsel of God requires of us, then we are really poor. And that is true whether our heart is set on things like obtaining great material wealth and financial security; or whether we're simply slothful for any reason in the Word of God, prayer, and the overall pursuit of righteousness before God. It's important to remember that the goal always ought to be righteousness, not wealth and not poverty. It cannot be understated how important it is to set our hearts on doing what is right before God and to view all our dealings with finances as avenues to *that*. When we do so, any wrong attitude towards finances, and any dishonest dealing in them, will seem hideous and utterly counterproductive to our ultimate goal. And whenever such things don't seem utterly hideous and unthinkable to act upon, then that is a red flag that our hearts are not right; and mourning and repentance before God is surely needed (reference James 4:7-10). And if you read James 4 in its entirety, it is very much dealing with the carnal strife to obtain the things of earth which all men are prone to. It is also dealing with the carnal tendency to neglect to do good in God's eyes to instead pursue the things of earth.

With this said then, the very common concept that has even come to be associated with Christian ministry, that goes something like "If I only had more money, I could do so much more good" is seen to be fraudulent- *especially* when such is said as a complaint. A narrow

exception to this might be if it is said by someone who is in a position to literally save people's lives who are in dire circumstances, like people starving or otherwise being delivered to death. But when that's really the case it involves someone literally putting their own life on the line and offering their blood essentially to help others in desperate need. That is definitely not the context of the vast majority of such lamentations; and definitely not the case when someone's own lifestyle has the potential to be enhanced beyond mere necessities were they to be given more money.

The Apostle Paul was much more concerned with the young man he mentored, and with the Christians which he led in general, not being content in having what they needed than he was concerned with them not obtaining enough material wealth. Paul obviously knew of the good which wealth might do; and he was writing inspired by God's Spirit, who knows this best. Yet God also sees the whole picture, and a man with godly discernment sees the picture well enough to know that there are limitations on the good that money can do. There is another realm where the battle is ultimately being decided, which no amount of money can obtain the victory in, even though it might very well be a hindrance and a distraction which prevents the victory from being won.

1 Timothy 6:5-10: "Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition (*i.e. eternal damnation*).10 For the love of money is the root of all evil:

which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows..."

One lesson that we can learn from the above passage is that those in poorer countries who seek to come to America, or to come to other nations which are richer than their own, are often not making a good choice. Making such a move, or even setting one's heart on making such a move, opens one up to a new world of temptations, challenges, frustrations, etc that are hard for even those motivated to make such a move for pure reasons to handle. And if they are mainly motivated by a more comfortable life and are not fleeing famine, war, and/or seeking to honestly fulfill a real duty which makes such a move a necessity, then in the spiritual realm they are not too different from someone who walks across a battlefield where their enemies are waiting, while they basically say "Shoot me."

Yet fleeing the love of money and things related to that is not enough. There is more. 1 Timothy 6:11-12a "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life..." (see also 2 Timothy 2:22). You can only have the spiritual discernment and skill to faithfully demonstrate righteousness, and minister God's Word to produce the fruit of righteousness in those who hear you, when you are faithful yourself to put off the old man and put on the new, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to pursue the things God values, to do all that you know to be His will, to study His Word to find better light and good direction, and to get in your proper place in the various circumstances and situations in which you find yourself. Spiritual discernment and power from the true God do not come any other way. If we are not wholeheartedly pursuing righteousness, being faithful to do

all that we know we ought to do before Him, then our money cannot serve righteousness much. We are actually then prime candidates for instead serving mammon, along with the deceitful lusts associated with such service. In that case we'd be better off not even claiming to be Christians.

2 Timothy 2:1-7: “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. 3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. 5 And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. 6 The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits. 7 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.”

In light of these verses, it's good to consider the things which compromised people who attempt to be gospel ministers, in spite of their service to mammon, use as counterfeits for actual spiritual power and spiritual discernment from God. Such things have been commonly labeled as the workings of God's Holy Spirit, when they are simply not. And the influence of such deceitful labeling is everywhere- *since* compromise related to mammon is everywhere. We need to be aware of it to make sure we purge this influence from our own minds and methods. Here are just a few key examples:

- The use of soft music to draw people to altars, to induce them to say sinner's prayers, make confessions of faith in Christ, etc.

- The employment of excessive, unnecessary emotion (shouting, crying, laughing, etc) to draw people to do the same; and to attempt to make sermons and prayers seem powerful before God.

- Using manipulative tactics to induce guilt in people, not proper guilt related treason against God and wrong done towards others, but rather guilt related to matters which have more to do with looking bad before man over insignificant or utterly meaningless things (like if they don't come up to the altar or put money in the collection plate at the moment or raise their hand to a certain declaration which they are being persuaded to agree to).

- The use of music, whether it be loud or soft or otherwise, to stir people's emotions and to produce emotional experiences which are carelessly and boldly declared to be encounters with God.

- The use of hypnosis and carnal psychological tactics to get people to jabber "in tongues", to get people "slain in the spirit", to induce "holy laughter", and other various hysteria which commonly pervade (but are not limited to) circles influenced by the fake revival that is called Azusa Street.

- Running campaigns to build large buildings, obtain elaborate sound systems, and other things related to a church meeting place which are obviously excessive. Then when the goal is raised, attributing the meeting of that goal to God's providence and the Holy Spirit.

-Obtaining donations for a meeting place and the operations of the church (including the minister's salaries) through psychological pressure/false guilt tactics, other manipulation, and/or other unrighteous

means (like events where there is alcohol served and/or there is immodest entertainment and/or raffles/lottery drawings, etc). And then calling any success in this the work of God.

The reality is that those who do such things depend on such things, and feel the need to label them as the work of God's Holy Spirit, *precisely because they do not actually have God's Holy Spirit*. (Remember also here Simon the sorcerer's great error in thinking that the gift of God, the Holy Spirit, can be purchased with money).

When men really have God's Holy Spirit they do *not absolutely need* money beyond providing for their own needs (and their household's needs if they have dependents). They do not need music, shouting, and they do not need to appeal to people's emotions and/or shame them up to altars and into "making decisions for Christ" etc. Dependence on more money and resources to advance God's kingdom is way more dangerous than not having enough money and resources!

Hebrews 12:25-29: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: 26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. 27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: 29 For our God is a consuming fire."

May we be consumed then with the things that cannot be shaken. And I'll add in closing here that as you read the Book of Acts and see Paul proceed in his missionary journeys, specifically in Acts chapters 13 to 19, you can notice that Paul's pattern over time was to stay in cities longer after he had planted churches in them. He never ceased thinking about how to advance the Gospel further, but he did especially focus on not losing the ground he had already gained. He labored much to secure, cultivate, and enrich that ground so it could hold up without him and so it could be used to gain further ground. You also see in that section of Acts how a few times the Apostles sought to go somewhere but the Spirit of God forbade them from going- at least for the moment (Paul was forbidden from going to Asia when he first sought to go, yet he got there eventually). Sometimes limited mobility is a blessing. And not just related to this topic, but in many other ways also, having things not as easy as they might have been can actually be a big advantage. There is a lesson in that the Vikings derived their above average strength and endurance for battle through having to row their own boats when they traveled by sea to the various places they conquered. In many things, less is more at times. And that can especially be the case when it comes to money and other earthly advantages in relation to being a faithful Christian. If we're not aware of that, we're prime bait for the snare of the devil since frustration, bitterness, anxiety, and other such things give him a foothold in anyone who is infected by these. Don't let it happen. Otherwise, anything we offer to the Lord is in the realm of Cain's sacrifice. It won't be accepted and we'll have a problem infinitely greater than any problem related to material lack.

Proverbs 15:8-9: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight. 9 The way of the

wicked is an abomination unto the Lord: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness."

"Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." (Proverbs 11:4)

We can't be an honor to God nor eternally benefit others if we're not living demonstrations of the proper attitude towards mammon, using money and material wealth faithfully in the service of God's kingdom and righteousness, while discerning and honoring the boundaries of their limits.

