

GOD'S LAW OF LOVE

By

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*For Christians **eternal life** is their ultimate goal. The Holy Bible is generally accepted as the inspired word of God. All Christians believe in God. They also believe that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, died for our sins, and have accepted this sacrifice as a free gift from God the Father in order for them to receive salvation, (i.e., live forever in the presence of God). It is a well-known principle that we cannot achieve **salvation** through anything that we do, (i.e., "works"). Salvation, (defined below), is offered to us as a free gift through God's grace. We cannot do anything to earn this free gift. The only requirement is that we accept this free gift of Jesus Christ's death on the cross as atonement for our sins. In other words, just say, " Yes!" Invite Jesus Christ, God the Father and the Holy Spirit into your life and you can receive salvation. It is as simple as that!*

*However, many modern-day Christians do not believe that there is anything beyond the need for salvation, which is the doorway to eternal life. Careful study of the Bible will reveal that there is another dimension to this mortal life. This other dimension has to do with **love for God's law**. Many ministers of God's word refer to the **10 Commandments**. However, they only really teach about them from a fleshly standpoint. There is a Spiritual aspect of God's Commandments to which the modern-day Church has lost perspective. Man cannot keep the Law of God in his own power. Man must be possessed, if you will, by the Holy Spirit of God in order to be able to keep the Law of God. Jesus said He did not come to do away with the Law, but he came to fulfill the Law, (see Matthew 5:17).*

Matthew 5:17 -

¹⁷ **“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to fulfill them.1**

The 10 Commandments may be summarized as follows: *the first four Commandments tell us how to **love God**, and the last six Commandments tell us how to **love our neighbors as ourselves**.*

*It must be emphasized that keeping the law of God perfectly ‘in the flesh’ is not required by God, or even possible for the average person to do. It will **NOT** lead to salvation. It is only by the **GRACE** of God, **through FAITH** in Jesus Christ that we can be **saved** and have eternal life, (see Romans 10, esp. verses 5-13). This is what the Bible teaches. However, once a person has accepted Jesus Christ as his/her personal savior, repents of his/her sins, is baptized, has hands laid on them and receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the stage is set for that person to **live a godly life**. **It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to keep God laws.***

¹Holy Bible, New Living Translation, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

If the Holy Spirit takes over a person's life, they will become as God. This is because the Holy Spirit is the power of God! It is only by following the lead of the Holy Spirit that we can keep the law of God. Again to summarize, God's law is summed up in the statement, "love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength, " (Deut. 6:5) and love your neighbor as yourself, (Lev. 19:18). " Jesus repeated these commandments in Matthew 22: 37 –

Matthew 22:34 -40 -

The Most Important Commandment

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they thought up a fresh question of their own to ask him. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?"

³⁷ Jesus replied, " 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."2

*Although we often say that 'no one is perfect '. **God does expect perfection.** That may sound like heresy, but bear with me on this. Jesus told us to be ' perfect' even as God the Father is perfect', (see Matthew 5:48).*

Matthew 5:43-48 –

Teaching about Love for Enemies

⁴³ "You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵ In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too. ⁴⁶ If you love only those who love you, what good is that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷ If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸ But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.3

*The word **perfect** here comes from the Greek word **teleios**, (Strong's number 5046). This word means **mature**, or '**full of age**'. See Strong's description...*

2Holy Bible, New Living Translation, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

3Holy Bible, New Living Translation, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

5046. τέλειος **tēleĩōs**, tel'-i-os; from 5056; complete (in various applications of labor, growth, ment. and mor. character, etc.); neut. (as noun, with 3588) completeness:— of full age, man, perfect.⁴

*God expects us to **GROW UP!** We must become **MATURE in CHRIST**. How do we do this? Well it is a process. We must allow God to work His character into us over time. We also must make an effort by reading His Word daily, and praying throughout the day as well as just spending time in God's presence.*

*In this lesson we will discuss God's Commandments and guidelines for living. These include special days of the year referred to as **Holy Days**. Recognizing the **Sabbath and Holy Days** is an integral part **of showing respect for God**. These days are more than mere 'days', they are a way of life, as in **'entering GOD'S REST'**, (See Isaiah 58, especially verses 13 – 14 and Hebrews 4:1-13). The reward for this type of living is that people who follow God's Commandments and keep His Holy Days, including the Sabbath, (which is again a way of life DAILY), will be spared the three and one-half year **tribulation** described in the book of Revelation. Jesus made this promise in Revelation 3:10, (see also Rev. 7:1-8). All other Christians will be spared the other (latter) three and one-half year period of time following the tribulation, the so-called **"Day of the Lord"**. (see Rev. 7:9-17). There are other rewards inherent in keeping God's Laws, especially having an abundant life, free from worry.*

Let's look at this subject more closely-

SALVATION - deliverance from the power of sin; redemption.

In the Old Testament, the word “salvation” sometimes refers to deliverance from danger (Jer. 15:20), deliverance of the weak from an oppressor (Ps. 35:9–10), the healing of sickness (Is. 38:20), and deliverance from blood guilt and its consequences (Ps. 51:14). It may also refer to national deliverance from military threat (Ex. 14:13) or release from captivity (Ps. 14:7). But salvation finds its deepest meaning in the spiritual realm of life. Our universal need for salvation is one of the clearest teachings of the Bible.

The need for salvation goes back to the removal of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). After the Fall, the lives of people were marked by strife and difficulty. Increasingly, corruption and violence dominated their world (Gen. 6:11–13). When God destroyed the world with the Flood, He also performed the first act of salvation by saving Noah and his family. These eight people became the basis of another chance for mankind. The salvation of Noah and his family was viewed by the apostle Peter as a pattern of the full salvation we receive in Christ (1 Pet. 3:18–22).

The central Old Testament experience of salvation is the Exodus (Ex. 12:40–14:31). Much of Israel's worship of God was a renewal of this mighty experience that brought them from tyranny in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land (Ex. 13:3–16). The mighty saving power of God was demonstrated dramatically as the Israelites formed a holy

⁴James Strong, *New Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

nation of priestly servants of the Lord (Ex. 19:4–6). The Exodus became a pattern of salvation by which God's future deeds of redemption would be understood.

But just as the Exodus symbolized their salvation, the Captivity of the Israelites in Babylon was a disastrous return to bondage. The people responded to this plight with expectations of a new and better Exodus (Is. 43:14–16) in which God would forgive their sins and restore their hearts to faithfulness (Jer. 31:31–34).

This hope for a new Exodus merged with expectation of a full realization of the rule of God (Ezek. 36:22–38). Since God was Lord and had shown Himself to be righteous and faithful, He must one day overpower His enemies and perfect the life of His people. This hope is expressed through the concept of the “day of the Lord” as described by the Old Testament prophets (Joel 2:1–11; Amos 9:11–15). But this hope also focused on the role of the Anointed King and the coming of the Messiah (Psalm 2).