Chapter 13: Don't Be Discouraged by Setbacks

I'm calling this study "Don't be Discouraged by Setbacks." This is for those whom possibly the most comforting Bible verse, Romans 8:28, applies to, "those who love God.. them who are called according to his purpose." Those who have chosen to deny themselves, take their cross, and follow Jesus Christ in order to be dead indeed unto sin, alive unto God, and endure the arduous process of being renewed according to God's image should not be discouraged by setbacks. All others have a greater problem in that they don't love God and aren't rightly responding to His purpose which He calls all men to through Christ's Gospel. This is not spoken to these directly, though it will speak of the suffering for righteousness which they are not doing; and of the great promises and true security of being in God's grace which they are missing out on due to their inadequate response to Christ's great salvation which He offers them.

It's really interesting that when the man who eventually became the Apostle Paul was still Saul the persecutor on a mission to stamp out Christianity, his turnaround moment came when a bright light from heaven blinded him as he was on a mission trip (not all missions are good). Christ spoke to him in his weakened and handicapped state. This led to his conversion to Christ and changed the nature of both the short-term mission he was on, as well as the overall mission of his life. That much isn't hard to comprehend to the natural mind. We know that it is appropriate for a person doing evil to be chastised. Yet what is not so easy to comprehend is when a man who is doing right and serving God with his whole heart gets the same kind of pain and frustration which it is fitting for a wicked man to get in pursuing evil and serving the devil. It is really interesting to compare Paul's description of his sufferings *as a*

faithful Christian missionary with the types of sufferings that God threatened Israel with if they should do wickedly and be disobedient to Him. There are some similarities! Yet as we'll see, there are some key differences, especially the key difference in the reasons for God delivering over a person to such in each case.

Deuteronomy 28:45-48 (*directed at Israel should it turn from obeying God's Law*): "Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee."

2 Corinthians 11:23-31 (Paul's sufferings as a faithful Christian missionary): "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all

the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? 30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.”

Obviously the first of these two passages is describing God chastening wicked Israel as their enemy and vindicating His righteous ways by doing so (and in the grand scheme of things even that is love towards those being chastened, persuading to come to their senses and repent before they are sent to eternal hell-fire without remedy). And in the second of the two passages it is something different, which we will get to. Yet it is amazing to consider that God would allow His faithful servant to go through things like this *in the very midst of faithful service for Him*. It is no wonder that a wicked man vacationing to pursue sin would meet such trouble. It is little wonder even that a lukewarm Christian vacationing primarily for his own happiness would meet such trouble. But a faithful servant of God being cold, hungry, thirsty, without adequate clothing, getting shipwrecked multiple times, and even spending about 24 hours in the sea! How can that be?

So if you look at what God said about His judgments towards Israel, and you compare that with the lessons which Paul understood about suffering in righteousness, you notice a big difference not only in what God was seeking to accomplish by each, but also in the different attitude which He wanted to instill in each case. He wanted those whom He was chastising for wickedness to be discouraged, dismayed, confounded, frustrated, etc. That was part of His reason for bringing the judgment! That was necessary to vindicate righteousness. Yet when the righteous suffer in doing righteousness, He seeks to comfort them and tells them not to be discouraged, dismayed, confounded, frustrated, etc. He has good reason

for allowing this; and He has good intentions for them if they trust Him and cooperate in faith. You see these things in each of the passages which we've looked at when considered in their respective contexts. Consider the lessons in each case which God is seeking to give and the attitudes which He is seeking to impart in those being afflicted.

"Deuteronomy 28:58-68: "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord Thy God; 59 Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. 60 Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. 61 Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed. 62 And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the Lord thy God. 63 And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. 64 And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. 65 And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: 66 And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: 67 In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt

fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. 68 And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you."

How different is the lesson which God was seeking to send to Paul in his suffering? God was using this to keep him in his proper place; yet he also intended to use the suffering to help Paul find greater grace and to strengthen him as a faithful Christian. This is greatly different from the lesson which He was seeking to drive home to disobedient Israel to testify against their sin and expose its great severity.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

The Law of God and one's attitude towards it is the standard to determine which category they are in as they suffer. The righteous may need pain and trials to train and to purify them- and that is likely even more so as their labor becomes more potentially beneficial for God's kingdom. And though there are some who falsely think that God is with them because they are suffering, and others who think God is with them because they

are prospering and at ease, we should submit to God's Law and obey God's Word to the best of our ability. Whether we are truly doing that ought to be our test of whether God is with us, so that we will read our circumstances like we ought to. There is no sure way to know for certain based upon our circumstances taken alone. Ecclesiastes 9:1-2: "For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. 2 All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath."

There are special judgments which God gives to certain sinners; and there are certain troubles which everyone receives, especially death itself. Likewise there are certain trials which the righteous may especially receive in God's service. We see in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 how Paul had established that pursuing righteousness and being in line with Christ is the sure way, and the only way, to know that one's sufferings are accompanied by God's favor and producing blessings which are eternally profitable. Paul obviously said this as one with much experience in serving Christ, suffering for His sake, and learning firsthand the good that this has the potential to produce as he pursued the accomplishment of Christ's Great Commission somehow in every circumstance which he encountered (reference 2 Corinthians chapter 4).

So the bottom line is, if you're a Christian who truly loves God and keeps His Word with your whole heart, don't be discouraged and don't be dismayed when life is going bad for you. And I mean that especially when any ministry you might have or have had, and your hopes in

-serving God, get set back and maybe even seem to be shattered. That is simply not the case if you are obedient to His Word and you don't let setbacks prevent you from continuing to trust and love God.

Joshua 1:7-9: "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Isaiah 41:10: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

noun: **dismay**: consternation and distress, typically that caused by something unexpected.

noun: **consternation**: feelings of anxiety or dismay, typically at something unexpected.

noun: **distress**: anxiety, sorrow, or pain.

Even not being afraid nor dismayed in adversity is a command for God's people. And as hard as that may be, we can cry like the man in the Gospels "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." In 1 Samuel chapter 30 David and his men suddenly found the village they were staying in called Ziklag burned and plundered while they had gone out to a battle.

All of their families and possessions were gone. Dismay, consternation, and distress were things which tempted David and might have destroyed him had he not adhered to the principle that God commands His servants to trust Him and not be dismayed when things like calamity and other setbacks hit. That is how David encouraged himself in the Lord his God; and then went forward in faith to obtain a quick recovery and victory. Recovery and victory for us may be a slower process. Yet God is still faithful and this principle still applies when calamities and other setbacks get prolonged and drag out for a long time.

Here is just a sample of the setbacks that might hit a faithful Christian, in some cases especially a preacher or one who is involved in Christian ministry in one way or another.

- Poor health: You are afflicted so that your physical affliction hinders you from serving the Lord like you did before or at least requires attention to treat so that it distracts and limits you in God's service. This happened to some of God's servants in the Bible (Epaphroditus in Philippians chapter 2, Trophimus in 2 Timothy 4, the Apostle Paul included infirmities in his weaknesses which he faced for Christ's sake in 2 Corintihans chapter 12, etc). It is possible that Paul had poor eyesight for some reason. He obviously dictated his letters to another who did the actual writing with ink and pen, he spoke of the Galatians if possible being willing to pluck out their eyes and give them to him, and he got bit by a viper in Acts ch 28 which may have happened due to his failure to see it initially.

- Sudden calamity: Like we saw above in David's case. Robbery, fire, loss of property in other ways, separation from family, etc.

- Sentence to prison or banishment. It can remove a man from an important ministry which he is involved in. Yet the Lord might have an even greater work for such in prison or banishment- if they continue in faith through such. Look at how several of Paul's epistles were written from prison, the conversion of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16, and how the Apostle John wrote Revelation when he was banished on the isle of Patmos. Perhaps the Lord sees someone in such a situation just needs to focus on drawing near to Him and open their ears so that He can prepare them for a work so complicated, detailed, and requiring such precision that they could not get adequately ready to do it otherwise.

- Biblical Adjustments: Though a Biblical adjustment won't cause any actual loss, and only gives the potential for real gain when all is said and done, it is still maybe close to a guarantee, especially if your influence is already significant, that a Biblical adjustment will result in temporary loss and maybe reveal the state of your church to not be as great as it seemed to be beforehand. At the very least it is likely to generate some unpleasant controversy. Some have seen this by ridding their fellowships of fleshly music and transitioning to more spiritual music. Obviously this has happened to some on a grand scale as they understood, and began to preach and enforce Biblical repentance and holiness in their church.