Even Israel's return from the Captivity, however, failed to fulfill all their hopes (Hag. 2:3). So a new understanding arose: the full realization of God's purpose of salvation would involve the coming of a completely new age (Is. 65:17–25). This doctrine of salvation reached its fulfillment in the death of Christ on our behalf. Jesus' mission was to save the world from sin and the wrath of God (Matt. 1:21; John 12:47; Rom. 5:9). During His earthly ministry, salvation was brought to us by His presence and the power of faith (Luke 19:9–10). Now, our salvation is based on His death and resurrection (Mark 10:25).

The salvation that comes through Christ may be described in three tenses: past, present, and future. When people believe in Christ, they are saved (Acts 16:31). But we are also in the process of being saved from the power of sin (Rom. 8:13; Phil. 2:12). Finally, we shall be saved from the very presence of sin (Rom. 13:11; Titus 2:12–13). God releases into our lives today the power of Christ's resurrection (Rom. 6:4) and allows us a foretaste of our future life as His children (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:14). Our experience of salvation will be complete when Christ returns (Heb. 9:28) and the kingdom of God is fully revealed (Matt. 13:41–43).⁵

GOD'S COMMANDMENTS –

Genesis Chapter 26:1-6 -

Now a severe famine struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham's time. So Isaac moved to Gerar, where Abimelech, king of the Philistines, lived.

⁵Ronald F. Youngblood, general editor; F.F. Bruce and R.K. Harrison, consulting editors, *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary: An authoritative one-volume reference work on the Bible with full color illustrations [computer file], electronic edition of the revised edition of Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary, Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995.

² The LORD appeared to him there and said, “Do not go to Egypt. ³ Do as I say, and stay here in this land. If you do, I will be with you and bless you. I will give all this land to you and your descendants, just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father. ⁴ I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed. ⁵ I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, regulations, and laws.”

⁶ So Isaac stayed in Gerar.⁶

Exodus 15:25-26 -

²⁵ So Moses cried out to the LORD for help, and the LORD showed him a branch. Moses took the branch and threw it into the water. This made the water good to drink.

It was there at Marah that the LORD laid before them the following conditions to test their faithfulness to him: ²⁶ “If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his sight, obeying his commands and laws, then I will not make you suffer the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you.”⁷

Exodus 16:27-30 -

²⁷ Some of the people went out anyway to gather food, even though it was the Sabbath day. But there was none to be found. ²⁸ “How long will these people refuse to obey my commands and instructions?” the LORD asked Moses. ²⁹ “Do they not realize that I have given them the seventh day, the Sabbath, as a day of rest? That is why I give you twice as much food on the sixth day, so there will be enough for two days. On the Sabbath day you must stay in your places. Do not pick up food from the ground on that day.”³⁰ So the people rested on the seventh day.⁸

The Ten Commandments

20 Then God instructed the people as follows:

² “I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt.

³ “Do not worship any other gods besides me.

⁴ “Do not make idols of any kind, whether in the shape of birds or animals or fish. ⁵ You must never worship or bow down to them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not share your affection with any other god! I do not leave unpunished the sins of those who hate me, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations. ⁶ But I lavish my love on those who love me and obey my commands, even for a thousand generations.

⁷ “Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.

⁶*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

⁷*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

⁸*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

⁸ “Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days a week are set apart for your daily duties and regular work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; then he rested on the seventh day. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

¹² “Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God will give you.

¹³ “Do not murder.

¹⁴ “Do not commit adultery.

¹⁵ “Do not steal.

¹⁶ “Do not testify falsely against your neighbor.

¹⁷ “Do not covet your neighbor’s house. Do not covet your neighbor’s wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else your neighbor owns.”

¹⁸ When the people heard the thunder and the loud blast of the horn, and when they saw the lightning and the smoke billowing from the mountain, they stood at a distance, trembling with fear.

¹⁹ And they said to Moses, “You tell us what God says, and we will listen. But don’t let God speak directly to us. If he does, we will die!”

²⁰ “Don’t be afraid,” Moses said, “for God has come in this way to show you his awesome power. From now on, let your fear of him keep you from sinning!”

²¹ As the people stood in the distance, Moses entered into the deep darkness where God was.⁹

A Call for Justice

23 “Do not pass along false reports. Do not cooperate with evil people by telling lies on the witness stand.

² “Do not join a crowd that intends to do evil. When you are on the witness stand, do not be swayed in your testimony by the opinion of the majority. ³ And do not slant your testimony in favor of a person just because that person is poor.

⁴ “If you come upon your enemy’s ox or donkey that has strayed away, take it back to its owner. ⁵ If you see the donkey of someone who hates you struggling beneath a heavy load, do not walk by. Instead, stop and offer to help.

⁶ “Do not twist justice against people simply because they are poor.

⁷ “Keep far away from falsely charging anyone with evil. Never put an innocent or honest person to death. I will not allow anyone guilty of this to go free.

⁸ “Take no bribes, for a bribe makes you ignore something that you clearly see. A bribe always hurts the cause of the person who is in the right.

⁹ “Do not oppress the foreigners living among you. You know what it is like to be a foreigner. Remember your own experience in the land of Egypt.

¹⁰ “Plant and harvest your crops for six years, ¹¹ but let the land rest and lie fallow during the seventh year. Then let the poor among you harvest any volunteer crop that may come up. Leave the rest for the animals to eat. The same applies to your vineyards and olive groves.

¹² “Work for six days, and rest on the seventh. This will give your ox and your donkey a chance to rest. It will also allow the people of your household, including your slaves and visitors, to be refreshed.

¹³ “Be sure to obey all my instructions. And remember, never pray to or swear by any other gods. Do not even mention their names.

Three Annual Festivals

¹⁴ “Each year you must celebrate three festivals in my honor. ¹⁵ The first is the Festival of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast, just as I commanded you before. This festival will be an annual event at the appointed time in early spring, for that is the anniversary of your exodus from Egypt. Everyone must bring me a sacrifice at that time. ¹⁶ You must also celebrate the Festival of Harvest, when you bring me the first crops of your harvest. Finally, you are to celebrate the Festival of the Final Harvest at the end of the harvest season. ¹⁷ At these three times each year, every man in Israel must appear before the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁸ “Sacrificial blood must never be offered together with bread that has yeast in it. And no sacrificial fat may be left unoffered until the next morning.

¹⁹ “As you harvest each of your crops, bring me a choice sample of the first day's harvest. It must be offered to the LORD your God.

“You must not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.

A Promise of the LORD's Presence

²⁰ “See, I am sending my angel before you to lead you safely to the land I have prepared for you. ²¹ Pay attention to him, and obey all of his instructions. Do not rebel against him, for he will not forgive your sins. He is my representative—he bears my name. ²² But if you are careful to obey him, following all my instructions, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and I will oppose those who oppose you. ²³ For my angel will go before you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, so you may live there. And I will destroy them. ²⁴ Do not worship the gods of these other nations or serve them in any way, and never follow their evil example. Instead, you must utterly conquer them and break down their shameful idols.

²⁵ “You must serve only the LORD your God. If you do, I will bless you with food and water, and I will keep you healthy. ²⁶ There will be no miscarriages or infertility among your people, and I will give you long, full lives.

²⁷ “I will send my terror upon all the people whose lands you invade, and they will panic before you. ²⁸ I will send hornets ahead of you to drive out the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites. ²⁹ But I will not do this all in one year because the land would become a wilderness, and the wild animals would become too many to control. ³⁰ I will drive them out a little at a time until your population has increased enough to fill the land. ³¹ And I will fix your boundaries from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the southern deserts to the Euphrates River. I will help you defeat the people now living in the land, and you will drive them out ahead of you.

³² “Make no treaties with them and have nothing to do with their gods. ³³ Do not even let them live among you! If you do, they will infect you with their sin of idol worship, and that would be disastrous for you.”¹⁰

Israel Accepts the LORD's Covenant

24 Then the LORD instructed Moses: “Come up here to me, and bring along Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of Israel's leaders. All of them must worship at a distance. ² You alone, Moses, are allowed to come near to the LORD. The others must not come too close. And remember, none of the other people are allowed to climb on the mountain at all.”

³ When Moses had announced to the people all the teachings and regulations the LORD had given him, they answered in unison, “We will do everything the LORD has told us to do.”

⁴ Then Moses carefully wrote down all the LORD's instructions. Early the next morning he built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He also set up twelve pillars around the altar, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ Then he sent some of the young men to sacrifice young bulls as burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD. ⁶ Moses took half the blood from these animals and drew it off into basins. The other half he splashed against the altar.

⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They all responded again, “We will do everything the LORD has commanded. We will obey.”

⁸ Then Moses sprinkled the blood from the basins over the people and said, “This blood confirms the covenant the LORD has made with you in giving you these laws.”

⁹ Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the leaders of Israel went up the mountain. ¹⁰ There they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there seemed to be a pavement of brilliant sapphire, as clear as the heavens. ¹¹ And though Israel's leaders saw God, he did not destroy them. In fact, they shared a meal together in God's presence!

¹² And the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain. Stay there while I give you the tablets of stone that I have inscribed with my instructions and commands. Then you will teach the people from them.” ¹³ So Moses and his assistant Joshua climbed up the mountain of God.

¹⁴ Moses told the other leaders, “Stay here and wait for us until we come back. If there are any problems while I am gone, consult with Aaron and Hur, who are here with you.”

¹⁵ Then Moses went up the mountain, and the cloud covered it. ¹⁶ And the glorious presence of the LORD rested upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from the cloud. ¹⁷ The Israelites at the foot of the mountain saw an awesome sight. The awesome glory of the LORD on the mountaintop looked like a devouring fire. ¹⁸ Then Moses disappeared into the cloud as he climbed higher up the mountain. He stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.¹¹

Chapter 31:12-18 -

¹⁰*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

¹¹*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

Instructions for the Sabbath

¹² The LORD then gave these further instructions to Moses: ¹³ “Tell the people of Israel to keep my Sabbath day, for the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between me and you forever. It helps you to remember that I am the LORD, who makes you holy. ¹⁴ Yes, keep the Sabbath day, for it is holy. Anyone who desecrates it must die; anyone who works on that day will be cut off from the community. ¹⁵ Work six days only, but the seventh day must be a day of total rest. I repeat: Because the LORD considers it a holy day, anyone who works on the Sabbath must be put to death. ¹⁶ The people of Israel must keep the Sabbath day forever. ¹⁷ It is a permanent sign of my covenant with them. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but he rested on the seventh day and was refreshed.”

¹⁸ Then as the LORD finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, written by the finger of God.

The Calf of Gold

32 When Moses failed to come back down the mountain right away, the people went to Aaron. “Look,” they said, “make us some gods who can lead us. This man Moses, who brought us here from Egypt, has disappeared. We don’t know what has happened to him.”

² So Aaron said, “Tell your wives and sons and daughters to take off their gold earrings, and then bring them to me.”

³ All the people obeyed Aaron and brought him their gold earrings. ⁴ Then Aaron took the gold, melted it down, and molded and tooled it into the shape of a calf. The people exclaimed, “O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of Egypt!”

⁵ When Aaron saw how excited the people were about it, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, “Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD!”

⁶ So the people got up early the next morning to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. After this, they celebrated with feasting and drinking, and indulged themselves in pagan revelry.

⁷ Then the LORD told Moses, “Quick! Go down the mountain! The people you brought from Egypt have defiled themselves. ⁸ They have already turned from the way I commanded them to live. They have made an idol shaped like a calf, and they have worshiped and sacrificed to it. They are saying, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt.’ ”

⁹ Then the LORD said, “I have seen how stubborn and rebellious these people are. ¹⁰ Now leave me alone so my anger can blaze against them and destroy them all. Then I will make you, Moses, into a great nation instead of them.”

¹¹ But Moses pleaded with the LORD his God not to do it. “O LORD!” he exclaimed. “Why are you so angry with your own people whom you brought from the land of Egypt with such great power and mighty acts? ¹² The Egyptians will say, ‘God tricked them into coming to the mountains so he could kill them and wipe them from the face of the earth.’ Turn away from your fierce anger. Change your mind about this terrible disaster you are planning against your people! ¹³ Remember your covenant with your servants—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You swore by your own self, ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven. Yes, I will give them all of this land that I have promised to your descendants, and they will possess it forever.’ ”

¹⁴ So the LORD withdrew his threat and didn't bring against his people the disaster he had threatened.

¹⁵ Then Moses turned and went down the mountain. He held in his hands the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. ¹⁶ These stone tablets were God's work; the words on them were written by God himself.

¹⁷ When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting below them, he exclaimed to Moses, "It sounds as if there is a war in the camp!"

¹⁸ But Moses replied, "No, it's neither a cry of victory nor a cry of defeat. It is the sound of a celebration."

¹⁹ When they came near the camp, Moses saw the calf and the dancing. In terrible anger, he threw the stone tablets to the ground, smashing them at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰ He took the calf they had made and melted it in the fire. And when the metal had cooled, he ground it into powder and mixed it with water. Then he made the people drink it.

²¹ After that, he turned to Aaron. "What did the people do to you?" he demanded. "How did they ever make you bring such terrible sin upon them?"

²² "Don't get upset, sir," Aaron replied. "You yourself know these people and what a wicked bunch they are. ²³ They said to me, 'Make us some gods to lead us, for something has happened to this man Moses, who led us out of Egypt.' ²⁴ So I told them, 'Bring me your gold earrings.' When they brought them to me, I threw them into the fire—and out came this calf!"