- Divinely arranged circumstances intended to humble and/or instruct: You might find yourself due to circumstances having to work an unpleasant and/or difficult job in order to righteously fulfill your financial obligations towards God and man. God Himself might be the one orchestrating circumstances to force you to face an obstacle which He sees as needful to purify your heart and/or accomplish something in you which you may not even understand well at the moment. You're just

there struggling to survive- and it may seem especially bitter because you see how things might be a lot easier, and even how you might be better freed up for Christian ministry in a direct way, if some really improbable looking things had not happened in a string of events to bring you to where you are. And I suggest, especially with those who have tasted authority and are attached to it, He might see the learning of righteousness under authority as your greatest need, since lack in that area could very well destroy you spiritually in due time. Here is a quote from the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. "I can no longer obey. I have tasted power and I cannot give it up." This is not good! Such a circumstance then might be God's way of saving us from the way of Napoleon. To faithfully navigate and advance much on the strait and narrow way which leads to life we need to be able to handle being under authority well. So many key lessons are also not likely to be learned otherwise. It is no wonder that Moses spent forty years in the desert living with his father-in-law before he was ready to lead God's people and deliver them from Egypt.

An illustration I've heard about why God might allow setbacks in our plans in serving Him: An artist was up on a platform looking at a painting he was in the process of painting on the ceiling of a large building. As he was walking backwards on the platform admiring what he was accomplishing, another who had joined him on the platform started to yell at him to stop because he was going to fall off the platform backwards. Since he was not listening, the one who had warned him took a can of paint and threw it up at his picture. This caused the artist to stop and yell "You destroyed my picture!" Pointing to how he was one step from falling off the platform, if he had kept walking back admiring his painting, the other said "I may have destroyed your picture, but I saved your life."

It is possible to get so wrapped up in our own plans and ideas, even in serving God, that the most merciful thing God can do is allow our plans and ideas to be ruined. If He does this, He does it with the intent that we should be built back up in Him and work to build the Body of Christ in a way where we are more deeply seeking His guidance and waiting on Him to understand better what He wants from us. We should be content to do no more, yet resolved to do no less. This takes training; and often it is not an all or nothing thing. He might let a corner of the picture be destroyed which will need to be redone. That which is genuinely of Him, that which has truly been worked and built by His direction, through a living faith in Christ, that is something precious to God which He would not destroy and which no man can take away. Such things are His very goal. But trials and certain circumstances reveal reality, separating the wheat from the chaff; and the gold, silver, and precious stones from the wood, hay, and stubble.

1 Peter 1:7-9: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (Reference also Hebrews 12:25-29).

If we finish our race in obedient faith, we win. Yet the quality of what we're doing, of our influence and of what we minister and build in Christ's body, can still leave regret on Judgment Day- even for the faithful. Setbacks can give us hints about what we need to adjust; and how we ought to adjust in order to maximize the quality of our service for the Lord. And obviously how we respond in setbacks will affect our

own salvation too. The Bible does yet speak of Christian ministers who are victorious on a personal level, yet whose ministries will be shown to be of little to no profit on Judgment Day (Reference 1 Corinthians 3:5-15).

Keep in mind then that even real setbacks might be a mercy. Psalm 127:1-2: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep." And keep in mind too that what seems to be a setback isn't necessarily a setback at all- *if* we go forward from it walking by faith and trusting in the Lord.

Luke 24:19-26: "And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

What seems like a setback to man, unless perhaps he takes very careful heed to the Scriptures, can be God's plan A. And such can be the very

means of accomplishing the very mission which the apparent setback seems like not only opposition to, *but even the very destruction of.* Romans 11:33-34: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?"

If you love God in truth and are ruled by His Word which His Spirit inspired, then His Spirit makes intercession for you in a deep way. Thus you can be sure that though God's work in the world is always beyond the comprehension of men, that will especially be so with you. Deep prayers among the persons of the Trinity, the God whose wisdom and knowledge exceeds man's in a way that words cannot express, may leave you in circumstances which make you puzzled and which you truly cannot see how God could ever work for your good. But be still, know that He is God, and do the things which you know you ought to do- and He *will* take care of the rest.

Romans 8:13-28: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not

willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,²¹ Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. 26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

Psalm 77: “I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me. 2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. 3 I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. 4 Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. 5 I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. 6 I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. 7 Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favorable no more? 8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? 9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. 10 And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember

the years of the right hand of the most High. 11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12 I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. 13 Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? 14 Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people. 15 Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. 16 The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. 17 The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. 18 The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. 19 Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. 20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.”

Appendix 1: Questions Answered

1. Is it Biblical to have two different vessels in one church/fellowship (2 Timothy 2:20-21, Romans 9:20-21)?

The passages referenced are contrasting the wicked and the righteous; and the 2 Timothy chapter 2 reference is especially talking about righteous professing Christians in contrast to wicked professing Christians. Only those who have made a 180 degree turn away from sin to walk with an intent of pleasing God in all things, in alignment with the Bible's directions (i.e. walking in a living faith in Christ in pursuit of Biblical holiness), should be Christian church members. Church leadership needs to oversee the church to discern if anyone in the church is not walking according to that profession. And if such a lack is ever evident enough in a church member, that person needs to be confronted and dealt with in a wise way so what is really going on can be understood; and so they will be brought to repentance if there is indeed sin in their life. Hebrews 12:15-16: "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." A root of bitterness then is actually referring to a bad church member (see Deuteronomy 29:18) who needs to be rooted out of the church (see 1 Corinthians chapter 5).

And this is what 2 Timothy chapter 2 in context is really dealing with. The elder's need to, with wisdom and with as much gentleness as is reasonable, strive to keep the church pure. And *there will* be the need to confront false doctrine and straying Christians within the church. So could it be said that there will be impure vessels in the church? *Yes,*

however that should never be acceptable and needs to be dealt with when that is evidently the case. The message to the church leadership in 2 Timothy chapter 2 is to do what is in your power to prevent that from happening; and be as wise as possible to help straying Christians in the church come to repentance and better understanding. In that case the church can remain pure while they also remain in it as vessels unto honor. Vessels unto dishonor who persist in sin and won't heed sound doctrine cannot remain in the church when they have been exposed as such; and the best efforts to amend have not accomplished their amendment (reference 2 Timothy 2:14-26).

If the church is faithful, others will comprehend the lines of light and darkness by the church's testimony. They will thus fear (Acts 5:11-14) to get baptized and become members without real repentance and faith in Christ, whereby one becomes His disciple under the authority of the Word of God. Consider 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 and note the "if" when it comes to the unlearned and unbelievers being present when the church comes together. It is not a necessity.

2. Do we still have God's prophets in today's church (Luke 16:16)?

Not in the sense of writers of Scripture, like Luke 16:16 is speaking of in its context. But in the sense of those that speak so that they edify God's church, yes. 1 Corinthians 14:3 "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." Having a Christian mindset involves having a focus on edifying the church. I'd stress the importance of this to the church and exhort everyone to study how to do this- and also to study when it is appropriate for them not to do this (example: it's not for women to take it upon themselves to do this during the church meeting, as Paul would later make clear in 1 Corinthians

chapter 14). I'd distrust anyone who goes around calling themselves a Prophet, as if it were their title and they are some special person.

3. What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit and at what time is someone baptized with the Holy Spirit?

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is when one receives the Holy Spirit. This happens when someone truly repents and believes in Christ, since it is actually a witness from God that He has accepted that person's response to the Gospel of Christ and made them His child.

Acts 2:38-39: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Acts 5:31-32: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."

Ephesians 1:13-14: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

Romans 8:9: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is related to pouring out; and thus involves the identification of the one receiving the pouring with the element poured out upon them. Note the connection in the verses below. Acts 11:15-16: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.¹⁶ Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."

So in receiving the indwelling of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, that is the baptism of the Holy Spirit which makes an individual a part of the body of Christ. Those who say that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is tongues are greatly in error (and they usually don't even define tongues right- see chapter 9). 1 Corinthians 12:12-13: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The very chapter that these verses are found in emphasizes that not every member of the body speaks with tongues. And we have seen how Biblical tongues were always a functional thing whereby actual languages were communicated, not some mystical prayer language that could never be proven to be genuine.