²⁵ When Moses saw that Aaron had let the people get completely out of control—and much to the amusement of their enemies—²⁶ he stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, "All of you who are on the LORD's side, come over here and join me." And all the Levites came.

²⁷ He told them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Strap on your swords! Go back and forth from one end of the camp to the other, killing even your brothers, friends, and neighbors." ²⁸ The Levites obeyed Moses, and about three thousand people died that day.

²⁹ Then Moses told the Levites, "Today you have been ordained for the service of the LORD, for you obeyed him even though it meant killing your own sons and brothers. Because of this, he will now give you a great blessing."

Moses Intercedes for Israel

³⁰ The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a terrible sin, but I will return to the LORD on the mountain. Perhaps I will be able to obtain forgiveness for you."

³¹ So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Alas, these people have committed a terrible sin. They have made gods of gold for themselves. ³² But now, please forgive their sin—and if not, then blot me out of the record you are keeping."

³³ The LORD replied to Moses, "I will blot out whoever has sinned against me. ³⁴ Now go, lead the people to the place I told you about. Look! My angel will lead the way before you! But when I call the people to account, I will certainly punish them for their sins."

³⁵ And the LORD sent a great plague upon the people because they had worshiped the calf Aaron had made.

33 The LORD said to Moses, “Now that you have brought these people out of Egypt, lead them to the land I solemnly promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I told them long ago that I would give this land to their descendants.² And I will send an angel before you to drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.³ Theirs is a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not travel along with you, for you are a stubborn, unruly people. If I did, I would be tempted to destroy you along the way.”

⁴ When the people heard these stern words, they went into mourning and refused to wear their jewelry and ornaments.⁵ For the LORD had told Moses to tell them, “You are an unruly, stubborn people. If I were there among you for even a moment, I would destroy you. Remove your jewelry and ornaments until I decide what to do with you.”⁶ So from the time they left Mount Sinai, the Israelites wore no more jewelry.

⁷ It was Moses' custom to set up the tent known as the Tent of Meeting far outside the camp. Everyone who wanted to consult with the LORD would go there.

⁸ Whenever Moses went out to the Tent of Meeting, all the people would get up and stand in their tent entrances. They would all watch Moses until he disappeared inside.⁹ As he went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and hover at the entrance while the LORD spoke with Moses.¹⁰ Then all the people would stand and bow low at their tent entrances.¹¹ Inside the Tent of Meeting, the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. Afterward Moses would return to the camp, but the young man who assisted him, Joshua son of Nun, stayed behind in the Tent of Meeting.

Moses Sees the LORD's Glory

¹² Moses said to the LORD, “You have been telling me, ‘Take these people up to the Promised Land.’ But you haven't told me whom you will send with me. You call me by name and tell me I have found favor with you.¹³ Please, if this is really so, show me your intentions so I will understand you more fully and do exactly what you want me to do. Besides, don't forget that this nation is your very own people.”

¹⁴ And the LORD replied, “I will personally go with you, Moses. I will give you rest—everything will be fine for you.”

¹⁵ Then Moses said, “If you don't go with us personally, don't let us move a step from this place.¹⁶ If you don't go with us, how will anyone ever know that your people and I have found favor with you? How else will they know we are special and distinct from all other people on the earth?”

¹⁷ And the LORD replied to Moses, “I will indeed do what you have asked, for you have found favor with me, and you are my friend.”

¹⁸ Then Moses had one more request. “Please let me see your glorious presence,” he said.

¹⁹ The LORD replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, ‘the LORD,’ to you. I will show kindness to anyone I choose, and I will show mercy to anyone I choose.²⁰ But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live.”²¹ The LORD continued, “Stand here on this rock beside me.²² As my glorious presence passes by, I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed.²³ Then I will remove my hand, and you will see me from behind. But my face will not be seen.”

A New Copy of the Covenant

34 The LORD told Moses, “Prepare two stone tablets like the first ones. I will write on them the same words that were on the tablets you smashed.² Be ready in the morning to come up Mount Sinai and present yourself to me there on the top of the mountain.³ No one else may come with you. In fact, no one is allowed anywhere on the mountain. Do not even let the flocks or herds graze near the mountain.”

⁴ So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. Early in the morning he climbed Mount Sinai as the LORD had told him, carrying the two stone tablets in his hands.

⁵ Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and called out his own name, “the LORD,” as Moses stood there in his presence.⁶ He passed in front of Moses and said, “I am the LORD, I am the LORD, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness.⁷ I show this unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so I do not leave sin unpunished, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations.”

⁸ Moses immediately fell to the ground and worshiped.⁹ And he said, “If it is true that I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, then please go with us. Yes, this is an unruly and stubborn people, but please pardon our iniquity and our sins. Accept us as your own special possession.”

¹⁰ The LORD replied, “All right. This is the covenant I am going to make with you. I will perform wonders that have never been done before anywhere in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people around you will see the power of the LORD—the awesome power I will display through you.¹¹ Your responsibility is to obey all the commands I am giving you today. Then I will surely drive out all those who stand in your way—the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.

¹² “Be very careful never to make treaties with the people in the land where you are going. If you do, you soon will be following their evil ways.¹³ Instead, you must break down their pagan altars, smash the sacred pillars they worship, and cut down their carved images.¹⁴ You must worship no other gods, but only the LORD, for he is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you.

¹⁵ “Do not make treaties of any kind with the people living in the land. They are spiritual prostitutes, committing adultery against me by sacrificing to their gods. If you make peace with them, they will invite you to go with them to worship their gods, and you are likely to do it.¹⁶ And you will accept their daughters, who worship other gods, as wives for your sons. Then they will cause your sons to commit adultery against me by worshipping other gods.¹⁷ You must make no gods for yourselves at all.

¹⁸ “Be sure to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days, just as I instructed you, at the appointed time each year in early spring, for that was when you left Egypt.

¹⁹ “Every firstborn male belongs to me—of both cattle and sheep.²⁰ A firstborn male donkey may be redeemed from the LORD by presenting a lamb in its place. But if you decide not to make the exchange, you must kill the donkey by breaking its neck. However, you must redeem every firstborn son. No one is allowed to appear before me without a gift.

²¹ “Six days are set aside for work, but on the Sabbath day you must rest, even during the seasons of plowing and harvest.²² And you must remember to celebrate the Festival

of Harvest with the first crop of the wheat harvest, and celebrate the Festival of the Final Harvest at the end of the harvest season.²³ Three times each year all the men of Israel must appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel.²⁴ No one will attack and conquer your land when you go to appear before the LORD your God those three times each year. I will drive out the nations that stand in your way and will enlarge your boundaries.

²⁵ “You must not offer bread made with yeast as a sacrifice to me. And none of the meat of the Passover lamb may be kept over until the following morning.²⁶ You must bring the best of the first of each year’s crop to the house of the LORD your God.

“You must not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.”

²⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, “Write down all these instructions, for they represent the terms of my covenant with you and with Israel.”

²⁸ Moses was up on the mountain with the LORD forty days and forty nights. In all that time he neither ate nor drank. At that time he wrote the terms of the covenant—the Ten Commandments—on the stone tablets.

²⁹ When Moses came down the mountain carrying the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, he wasn’t aware that his face glowed because he had spoken to the LORD face to face.³⁰ And when Aaron and the people of Israel saw the radiance of Moses’ face, they were afraid to come near him.

³¹ But Moses called to them and asked Aaron and the community leaders to come over and talk with him.³² Then all the people came, and Moses gave them the instructions the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai.³³ When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.³⁴ But whenever he went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with the LORD, he removed the veil until he came out again. Then he would give the people whatever instructions the LORD had given him,³⁵ and the people would see his face aglow. Afterward he would put the veil on again until he returned to speak with the LORD.¹²

*These scriptures describe the “Old Covenant”. This was the physical law that was given to the ancient Israelites. This Law was modified by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The curse of the Law was done away with. Once we accept Christ as our personal savior and open our heart to God, we are no longer under the curse of the La, (see **The Two Covenants** handout). However, does that mean that we are free from the Law altogether? No. However, God will help us keep the Law by working His nature into us as we submit to Him and His will in our life. **By God’s power**, (i.e., the inner working of the Holy Spirit within us following the Baptism of the Holy Spirit), we must live according to God’s wishes. There are scriptures in the Old and New Testaments that describe this. Let’s look at a few of them...*

Romans Chapters 1-8 –

Greetings from Paul

1 This letter is from Paul, Jesus Christ’s slave, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News.² This Good News was promised long ago by God through

his prophets in the holy Scriptures.³ It is the Good News about his Son, Jesus, who came as a man, born into King David's royal family line.⁴ And Jesus Christ our Lord was shown to be the Son of God when God powerfully raised him from the dead by means of the Holy Spirit.⁵ Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.

⁶ You are among those who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ,⁷ dear friends in Rome. God loves you dearly, and he has called you to be his very own people. May grace and peace be yours from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Good News

⁸ Let me say first of all that your faith in God is becoming known throughout the world. How I thank God through Jesus Christ for each one of you.⁹ God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart by telling others the Good News about his Son.

¹⁰ One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you.¹¹ For I long to visit you so I can share a spiritual blessing with you that will help you grow strong in the Lord.¹² I'm eager to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours. In this way, each of us will be a blessing to the other.

¹³ I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see good results, just as I have done among other Gentiles.¹⁴ For I have a great sense of obligation to people in our culture and to people in other cultures, to the educated and uneducated alike.¹⁵ So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach God's Good News.

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—Jews first and also Gentiles.¹⁷ This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."

God's Anger at Sin

¹⁸ But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who push the truth away from themselves.¹⁹ For the truth about God is known to them instinctively. God has put this knowledge in their hearts.²⁰ From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God.

²¹ Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. The result was that their minds became dark and confused.²² Claiming to be wise, they became utter fools instead.²³ And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people, or birds and animals and snakes.

²⁴ So God let them go ahead and do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies.²⁵ Instead of believing what they knew was the truth about God, they deliberately chose to believe lies. So they worshiped the things God made but not the Creator himself, who is to be praised forever. Amen.

²⁶ That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. ²⁷ And the men, instead of having normal sexual relationships with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men and, as a result, suffered within themselves the penalty they so richly deserved.

²⁸ When they refused to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their evil minds and let them do things that should never be done. ²⁹ Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, fighting, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. ³⁰ They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They are forever inventing new ways of sinning and are disobedient to their parents. ³¹ They refuse to understand, break their promises, and are heartless and unforgiving. ³² They are fully aware of God's death penalty for those who do these things, yet they go right ahead and do them anyway. And, worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

God's Judgment of Sin

2 You may be saying, "What terrible people you have been talking about!" But you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you do these very same things. ² And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things. ³ Do you think that God will judge and condemn others for doing them and not judge you when you do them, too? ⁴ Don't you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see how kind he has been in giving you time to turn from your sin?

⁵ But no, you won't listen. So you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself because of your stubbornness in refusing to turn from your sin. For there is going to come a day of judgment when God, the just judge of all the world, ⁶ will judge all people according to what they have done. ⁷ He will give eternal life to those who persist in doing what is good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. ⁸ But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and practice evil deeds. ⁹ There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on sinning—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. ¹⁰ But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. ¹¹ For God does not show favoritism.

¹² God will punish the Gentiles when they sin, even though they never had God's written law. And he will punish the Jews when they sin, for they do have the law. ¹³ For it is not merely knowing the law that brings God's approval. Those who obey the law will be declared right in God's sight. ¹⁴ Even when Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, instinctively follow what the law says, they show that in their hearts they know right from wrong. ¹⁵ They demonstrate that God's law is written within them, for their own consciences either accuse them or tell them they are doing what is right. ¹⁶ The day will surely come when God, by Jesus Christ, will judge everyone's secret life. This is my message.

The Jews and the Law

¹⁷ If you are a Jew, you are relying on God's law for your special relationship with him. You boast that all is well between yourself and God. ¹⁸ Yes, you know what he wants; you know right from wrong because you have been taught his law. ¹⁹ You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a beacon light for people who are lost in darkness without God. ²⁰ You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that in God's law you have complete knowledge and truth.

²¹ Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? ²² You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you do it? You condemn idolatry, but do you steal from pagan temples? ²³ You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. ²⁴ No wonder the Scriptures say, "The world blasphemes the name of God because of you."

²⁵ The Jewish ceremony of circumcision is worth something only if you obey God's law. But if you don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. ²⁶ And if the Gentiles obey God's law, won't God give them all the rights and honors of being his own people? ²⁷ In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's law will be much better off than you Jews who are circumcised and know so much about God's law but don't obey it.

²⁸ For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the Jewish ceremony of circumcision. ²⁹ No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not a cutting of the body but a change of heart produced by God's Spirit. Whoever has that kind of change seeks praise from God, not from people.

God Remains Faithful

3 Then what's the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the Jewish ceremony of circumcision? ² Yes, being a Jew has many advantages. First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God.

³ True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they broke their promises, does that mean God will break his promises? ⁴ Of course not! Though everyone else in the world is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say, "He will be proved right in what he says, and he will win his case in court."

⁵ "But," some say, "our sins serve a good purpose, for people will see God's goodness when he declares us sinners to be innocent. Isn't it unfair, then, for God to punish us?" (That is actually the way some people talk.) ⁶ Of course not! If God is not just, how is he qualified to judge the world? ⁷ "But," some might still argue, "how can God judge and condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights his truthfulness and brings him more glory?" ⁸ If you follow that kind of thinking, however, you might as well say that the more we sin the better it is! Those who say such things deserve to be condemned, yet some slander me by saying this is what I preach!