4. Is the altar-call biblical?

We don't have an earthly sanctuary like they did in Old Testament times; and I don't see the precedent for New Covenant Christians to be building physical altars now, whether in their church or their home. I think many churches and organizations have come to equate the altar with the pulpit or the front row of the church- or the space between the front row and the pulpit. But a pulpit is a tool for preaching. This idea of calling people up to the front of the church to make this decision for Christ and get right with God there, I don't see how that is Biblical. There is nothing special at the front of the church to better facilitate, or validate, a response of living faith before God than there is anywhere else. We demonstrate such a response by doing the thing, or the things, which a right response to God demands that we do. With a lost person that is doing whatever works are fit to demonstrate repentance, confessing Christ publicly, and getting baptized as the Bible describes. To the Saint taking the next step of faith that they need to take, that could look as different as the many different ways that a person might need to to go forward in obedient faith.

So many have a false hope of salvation through having responded to an altar-call; and so many so-called Gospel ministers glory in getting people to respond to an altar-call (think Billy Graham crusades and the many different crusades that report statistics which, if added up and taken at face value, would indicate that the entire population of earth has been saved twice over! It is really madness). I've been in meetings where the vast majority came up to the front near the end- and I have little doubt those who put on these meetings considered the meetings to be successful because of this. The altar, or whatever was at the front, was

so crowded that anyone who really wanted to pray and seek God would have been better off just staying where they had been sitting.

Romans 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

If you have given altar-calls, yet you have preached genuine repentance and faith in Christ, and you made it clear that the experience of the moment was not what mattered, but how you actually proceeded on afterwards, then I doubt you are greatly guilty and I wouldn't be too hard on yourself. Many have misled others though in relation to this and need to repent. That will mean losing face and acknowledging that many (maybe all) they think they've led to Christ have actually instead become two-fold more the children of hell (now they're deceived into thinking they have genuine Christianity when they don't; and they are also very confused over this experience). What some might call the altar-call could be a way to separate those who need to pray and get right with God, or those who might need counsel, away from everyone else. Yet this would not really be an altar-call. It would rather be a way to facilitate people getting alone to pray to have dealings with God and/or getting further instruction after hearing Biblical preaching, before they go away and get distracted with other things. Sometimes standing up in a meeting to confess that you are surrendering to Christ, or to tell others you need prayer, could be a helpful moment in the overall process of doing what worship at an altar was intended to signify in the Bible. But many modern evangelicals have this idea that salvation *is basically* going up to the front (they might say, altar) and saying the sinner's prayer. No

matter how you live afterwards, that moment is what ultimately matters most to them. And often if someone has never responded to an altar call nor said the sinner's prayer, yet they really begin to walk as a faithful Christian and even confess Christ in getting baptized like the Bible commands, the same shallow ministers will often even be suspicious of their salvation until/unless they go through the altar call/sinner's prayer routine. What pathetic superstition!

We should be aware of this superstitious, deceptive influence that is so widespread and consider our methods carefully to be sure that it is not affecting the way we operate. There is no shame in having to adjust your methods when you were doing the best you could already to achieve the right ends. Someone who has the right goals should be happy to do so.

5. How can the youth manage or handle pressure for a better tomorrow?

I think it is especially hard for young adults who are in a very bad economy, or who have other circumstances which bring them into great poverty, to deal with life. Teenagers in circumstances where that looks inevitable have to deal with similar temptations. It can also be very unnatural for an adult of whatever age to not have a family to care for due to how such responsibility can really keep a person moving and disciplined. That is one problem with prolonged singleness which isn't necessarily related to sexual temptation or loneliness. It is natural to support others and care for others- and it is a sad reality that sometimes even those who are very willing to do that cannot do so for one reason or another. But there are some ways to spin these unfortunate circumstances and make the best of them.

Hopeless looking circumstances regarding tomorrow can shatter false hopes about today, tomorrow, and about life itself. Life is ultimately temporary, no matter how long it is or what quality it is lived at. It is great to have a good job, a family, useful projects to do, etc. Yet we need a hope beyond such things, and a hope that is independent of such things; and we know that such a hope exists.

It is also good to learn to be deaf to human pressure in many ways. Being despised and/or pitied by the world can help teach a young person not to value man's opinions and man's applause. We should not disregard all of man's counsel necessarily, but we should filter out man's counsel and opinions stemming from his pride and his bad or inordinate values. If someone never amounts to much in man's eyes and/or dies alone and forsaken by man, that is an exceedingly small thing if they are pleasing to God. And if someone is not pleasing to God, then how could what they accomplish, or how could any support they have from man, be of any real, ultimate value? Just the fact that many would indeed be offended and/or feel depressed to hear this proves they have not received this lesson as they ought to. Mathew 16:26: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" 1 Corinthians 7:29-31: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; 30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; 31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

Nevertheless, we still do need to manage life and get through life. And things like business and family and other endeavors related to this life can be used to glorify God and thus have an eternal impact. And it is also

true that stagnation in life, lack of activity, lack of purpose in day to day activity, etc help no one- not even in seeking God. I truly believe that. I'd recommend the following to anyone regarding handling pressure about tomorrow and about life in general.

Seek to help those needier than you are. There surely are people like that- at least in certain ways. Identify real needs and real pains of those in your life. Give what you can to meet these needs and to soothe these pains. And do some work, somehow. Even if someone is limited, maybe one is too weak to work much, maybe they are in a poor area where there is almost no work anyways. *Yet even then* they can still surely do something. Where there is a will, there is a way. Proverbs 11:24-25: "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." Giving and working can do wonders to a person's psychology, even if they can only be done a little bit. People who limit Christian suffering to a vague concept of persecution don't consider how Christian boundaries can limit a person and keep them from social situations and/or jobs which really might put them in a better and happier situation for a while. Yet there is always some righteous work that needs to be done which others are not lining up to do; and there are always needy people whom others are not lining up to help. Going through open doors in these ways can lead to the breakthrough the despairing person so greatly needs. It probably won't happen right away though. Persistence and perseverance are crucial.

Even life at its best is still in a very real way a highway to death; and even life at its worst is a process of redemption from sin for those who have entered into God's covenant in Christ. For these, what would have

otherwise been the highway to eternal death instead prepares them for resurrection and everlasting life and glory. The Christian who commits his or her soul to God in well-doing, through a faith which works righteousness in His eyes, has every reason to hope and not despair due to the exceedingly great and precious promises of God!

2 Timothy 1:7-12: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. 8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; 9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: 11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Psalm 31:5: "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

Ecclesiastes 7:9-14: "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. 10 Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this. 11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun. 12 For wisdom is a defense, and money is a defense: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it. 13 Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked? 14 In the day of prosperity be

joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.”

Job 11:13-20: “If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him; 14 If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles 15 For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear: 16 Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: 17 And thine age shall be clearer than the noonday: thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. 18 And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety. 19 Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee. 20 But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.”

This was somewhat misapplied by being said to Job like it was said, since Job was already a righteous man. Yet it still expresses the hope the righteous have and the despair which the wicked will inherit. Job endured faithfully in his great affliction and meant the conditions for these promises to the righteous. And we even see how God fulfilled them and they were proven to be true in the final chapter of the Book of Job. James 5:10-11: “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. 11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”

Appendix 2: Supplemental Articles on Key Topics

On Divorce and Remarriage

People often cite Jesus' words in the Gospels about divorce and remarriage to try to say all divorce, or at least all divorce and remarriage, are forbidden by the Bible. They will also cite where it says in the Book of Malachi that God hates divorce to try to claim that divorce is never a righteous option. Clearly though the context in both of those cases is rebuke of people who are dealing treacherously against their spouse and forsaking their marriage covenant for wicked reasons (i.e. reasons that don't line up with the Law of God's narrow provision for divorce). Neither Malachi nor Jesus in the Gospels was saying that the innocent party doesn't have a lawful recourse when there is adultery, serious perversion, or other serious abuse on the part of their spouse. When Jesus spoke on this topic in the Gospels He was saying that a man is still an adulterer even though he gets the paperwork done in divorcing his wife so he can leave her to marry another woman. Just having the divorce paperwork done regarding the first marriage, before the second marriage takes place, doesn't mean he's not guilty of adultery in initiating the second marriage. The Jews of His time were notorious for abusing the provision the Law of God made for divorce in Deuteronomy chapter 24 to allow divorce for any cause at all. Jesus *never* broke or spoke against the Law of God (Matthew 5:17-20, Matthew 7:12, Matthew 15:1-9, Matthew 23:1-3 etc all prove this). In the Gospels Jesus was clearly

rebuking the abuse of God's provision for divorce in the law, not the righteous application of it! The Law of God provides a narrow provision for divorce, not a broad one. It is thus wrong to deny that there is indeed a narrow provision for divorce that ought to be applied sometimes. Those who deny this narrow provision are speaking contrary to God's Law like the people who promote divorce contrary to God's Law (both groups are in violation of God's Law) and are putting themselves on very dangerous ground.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 7, as the Apostle Paul taught on the same subject, you see that divorce is never an option when there are two faithful Christians in the marriage- who would indeed remain faithful Christians. But then there are also other marriage situations, such as when an unbeliever is present (which includes those who call Jesus Lord but do not do what His Word says). We see there how there is a time to let such an one depart if they aren't pleased to dwell with the faithful believer peaceably (i.e. if the unbeliever should leave *or* if the unbeliever should seek to impede their spouse from faithfully obeying God's Word). And you also see there how the believer in Christ isn't bound to the marriage in that case. When one's spouse chooses a course where they are unwilling to dwell peacefully with them as they live as a faithful Christian, the Bible also says clearly in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 that they are not under bondage. That means they ought to let the divorce happen; and they are then free to remarry in the Lord. Whenever there has been a divorce which a person righteously initiated, or which

they had no control over the other initiating, there is freedom to remarry. Obviously a couple which has already divorced for reasons which are not righteous should reconcile if possible. But desire for reconciliation is not always mutual; and reconciliation is neither righteous nor practical if one or both of the parties have already remarried. The concept that God only recognizes first marriages is false. Jesus acknowledged in John 4:18 that the Samaritan woman whom He conversed with at the well had had five husbands.

God hates divorce, yet that doesn't mean it's never necessary and it doesn't mean there isn't such a thing as an innocent party who is blameless in the divorce. He hates it when man's unrighteousness necessitates a divorce as much as He hates it when man's unrighteousness initiates a divorce when there was no righteous necessity for it. Wicked people can abuse God's Word out of context to threaten a victimized spouse not to divorce them just as wicked people abuse God's Word out of context to justify a divorce so they can remarry to gratify their lust or for some other unrighteous reason. There are people who have gone through years and years of constant abuse at the hands of a lunatic or otherwise impossible to bear heathen (who might also be a professing Christian) believing that divorce is never, ever righteous. This can also expose children greatly to physical and emotional abuse. Wavering, sloppy Scripture application, and overall bad understanding on this matter throughout Christendom can toss someone getting counsel

on this matter to and fro. Often so much that they will be utterly confused and driven further towards insanity.

Even one act of adultery is potential grounds for a righteous divorce, though it is good for the offended to forgive the offender and move on if/when there is reason to believe that there is true contrition over this and a resolve to not do it again. I wouldn't advise someone to initiate a divorce without much prayer and showing as much patience as is reasonable. There still might come a time though when it is absolutely necessary due to adultery or some other wicked pattern of behavior which might make living with a spouse in a godly, peaceful way to be impossible. God Himself doesn't show unlimited patience. He will cast people out of His covenant eventually who provoke Him and resist correction, in spite of good will and much merciful patience exercised on His part.

Very often those who contest these things point to 1 Corinthians 7:39 and Romans 7:1-3 which speak about the woman being bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. And yet they are unwittingly proving the point that there is a narrow provision made by God for divorce and remarriage. You have to *reference God's Law* to know and understand that! That is the very point and the key to handling this issue. It will never involve justifying the person who made up some shallow excuse to leave their spouse for someone else. It will never leave someone to be continually terrorized by an adulterer or an otherwise heathen spouse,

whose heathen ways interfere with Christian principles being followed in their home. And it will also never leave one who has is divorced, with no reasonable hope of ever reconciling their marriage, waiting for their first spouse to die before they can ever even think about remarriage. And the fact that all of these foolish things, and many other foolish things in relation to this topic, are commonly practiced throughout Christendom is proof in and of itself that the churches now (in general) have departed from God's ways and lack the knowledge of Him (see Hosea 4:6).

**Unconditional Eternal Security/Once Saved Always Saved Doctrine
is Evil**

Abiding in Christ and walking in His Spirit causes one to fulfill the law of God, as Romans 8:4 proves. 1 John 3:4 says that sin is the transgression of the law- and we sure do not have a right to continue in sin that grace may abound. God forbid! (see Romans chapter 6). We are not under the law in the sense that we are not under the ceremonies of the Law of Moses (and only because these were shadows of Christ who has now come as the ultimate substance of these things). A faithful believer who is abiding in Jesus and being saved from their sins (i.e. transgressions of the law) is also not under the law in the sense that the law no longer condemns them because they are rightly related to Christ. In being under His Lordship (i.e. righteous government) they are submitted to His Law; and since He is their redeemer and High priest,

God no longer counts their previous transgressions against them through His blood atonement. Hence they are reconciled to God and His Law.

Every passage in the New Testament about not being under the law is dealing with these things. Jesus upheld and vindicated the morality in the law of Moses and the Old Testament as a whole. The Law of Christ is the moral law of God plus whatever ceremonial ordinances God has ordained for New Covenant Christians (like baptism and the Lord's Supper). To seek the real Jesus means seeking His grace to do right in God's eyes; and that means coming in agreement with and striving to be faithful to God's Law. Jesus said that workers of lawlessness will be shut out of His kingdom (Matthew 7:21-27, Luke 13:23-27, etc).

Revelation 22:13-15: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Romans 3:31: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

Surrender to God's authority (i.e. walking in the light) is necessary to have Jesus' atonement applied to us. What Jesus did on the cross did nothing to change the fact that people go to hell for rejecting God's authority and choosing to pursue sin. By God's grace we can overcome

sin and not yield to it, but if we should sin we need to confess it for what it is and do whatever is appropriate to show repentance. This means restitution for the harm done which is in our power to do. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Proverbs 28:13) Christians need to relate to God the Father through Christ our High Priest to remain in His covenant and have their justification maintained. The concept that a believer in Christ's future sins are forgiven is not found in the Bible. Taken logically, this concept leads to lawlessness and removes our current and continual need for Christ. If one was forgiven forever unconditionally when they first believed in Christ, they would no longer need Jesus as their High Priest nor need to follow Him as their Lord. We have a sure salvation in the sense that Jesus will never fail to do His part. He will cleanse our record as our Advocate before the Father when we approach Him with a broken, contrite heart that is repentant over how we have fallen and is intent on going forth in the Light in obedience to His Word. All this is seen in 1 John 1:5 to 2:6. Don't rob God and yourself by taking anything for an answer here which negates these glorious truths and their many weighty implications.

Jude 20-25: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Hebrews 7:24-25: "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

How can those who believe that a Christian can never fall away from Christ ignore the warnings in the New Testament? Matthew chapter 24:9-13 proves that obviously the elect can be deceived if, and when, they do not take heed and watch. And how do they not account for the obvious, that the New Testament epistles were written to truly born-again, baptized Christian church members; and are filled with warnings and exhortations for them to continue in the faith lest they fall away from Christ unto their own damnation? The following were all spoken to true Christians.

Revelation 3:2-5: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou

hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

Hebrews 3:12-15: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; 15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation."

Romans 11:20-22: "Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: 21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. 22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

Many other Scriptures, from most any book in the Bible, prove that a person who has really been in God's grace has the potential to harden their heart in sin and so fall from God's grace. 1 Corinthians 10:1-12, 2 Peter 2:20-22, and Jude 3-7 are other notable Scripture texts which prove this. When someone denies the obvious from such passages, they have to be high from the illicit spiritual drugs which are the false theological systems, sloppy and out of context Bible interpretations, and the many misleading cliches which abound in Christendom to pave the way for such delusional hallucinations that set the Christian up for spiritual destruction and perdition. An easy strategy for Satan to defeat those who believe in OSAS: Just let them believe they are unconditionally elected to salvation like they already believe.