All People Are Sinners

⁹ Well then, are we Jews better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. ¹⁰ As the Scriptures say,

"No one is good—
not even one.

11 No one has real understanding;
 no one is seeking God.
 12 All have turned away from God;
 all have gone wrong.
 No one does good,
 not even one.”
 13 “Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave.
 Their speech is filled with lies.”
 “The poison of a deadly snake drips from their lips.”
 14 “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”
 15 “They are quick to commit murder.
 16 Wherever they go, destruction and misery follow them.
 17 They do not know what true peace is.”
 18 “They have no fear of God to restrain them.”

¹⁹ Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses and to bring the entire world into judgment before God. ²⁰ For no one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what his law commands. For the more we know God's law, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying it.

Christ Took Our Punishment

²¹ But now God has shown us a different way of being right in his sight—not by obeying the law but by the way promised in the Scriptures long ago. ²² We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done.

²³ For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. ²⁴ Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. ²⁵ For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us. God was being entirely fair and just when he did not punish those who sinned in former times. ²⁶ And he is entirely fair and just in this present time when he declares sinners to be right in his sight because they believe in Jesus.

²⁷ Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on our good deeds. It is based on our faith. ²⁸ So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

²⁹ After all, God is not the God of the Jews only, is he? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is. ³⁰ There is only one God, and there is only one way of being accepted by him. He makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. ³¹ Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

The Faith of Abraham

4 Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What were his experiences concerning this question of being saved by faith? ² Was it because of his good deeds that God accepted him? If so, he would have had something to boast about.

But from God's point of view Abraham had no basis at all for pride. ³ For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, so God declared him to be righteous."

⁴ When people work, their wages are not a gift. Workers earn what they receive. ⁵ But people are declared righteous because of their faith, not because of their work.

⁶ King David spoke of this, describing the happiness of an undeserving sinner who is declared to be righteous:

⁷ "Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sins are put out of sight.

⁸ Yes, what joy for those
whose sin is no longer counted against them by the Lord."

⁹ Now then, is this blessing only for the Jews, or is it for Gentiles, too? Well, what about Abraham? We have been saying he was declared righteous by God because of his faith. ¹⁰ But how did his faith help him? Was he declared righteous only after he had been circumcised, or was it before he was circumcised? The answer is that God accepted him first, and then he was circumcised later!

¹¹ The circumcision ceremony was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be righteous—even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are made right with God by faith. ¹² And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those who have been circumcised, but only if they have the same kind of faith Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³ It is clear, then, that God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was not based on obedience to God's law, but on the new relationship with God that comes by faith. ¹⁴ So if you claim that God's promise is for those who obey God's law and think they are "good enough" in God's sight, then you are saying that faith is useless. And in that case, the promise is also meaningless. ¹⁵ But the law brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!)

¹⁶ So that's why faith is the key! God's promise is given to us as a free gift. And we are certain to receive it, whether or not we follow Jewish customs, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe. ¹⁷ That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations." This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who brings into existence what didn't exist before.

¹⁸ When God promised Abraham that he would become the father of many nations, Abraham believed him. God had also said, "Your descendants will be as numerous as the stars," even though such a promise seemed utterly impossible! ¹⁹ And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though he knew that he was too old to be a father at the age of one hundred and that Sarah, his wife, had never been able to have children.

²⁰ Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹ He was absolutely convinced that God was able to do anything he promised. ²² And because of Abraham's faith, God declared him to be righteous.

²³ Now this wonderful truth—that God declared him to be righteous—wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. ²⁴ It was for us, too, assuring us that God will also declare us to be

righteous if we believe in God, who brought Jesus our Lord back from the dead.²⁵ He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised from the dead to make us right with God.

Faith Brings Joy

5 Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.² Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

³ We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us—they help us learn to endure.⁴ And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation.⁵ And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

⁶ When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.⁷ Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good.⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.⁹ And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's judgment.¹⁰ For since we were restored to friendship with God by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his life.¹¹ So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God—all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God.

Adam and Christ Contrasted

¹² When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.¹³ Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. And though there was no law to break, since it had not yet been given,¹⁴ they all died anyway—even though they did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. What a contrast between Adam and Christ, who was yet to come!¹⁵ And what a difference between our sin and God's generous gift of forgiveness. For this one man, Adam, brought death to many through his sin. But this other man, Jesus Christ, brought forgiveness to many through God's bountiful gift.¹⁶ And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but we have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins.¹⁷ The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us, but all who receive God's wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Yes, Adam's one sin brought condemnation upon everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness makes all people right in God's sight and gives them life.¹⁹ Because one person disobeyed God, many people became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many people will be made right in God's sight.

²⁰ God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful kindness became more abundant.²¹ So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful

kindness rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sin's Power Is Broken

6 Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more kindness and forgiveness? ² Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? ³ Or have you forgotten that when we became Christians and were baptized to become one with Christ Jesus, we died with him? ⁴ For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised as he was. ⁶ Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. ⁸ And since we died with Christ, we know we will also share his new life. ⁹ We are sure of this because Christ rose from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. ¹⁰ He died once to defeat sin, and now he lives for the glory of God. ¹¹ So you should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus.

¹² Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to its lustful desires. ¹³ Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning. Instead, give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God. ¹⁴ Sin is no longer your master, for you are no longer subject to the law, which enslaves you to sin. Instead, you are free by God's grace.

Freedom to Obey God

¹⁵ So since God's grace has set us free from the law, does this mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! ¹⁶ Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval. ¹⁷ Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you have obeyed with all your heart the new teaching God has given you. ¹⁸ Now you are free from sin, your old master, and you have become slaves to your new master, righteousness.

¹⁹ I speak this way, using the illustration of slaves and masters, because it is easy to understand. Before, you let yourselves be slaves of impurity and lawlessness. Now you must choose to be slaves of righteousness so that you will become holy.

²⁰ In those days, when you were slaves of sin, you weren't concerned with doing what was right. ²¹ And what was the result? It was not good, since now you are ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. ²² But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

No Longer Bound to the Law

7 Now, dear brothers and sisters—you who are familiar with the law—don't you know that the law applies only to a person who is still living? ² Let me illustrate. When a

woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her.³ So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries.

⁴ So this is the point: The law no longer holds you in its power, because you died to its power when you died with Christ on the cross. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, you can produce good fruit, that is, good deeds for God.⁵ When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced sinful deeds, resulting in death.⁶ But now we have been released from the law, for we died with Christ, and we are no longer captive to its power. Now we can really serve God, not in the old way by obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way, by the Spirit.

God's Law Reveals Our Sin

⁷ Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is evil? Of course not! The law is not sinful, but it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, "Do not covet."⁸ But sin took advantage of this law and aroused all kinds of forbidden desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power.