The Darkness and Error of Calvinism

Calvinism is indeed very dark. If true, it would be very sad. Calvinism actually vastly underestimates God's power and exalts man too highly—the very things it claims to do the opposite of! A sovereign king does not control the actions of everyone in his realm nor do the people in his realm necessarily do what he says. A sovereign king is one who is powerful enough to make just laws for his kingdom and to deal with his citizens in accordance with their deeds and attitude towards those laws (and by extension towards him). God is powerful enough to allow man's free will to take course; and yet still be fully in control. Calvinism basically teaches that God's sovereignty means everything happened by his decree. That falsely limits God's actual power and is also the most man-exalting doctrine that could be conceived. This gives every sinner

an excuse to blame their sin on God. Calvinists will usually deny this, but their doctrine logically followed leads to this conclusion- and some do admit it.

Salvation being a gift of God does not mean that it is unconditional. A free gift can have terms to it. God's justification does indeed have terms, as the many "if's in the Bible in relation to man's response to the Gospel of Christ prove. And God moving powerfully in one's life to turn them to Himself doesn't mean they cannot refuse; and even if they yield to God's workings and are born again through faith in Christ, there is no guarantee that they won't turn away from Him in the future in spite of God's work in them to keep them faithful to the end. If God worked to irresistibly overpower some to faith and salvation and yet not in others (like Calvinism blatantly teaches), *He would be a respecter of persons*. The Bible says over and over that God is no respecter of persons.

Ask the Calvinist who pushes Calvinism to you if you have free will to believe in Calvinism; and why he/she is so frustrated that you won't receive it. Watch how they evaluate you and expect you to respond positively to them- the very thing they deny that man is able to do with God's Truth! They don't logically follow their own doctrine in this way- and likely in several other ways too.. They also love to say how man is nothing- and yet if you call one of their prized, revered teachers anything negative they often take great offense. It is a system filled with false assumptions, faulty logic, gaping holes, bad Bible scholarship, and subtle or blatant hypocrisy.

The Bible has answers which make God the author of salvation; and also yet leave man with responsibility to cooperate with God's grace- grace which he did not earn, cannot replicate, and cannot please God without.

This grace necessarily tests and tries man to come into line with his Creator, the One whom heeding and aligning with composes the essence of righteousness. This heeding and alignment are, when exercised, proper reception of the great moves He has already made to reconcile man to Himself. There is a Biblical solution that leaves all men with *a valid, realistic_opportunity* to partake of God's grace which none did earn; and which simultaneously leaves the blame fully upon those who do not enter into this grace, and remain in this grace, by virtue of the fact that they really could have done so. God made the same offer to them and worked on them the same as He did with those who obtained His grace and remained in it. If this were not the case, then God Himself would be a partial respecter of persons who showed favoritism. Anyone who ended up condemned to hell on Judgment Day could then call Him out with the just charge that, if He had only done for them what He had done for the saved, then they would not be receiving condemnation to an everlasting lake of fire.

Calvinism essentially makes God not only the primary obstacle, but in reality *the only obstacle*, to man getting right with Him and attaining righteousness. No logical person who fears Him should be comfortable meeting Him on Judgment Day holding to such a dark doctrine which paints the Righteous Judge of all the earth in such a morally ugly, unfavorable way. And by morally ugly and unfavorable, that is not a reference to the world's corrupt definition of these things. If Calvinism were true, then God's ways would be morally ugly and unfavorable by the definition of His own Law. We know that Satan wants to slander and portray God as a hypocrite- and we know that he is subtle.

Calvinists also must face the fact that their theology essentially originated from a Roman Catholic (Augustine, whom John Calvin

basically got his theology from). Augustine was not shy in making known his belief that there is no salvation outside the Roman Catholic Church. This means that if Calvinism came from a man led by God's Spirit in his theological judgments, most Calvinists would be going to hell anyways.

Just imagine also if Jesus had spoken the messages to the seven churches (in Revelation chapters 2 & 3) in a way that attempted to be theologically sound from a Calvinist viewpoint. Any theology which would involve any altering of Scripture, let alone mass altering of Scripture to align it with the truths of Scripture, ought to be rejected and cast away as evil.

The Deceit of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture

I remember once speaking to a man who strongly believed in and proclaimed his hope in the pre-tribulation rapture. He boasted "I'm getting out of here!" regarding how thought he'd be getting out of the world before things got too hard for him. When I asked him about the Christians in other countries already facing great tribulation through persecution and/or poverty, he had no answer.

I don't think it's reasonable to expect that every honest person will necessarily see the timeline of the end-times exactly the same. Yet it's a deadly error to believe that God will rescue Christians from having to go through great tribulation, whether that be in the very final years before Christ returns or any other time. Therefore it's not hard to see that pre-tribulation rapture belief is usually accompanied by a shallow gospel which tells people they can accept Christ as their Savior, yet not require and insist that He be obeyed as Lord and followed in all things that His Word teaches. Such a gospel is false, as well any gospel which doesn't

teach the inevitably of suffering in order to faithfully do this. These produce Judases which betray Jesus with a kiss as opportunity for unrighteous gain presents itself; and produce people like the Roman soldiers who bow to Jesus with their knees while going about to crucify Him in the hour of trial. Pre-tribulation belief goes nearly, if not altogether, hand in hand with a lawless gospel and unconditional eternal security/once saved always saved doctrine. Pre-tribulation teachers typically don't teach the need to be faithful unto death for Christ's sake. How could they logically do so? Who could do this when their belief about God's ways makes it necessary that God would rescue Christians from having to face great tribulation?

The widespread belief in the pre-tribulation rapture may very well be more of a symptom of some form of a false, easy-believism gospel, as well as the overall disregard within Christendom of what the Bible actually says. It is also heavily related to the false gospel of prosperity, which abounds en masse. Just (supposedly) have faith and God will take away your sicknesses, your problems, and give you your best life now until He takes you to heaven. This is a pathetic falsehood, yet it is *popular*. One trip to a Christian bookstore, or to a book section of a major store, will prove this. And of course this fits very well with the belief in the pre-tribulation rapture too.

Yet consider how these false gospels and concepts are refuted, even in and through the Scriptural evidence that there will be Christians on earth at the last trumpet who have gone through the tribulation at the end of the age. The Bible gives evidence of this rather than teaching a pre-tribulation rapture. And even more evident is the fact the Bible teaches that Christians need to live faithful to the Lord, that the faithful will face tribulation in the Lord, and only those who endure tribulation faithfully

in the Lord will inherit salvation and enter the kingdom of God. The veracity of these principles matters more than someone's belief about the timeline in the last years before Christ's coming, but wrong suppositions about God's ways can cause someone to not adequately believe these principles; and these suppositions can be derived from an especially corrupt understanding of the end-times.

John 16:33: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

John 17:14-15: "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

Matthew 24:9-13: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

Acts 14:21-22: "And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

I will then let Scripture speak below on the timing of the rapture and whether God's people will be on earth during the tribulation or not.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." And then Revelation 11:15-18: "And the seventh angel sounded (*the last of the seven angels sounding his trumpet couldn't be anything besides the last trumpet*); and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. 16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth."

Revelation 16:15-17: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments (*only truly born-again Christians have garments before God that are worth keeping*), lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. 16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. 17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done."

The All Too Common Denominators

Whether we're talking about denominations labeled as Christian or churches labeled as non-denominational Christian churches, there are several common problems among modern churches which misrepresent Christianity. It is hard to find a church today without at least one of the following errors. The vast majority have several.

Unconditional Security Doctrine: This goes hand in hand with the OSAS (once saved always saved) concept which tells people that if they've ever been a partaker of Christ they can never ultimately fall from grace. True Biblical salvation on the other hand remedies man's rebellion against God and never promises salvation to anyone who is heeding the ancient lie of the serpent that we can transgress against God and "not surely die" (see Genesis 3:4 & Romans 8:13). It is no wonder that so many churches are plagued by immorality, lusts of the world, lukewarmness, and hypocrisy when the church's own doctrine offers God's grace without emphasizing our need to be diligent to prove ourselves as His faithful worshipers whom it would be fitting to have in His kingdom for eternity (Rev 21:8, Rev. 21:27, Rev 22:14, etc). Judas was hand-picked by Jesus Himself to be one of His Apostles- and yet he turned and fell away from Jesus to his own damnation.