⁹ I felt fine when I did not understand what the law demanded. But when I learned the truth, I realized I had broken the law and was a sinner, doomed to die.¹⁰ So the good law, which was supposed to show me the way of life, instead gave me the death penalty.¹¹ Sin took advantage of the law and fooled me; it took the good law and used it to make me guilty of death.¹² But still, the law itself is holy and right and good.

¹³ But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my doom? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commandment for its own evil purposes.

Struggling with Sin

¹⁴ The law is good, then. The trouble is not with the law but with me, because I am sold into slavery, with sin as my master.¹⁵ I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate.¹⁶ I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience shows that I agree that the law is good.¹⁷ But I can't help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things.

¹⁸ I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't.¹⁹ When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway.²⁰ But if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing it; the sin within me is doing it.

²¹ It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong.²² I love God's law with all my heart.²³ But there is another law at work within me that is at war with my mind. This law wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.²⁴ Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin?²⁵ Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our

Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

Life in the Spirit

8 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ² For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death. ³ The law of Moses could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. ⁴ He did this so that the requirement of the law would be fully accomplished for us who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

⁵ Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. ⁶ If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace. ⁷ For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. ⁸ That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

⁹ But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.) ¹⁰ Since Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin, your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God. ¹¹ The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you.

¹² So, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. ¹³ For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

¹⁵ So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family—calling him "Father, dear Father." ¹⁶ For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children. ¹⁷ And since we are his children, we will share his treasures—for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

The Future Glory

¹⁸ Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later. ¹⁹ For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. ²⁰ Against its will, everything on earth was subjected to God's curse. ²¹ All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. ²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us. ²⁴ Now that we are saved, we eagerly look forward to this freedom. For if you already have something, you don't

need to hope for it. ²⁵ But if we look forward to something we don't have yet, we must wait patiently and confidently.

²⁶ And the Holy Spirit helps us in our distress. For we don't even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷ And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. ²⁹ For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And he gave them right standing with himself, and he promised them his glory.

Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love

³¹ What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? ³² Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?

³³ Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us right standing with himself. ³⁴ Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No, for he is the one who died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us.

³⁵ Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or are hungry or cold or in danger or threatened with death? ³⁶ (Even the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") ³⁷ No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. ³⁹ Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.13

Galatians Chapters 1-5 -

Greetings from Paul

1 This letter is from Paul, an apostle. I was not appointed by any group or by human authority. My call is from Jesus Christ himself and from God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead.

² All the brothers and sisters here join me in sending greetings to the churches of Galatia.

³ May grace and peace be yours from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ He died for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live. ⁵ That is why all glory belongs to God through all the ages of eternity. Amen.

There Is Only One Good News

⁶ I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who in his love and mercy called you to share the eternal life he gives through Christ. You are already following a different way ⁷ that pretends to be the Good News but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who twist and change the truth concerning Christ.

⁸ Let God's curse fall on anyone, including myself, who preaches any other message than the one we told you about. Even if an angel comes from heaven and preaches any other message, let him be forever cursed. ⁹ I will say it again: If anyone preaches any other gospel than the one you welcomed, let God's curse fall upon that person.

¹⁰ Obviously, I'm not trying to be a people pleaser! No, I am trying to please God. If I were still trying to please people, I would not be Christ's servant.

Paul's Message Comes from Christ

¹¹ Dear brothers and sisters, I solemnly assure you that the Good News of salvation which I preach is not based on mere human reasoning or logic. ¹² For my message came by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ himself. No one else taught me.

¹³ You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted the Christians. I did my best to get rid of them. ¹⁴ I was one of the most religious Jews of my own age, and I tried as hard as possible to follow all the old traditions of my religion.

¹⁵ But then something happened! For it pleased God in his kindness to choose me and call me, even before I was born! What undeserved mercy! ¹⁶ Then he revealed his Son to me so that I could proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles. When all this happened to me, I did not rush out to consult with anyone else; ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. No, I went away into Arabia and later returned to the city of Damascus. ¹⁸ It was not until three years later that I finally went to Jerusalem for a visit with Peter and stayed there with him for fifteen days. ¹⁹ And the only other apostle I met at that time was James, our Lord's brother. ²⁰ You must believe what I am saying, for I declare before God that I am not lying. ²¹ Then after this visit, I went north into the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And still the Christians in the churches in Judea didn't know me personally. ²³ All they knew was that people were saying, "The one who used to persecute us now preaches the very faith he tried to destroy!" ²⁴ And they gave glory to God because of me.

The Apostles Accept Paul

2 Then fourteen years later I went back to Jerusalem again, this time with Barnabas; and Titus came along, too. ² I went there because God revealed to me that I should go. While I was there I talked privately with the leaders of the church. I wanted them to understand what I had been preaching to the Gentiles. I wanted to make sure they did not disagree, or my ministry would have been useless. ³ And they did agree. They did not even demand that my companion Titus be circumcised, though he was a Gentile.

⁴ Even that question wouldn't have come up except for some so-called Christians there—false ones, really—who came to spy on us and see our freedom in Christ Jesus. They wanted to force us, like slaves, to follow their Jewish regulations. ⁵ But we refused

to listen to them for a single moment. We wanted to preserve the truth of the Good News for you.

⁶ And the leaders of the church who were there had nothing to add to what I was preaching. (By the way, their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.) ⁷ They saw that God had given me the responsibility of preaching the Good News to the Gentiles, just as he had given Peter the responsibility of preaching to the Jews. ⁸ For the same God who worked through Peter for the benefit of the Jews worked through me for the benefit of the Gentiles. ⁹ In fact, James, Peter, and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles, while they continued their work with the Jews. ¹⁰ The only thing they suggested was that we remember to help the poor, and I have certainly been eager to do that.

Paul Confronts Peter

¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him publicly, speaking strongly against what he was doing, for it was very wrong. ¹² When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile Christians, who don't bother with circumcision. But afterward, when some Jewish friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore because he was afraid of what these legalists would say. ¹³ Then the other Jewish Christians followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was influenced to join them in their hypocrisy.

¹⁴ When I saw that they were not following the truth of the Good News, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you trying to make these Gentiles obey the Jewish laws you abandoned?" ¹⁵ You and I are Jews by birth, not 'sinners' like the Gentiles. ¹⁶ And yet we Jewish Christians know that we become right with God, not by doing what the law commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be accepted by God because of our faith in Christ—and not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be saved by obeying the law."

¹⁷ But what if we seek to be made right with God through faith in Christ and then find out that we are still sinners? Has Christ led us into sin? Of course not! ¹⁸ Rather, I make myself guilty if I rebuild the old system I already tore down. ¹⁹ For when I tried to keep the law, I realized I could never earn God's approval. So I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ. ²⁰ I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I am not one of those who treats the grace of God as meaningless. For if we could be saved by keeping the law, then there was no need for Christ to die.