Lack of Preaching on God's Wrath and the Fire of Hell: The God of the Bible sent a flood which killed everyone on earth besides eight people who were righteous before Him, He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone, and He has done many other terrifying acts *as examples to preview and warn us of the severe eternal judgment which He will bring to those who are transgressors in His sight.* God is holy, God is wrathful, God is a consuming fire- but few churches want to

spend much time dealing with this. They know preaching God as He is, a Great King who ought to be feared, will not be good for business.

Church as a Business: Though the Bible teaches that there is a rightful place for church leaders to be recompensed financially for their labor, church is not supposed to be a business which one plans to make a career out of and use as a means of financial security and material comfort. The fact that most church leaders see church as a business is proven by how they do not faithfully teach and enforce even the Bible truth that they know. This isn't even considering their lack of openness to correction and more light concerning what faithful Christianity entails in God's eyes. They *know* such would cause them to lose membership- and thus lose income, which is of course essential for a business. Jesus Christ gave a great display of His anger in His public ministry when He cast the money-changers and merchants out of the Temple of God. These are the spiritual ancestors of Christendom's clergy class today.

Prosperity Gospel and Birthright Privileges: It is no wonder then that man's happiness and prosperity is often inordinately spoken of and Scripture is twisted to justify this. And it is no wonder that many of the most popular preachers now are Prosperity Gospel preachers. People are taught that God owes them because they are (supposedly) Christians and they (supposedly) have the privilege to claim from God whatever their heart desires. It is no wonder also that the nation of modern Israel is blessed in the majority of churches, with the assumption that its present prosperity must be a sign of God's favor. Likewise, since the emphasis is on what God owes man and not on what God requires of man, unconditional security is usually taught in the same churches as a form of birthright privilege. As they claim the Jew who rejects Christ hasn't lost God's favor, the so-called born-again Christian (they claim) is in God's favor due to the status he may have had at some point in the past. The

truth though is that Jews who reject Jesus Christ, and the modern nation of Israel mainly composed of the same, are under God's wrath; and likewise the professing Christian who doesn't abide in Jesus Christ and bring forth the fruit of righteousness through Him is also under God's wrath (Romans 11:21-22).

Entertainment and Emotionalism: Rather than faithfully doing God's work and seeking to be pleasing to Christ, the trend in churches is to entertain man and to satisfy him emotionally. Music that emulates the world's music, elaborate sound systems, concert environments, carnal hype, and fun rule the day. No honest person acquainted with the Bible could imagine its faithful men so catering to the demands of the Pagan society around them. But actually, it was this very thing happening which caused the corruption in the early Christian churches and led to the decline of the holy testimony that was established by the churches which Christ's Apostles founded.

Yoking with the Roman Catholic Church: The harlot church which was, and still is, the chief product of the compromise between Christian churches and Pagan society is not called out as being such. It is rather emulated in its compromise to a significant degree; and quite often it is justified and involved in interdenominational fellowship of some kind. The current Pope is only a manifestation of the blasphemy, deceit, and fornication with the darkness of this world which his office and church have represented since at least the 4th century AD.

Jezebel Spirit: Often the Bible's prohibitions against women spiritually leading and teaching men in the church are blatantly disobeyed. Even more often the Bible truth that the wife ought to be subject to her husband is mocked while men who try to instill reasonable rules and order in their homes are labeled as harsh and unloving. Women lecture

men in and out of church, flaunt their bodies in immodest clothing, wear make-up, and are feared by male church leaders if they should think about preaching about how wrong any of this is in God's eyes from the straightforward instructions of Scripture. Men who do their duty and appropriately exercise their God-given strength in any form are labeled as harsh, unloving, unchristlike, and are lumped in the same category with men who are truly abusive.

Fake Long Hair Hippie Jesus: Even though many acknowledge that the image whereby Jesus is commonly portrayed in modern times must be false for obvious reasons, the modern churches seem to be the slowest to get this. That must have something to do with how the soft, effeminate man with long hair is much more compatible with the above points than a holy, masculine 1st century Jewish man with short hair. The modern Jesus is an idol and a counterfeit of the real Jesus. We are warned in Scripture to be aware of fake Jesuses and to not bear with them (2 Cor 11:3-4). Having a salvation that is real, and no counterfeit, comes only by believing in and obediently following the true Jesus of the Bible who is "the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20b)

On Modesty and the Deceit of Culture

Everyone can see that a culture having a common practice does not make that practice right. There have been unspeakably horrible things such as cannibalism and the ritualistic killing of the elderly which have been considered normal in societies throughout history. Another example would be the cultures which have normalized sacrificing their infants to pagan gods (not that our society is that bad- sarcasm). It is also evident that mankind is not progressing morally. Mankind's deadliest wars have been fought in recent centuries. There has also not been a continual decrease in violent crime nor a steady increase of peace. The concept

that mankind has been steadily evolving morally has been proven foolish, especially in the 20th century by the two great world wars and the many experiments of the practice of Leftist ideology (Communism) which has consistently resulted in mass oppression and murder.

Applying these things to today: Our society has come to accept as normal (and even label as progress) many evil things which the Word of God condemns. One example is the acceptance of immodest dress. Even though today it is considered normal to dress sensually in tight and/or revealing clothing, this is not right in God's eyes nor in line with common sense. This tempts good people, while pleasing impure people in unclean pursuits. This corrupts those who take pleasure in it, while making those who practice it objects in their eyes. And you can bet that immodest dress has always been associated with many other evils.

There is coming a Day of Judgment when God will judge the world by *His* standards and condemn all who lived in violation of them. "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." (Jude 14-15) No one will be able to hide behind their society then. The norms of society should not dictate proper Christianity. Rather, Biblical Christianity should dictate how we respond to our society. If you are involved in the sin of immodesty, or are in any way taking pleasure in the immodesty of others, repent and cast it from you! Make the best effort you can to get it out of your life and read the Bible for better understanding of God's will (which we should do anyways concerning every every issue). We ought to seek God with our whole hearts to align

with His prescription for righteousness, which is His eternal moral law. Heaven is only for those who do this and hell is for those who don't.

On Church Leadership and Church Membership

- You can't have a pure church without church doctrine that demands pure, Biblically righteous standards for the church.
- You shouldn't be part of a church that you don't trust with your monetary offerings..
- You can talk much about accountability, but unless there's a definite standard to hold the members accountable by, accountability is a vain concept.
- Deut 32:12 is proof that God alone leading does not negate human leadership. God's order being followed in a church necessarily involves human leadership.
- 1 Timothy chapter 2 lesson: If the women are not in subjection and dressed modestly, then it could not be a faithful church; and if they are truly in subjection, they'll put on head-coverings (1 Corinthians chapter 11). 1 Corinthians 11:7 shows how the head-covering is prescribed as an eternal principle of God, not as a matter of conformity to 1st century culture. 1 Corinthians 11:5, considered with 1 Corinthians 14:34, shows that the women's head-covering represents God's order outside of the church meeting as well as within the church meeting.
- The very concept of "I follow God and not man" is a man-made concept (when it is said in the context of disregarding the authority of faithful church leaders).
- You can be sure that Jezebel wanted the Bishop in Thyatira's hands to be tied.

- It is not godly to care what no one thinks of you. A person who cares not at all is only concerned about him/herself. It is another thing to do good to others, treat others as you'd reasonably expect others treat you, seek to not stumble anyone from pursuing God and righteousness, and be an overall faithful Christian- and from there not care about others' criticism and/or misunderstanding and/or lack of appreciation which isn't due to failure in these things according to the judgments of the Bible.
- Oftentimes to obey God we have to dedicate ourselves to a work which the world not only doesn't appreciate, but even downright despises.

Appendix 3: Reference Tools for Preaching the Whole Counsel of God

This is a review of some key verses to use in evangelism and contending for the Christian faith. These are also appropriate texts to use as a basis for sermons and lessons in preaching and teaching. These are obviously just a sample of verses on these topics; and this is not an exhaustive list of Bible topics either. Many of the verses that we will look at are also verses which most churches tend to not deal with or explain away. We need to study the whole counsel of God, grow in both the breadth and depth of our understanding, and in our skill with handling the Word of God.

We'll start with some verses pertaining to God's oversight of man, His evaluation of everything man does, man's accountability to God in all things, Judgment Day, and the wrath of God: -Job 34:21-22 -Proverbs 15:3 Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 -Luke 12:2-5 -Psalm 90:8 -Revelation 15:1-4 -Revelation 20:11-15 -Romans 2:4-16

Related to this, on the resurrection of the dead and the eternal blessedness or condemnation of each person: -Matthew 12:35-42 -Mark 9:43-48 - Isaiah 66:22-24 -Daniel 12:1-3 -John 5:21-29 -Revelation chs 21-22

-Scriptures to consider with Ephesians 2:8-9 regarding the conditions for receiving and partaking of God's grace: - Jonah chapter 3 (w/Matthew 12:35-42) -Titus 2:11-14 -James 4:1-10 -Hebrews 4:1-2 - Hebrews 5:7-10 -Acts 26:15-21 -Romans chapter 6 -Luke 19:1-10

This leads well into looking at some key Messianic Psalms and other Old Testament Messianic prophecies:

The call of the Gospel is to repent and obey the Son in submission to His righteous, royal authority. This is seen and proven throughout the Messianic Psalms and other Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

-Psalm 2 -Psalm 110 (also reference Philippians 2:4-16 here) -Psalm 22 (the Messiah's humility and sacrifice win Him a kingdom, an obedient people, and ultimately authority over all nations through which He will destroy all who refuse His righteous reign after He has returned to claim His kingdom- also reference Hebrews 2:5-12- verse 12 is a quote from Psalm 22) -Micah 5:2 -Isaiah 52:13-15 w/ chapter Isaiah 53 (also note in Isaiah 53:8 where it says "for the transgression of my people was he stricken"; this proves that God's servant spoken of here is not the nation of Israel as a whole, which some claim)

Understanding the Great Commission in action in light of the previous topics: -Matthew 28:16-20 -Acts 28:28-31 -Romans 1:1-5 -Romans 15:16-19 -Romans 16:25-27

On how only those who repent and obey the Biblical Jesus receive the Holy Spirit: -John 7:37-39 -Acts 2:32-40 -Acts 5:30-32 -Romans chapter 8:1-17

On true security and on refuting eternal security: -John 10:27-30 -Romans 8:12-17 -Romans 8:35-39 -Romans 11:20-22 -Hebrews 3:1 with Hebrews 3:12-15 (reference Numbers 14:1-25 with vs 15) -2 Peter 2:18-22 -Jude 3-7 -Revelation chapters 2 & 3 -Matthew 24:9-13 -1 Corinthians 10:1-14 -Hebrews 4:14-16 -Hebrews 7:24-25 -Also

remember here Ananias and Sapphira's severe judgment which they received in Acts chapter 5 and Proverbs 29:1: "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

On the uniqueness of God and the eternal distinction between God and His creation (which refutes Mormonism, New Age doctrine, Pantheism, and many other false religions): -Isaiah 43:10-11 -Psalm 86:8-10 -Psalm 96:3-5 -Deuteronomy 4:39-40 (especially note the surrounding verses)

Some verses which illustrate and prove the Trinity: -Genesis 1:1-3 (Compare with John 1:1-5- the Father, the Son who is the Word of God, and the Spirit of God all existed from the beginning) -Isaiah 48:16-18 (This passage soon reveals some of the clearest Messianic prophecies in the following chapters in Isaiah; and we see here the Redeemer, who has been from the beginning, sent by the Lord God and His Spirit) -Matthew 3:16-17: (The Trinity is just obviously pictured here. Nothing more needs to be said).

Some Key Verses for Upholding God's Law: -Leviticus 22:31-33 -Joshua 1:7-9 -Psalm 1 -Isaiah 8:19-20 -Isaiah 42:21-25 -Malachi 3:1-5 -Matthew 5:17-20 -Matthew 7:12 -Romans 3:31 -Romans 8:4 -2 John 6 -Revelation 12:17 -Revelation 22:14

On how we can (and must to be saved) walk righteously and keep God's commandments by grace through faith: -Genesis 26:3-5 -1 Kings 15:3-5 -Luke 1:5-6 -John 8:31-36 -John 8:51 -John 14:21-24 -1 John 3:21-24 -Revelation 22:12-15

We'll go on then with some Scriptures on the key topic of establishing the authority of God. This really ties together the previous topics well. The appropriate understanding of this topic should be a factor in every topic we are looking at and every other topic which you could ever analyze: -Matthew 22:17-21 (consider the implications here) -Acts 17:24-28 -Romans 11:33-36 -Daniel 5:23b -Luke 20:38 -Genesis 17:1 -Micah 6:6-8 -Amos 3:3 -Psalm 19:13-14 -Romans 1:16-25 (These also all sum up man's sin so well; they also clearly show how the Gospel of Christ only offers salvation in the context of properly recognizing and submitting to God's authority; they are thus Scriptures for demonstrating what salvation by grace through faith really is; and also for upholding God's law). Hence the call of the true Gospel in Revelation 14:6-7: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." These Scriptures well establish God's righteous authority, man's need to submit to God, and man's need to relate to God

as a debtor, in need of mercy- and they thereby establish man's need for God's gracious provision of atonement.

So then some Scriptures related to a basic understanding of Biblical atonement: -Leviticus 17:10-14: "And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. 11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. 12 Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood. 13 And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust. 14 For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off." Is this passage especially relevant to the establishment of God's authority? It sure is. *It actually magnifies it.* Life belongs to God; and thus transgression of God causes one to forfeit their soul and be condemned ("the wages of sin is death").

Only a perfect blood atonement can redeem a condemned life (Leviticus 22:24-25): "Ye shall not offer unto the Lord that which is bruised, or

crushed, or broken, or cut; neither shall ye make any offering thereof in your land. 25 Neither from a stranger's hand shall ye offer the bread of your God of any of these; because their corruption is in them, and blemishes be in them: they shall not be accepted for you.”

There is no true atonement for sin then, except in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (*and at an incomprehensible price*): Isaiah 53:8-10: “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. 9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”

Hebrews 1:3-4: “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: 4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

Hebrews 2:9: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

Hebrews 9:14 “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Acts 20:26-28:” Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

1 Corinthians 6:20: “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” Also see: -1 Corinthians 7:23 -Revelation 5:6-10

On how Christ's blood atonement will not profit, and not redeem, those who continue in sin and refuse to surrender to His authority as God (1 Corinthians 5:6-8): “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

See with the last passage Exodus 12:5-15 and Ephesians 4:17-24. The Passover blood would not save an Israelite who had leaven in their house

or who did not eat the entire Passover Lamb according to God's instructions (roast with fire with the bitter herbs, with their loins girded about, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand ready to flee Egypt). We have to put off the old man entirely, forsake the lusts of the world, and embrace the suffering and reproach of identifying with Christ and His cross. There is no other way to actualize the redemption which He purchased for us. Also see: -1 Peter 1:10-19 -Acts 3:18-19 -1 John 1:5-2:6 (Obviously walking as He walked is walking in the light of His Word, which means not denying we have sinned when we have *actually sinned*. Those who believe that the personal righteousness of Christ is imputed to the Christian are guilty of this. We have to confess and forsake our sins to relate to Christ properly as our High Priest so we can receive His forgiveness. And we see here how must be submitted to His Word and not attached to any darkness in order for that to happen. Christ's blood makes provision for failure to those whose hearts are set on walking in the light, following in His steps; it makes no provision for rebellion, willfully walking in darkness). -Also see: -Proverbs 28:13-14 -Hebrews 10:26-31

And we'll close with some verses of comfort for those who are walking in the light and striving to be faithful to the Lord: -Isaiah 40:25-31 -Isaiah 50:10 -Proverbs 23:17-18 -Jeremiah 29:11 (This is often used to carnally entice sinners and draw them through a prosperity gospel. This encouragement though comes in the midst of very challenging words of exhortation and warning which were very hard to bear. Nevertheless,

taken in such a context it's indeed an important reminder that God is good even as He allows suffering; and remaining faithful to Him in the challenges He requires His people face always does end in goodness and peace). Also see: -Psalm 23 -Lamentations 3:21-33 -2 Corinthians 4:17-18 -Romans 8:17-18