The Law and Faith in Christ

3 Oh, foolish Galatians! What magician has cast an evil spell on you? For you used to see the meaning of Jesus Christ's death as clearly as though I had shown you a signboard with a picture of Christ dying on the cross. ² Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by keeping the law? Of course not, for the Holy Spirit came upon you only after you believed the message you heard about Christ. ³ Have you lost your senses? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to

become perfect by your own human effort? ⁴ You have suffered so much for the Good News. Surely it was not in vain, was it? Are you now going to just throw it all away?

⁵ I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law of Moses? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ.

⁶ In the same way, "Abraham believed God, so God declared him righteous because of his faith." ⁷ The real children of Abraham, then, are all those who put their faith in God.

⁸ What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would accept the Gentiles, too, on the basis of their faith. God promised this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you." ⁹ And so it is: All who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.

¹⁰ But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all these commands that are written in God's Book of the Law." ¹¹ Consequently, it is clear that no one can ever be right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." ¹² How different from this way of faith is the way of law, which says, "If you wish to find life by obeying the law, you must obey all of its commands." ¹³ But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." ¹⁴ Through the work of Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, and we Christians receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith.

The Law and God's Promises

¹⁵ Dear brothers and sisters, here's an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or amend an irrevocable agreement, so it is in this case. ¹⁶ God gave the promise to Abraham and his child. And notice that it doesn't say the promise was to his children, as if it meant many descendants. But the promise was to his child—and that, of course, means Christ. ¹⁷ This is what I am trying to say: The agreement God made with Abraham could not be canceled 430 years later when God gave the law to Moses. God would be breaking his promise. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance could be received only by keeping the law, then it would not be the result of accepting God's promise. But God gave it to Abraham as a promise.

¹⁹ Well then, why was the law given? It was given to show people how guilty they are. But this system of law was to last only until the coming of the child to whom God's promise was made. And there is this further difference. God gave his laws to angels to give to Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people. ²⁰ Now a mediator is needed if two people enter into an agreement, but God acted on his own when he made his promise to Abraham.

²¹ Well then, is there a conflict between God's law and God's promises? Absolutely not! If the law could have given us new life, we could have been made right with God by obeying it. ²² But the Scriptures have declared that we are all prisoners of sin, so the only way to receive God's promise is to believe in Jesus Christ.

²³ Until faith in Christ was shown to us as the way of becoming right with God, we were guarded by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until we could put our faith in the coming Savior.

God's Children through Faith

²⁴ Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian and teacher to lead us until Christ came. So now, through faith in Christ, we are made right with God. ²⁵ But now that faith in Christ has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian. ²⁶ So you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have been made like him. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all Christians—you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and now all the promises God gave to him belong to you.

⁴ Think of it this way. If a father dies and leaves great wealth for his young children, those children are not much better off than slaves until they grow up, even though they actually own everything their father had. ² They have to obey their guardians until they reach whatever age their father set.

³ And that's the way it was with us before Christ came. We were slaves to the spiritual powers of this world. ⁴ But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵ God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. ⁶ And because you Gentiles have become his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, and now you can call God your dear Father. ⁷ Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, everything he has belongs to you.

Paul's Concern for the Galatians

⁸ Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. ⁹ And now that you have found God (or should I say, now that God has found you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual powers of this world? ¹⁰ You are trying to find favor with God by what you do or don't do on certain days or months or seasons or years. ¹¹ I fear for you. I am afraid that all my hard work for you was worth nothing. ¹² Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to live as I do in freedom from these things, for I have become like you Gentiles were—free from the law.

You did not mistreat me when I first preached to you. ¹³ Surely you remember that I was sick when I first brought you the Good News of Christ. ¹⁴ But even though my sickness was revolting to you, you did not reject me and turn me away. No, you took me in and cared for me as though I were an angel from God or even Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵ Where is that joyful spirit we felt together then? In those days, I know you would gladly have taken out your own eyes and given them to me if it had been possible. ¹⁶ Have I now become your enemy because I am telling you the truth?

¹⁷ Those false teachers who are so anxious to win your favor are not doing it for your good. They are trying to shut you off from me so that you will pay more attention to them. ¹⁸ Now it's wonderful if you are eager to do good, and especially when I am not with you. ¹⁹ But oh, my dear children! I feel as if I am going through labor pains for you

again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives.²⁰ How I wish I were there with you right now, so that I could be more gentle with you. But at this distance I frankly don't know what else to do.

Abraham's Two Children

²¹ Listen to me, you who want to live under the law. Do you know what the law really says? ²² The Scriptures say that Abraham had two sons, one from his slave-wife and one from his freeborn wife. ²³ The son of the slave-wife was born in a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise. But the son of the freeborn wife was born as God's own fulfillment of his promise.

²⁴ Now these two women serve as an illustration of God's two covenants. Hagar, the slave-wife, represents Mount Sinai where people first became enslaved to the law. ²⁵ And now Jerusalem is just like Mount Sinai in Arabia, because she and her children live in slavery. ²⁶ But Sarah, the free woman, represents the heavenly Jerusalem. And she is our mother. ²⁷ That is what Isaiah meant when he prophesied,

“Rejoice, O childless woman!

Break forth into loud and joyful song,

even though you never gave birth to a child.

For the woman who could bear no children

now has more than all the other women!”

²⁸ And you, dear brothers and sisters, are children of the promise, just like Isaac. ²⁹ And we who are born of the Holy Spirit are persecuted by those who want us to keep the law, just as Isaac, the child of promise, was persecuted by Ishmael, the son of the slave-wife.

³⁰ But what do the Scriptures say about that? “Get rid of the slave and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the family inheritance with the free woman's son.” ³¹ So, dear brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, obligated to the law. We are children of the free woman, acceptable to God because of our faith.

Freedom in Christ

5 So Christ has really set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.

² Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ cannot help you. ³ I'll say it again. If you are trying to find favor with God by being circumcised, you must obey all of the regulations in the whole law of Moses. ⁴ For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace.

⁵ But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive everything promised to us who are right with God through faith. ⁶ For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, it makes no difference to God whether we are circumcised or not circumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love.

⁷ You were getting along so well. Who has interfered with you to hold you back from following the truth? ⁸ It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom. ⁹ But it takes only one wrong person among you to infect all the others—a little yeast spreads quickly through the whole batch of dough! ¹⁰ I am trusting the Lord to bring you

back to believing as I do about these things. God will judge that person, whoever it is, who has been troubling and confusing you.

¹¹ Dear brothers and sisters, if I were still preaching that you must be circumcised—as some say I do—why would the Jews persecute me? The fact that I am still being persecuted proves that I am still preaching salvation through the cross of Christ alone. ¹² I only wish that those troublemakers who want to mutilate you by circumcision would mutilate themselves.

¹³ For you have been called to live in freedom—not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love. ¹⁴ For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.

Living by the Spirit's Power

¹⁶ So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. ¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer subject to the law.

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, ²⁰ idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²² But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, or irritate one another, or be jealous of one another. 14

I Timothy Chapters 1-2 –

Greetings from Paul

1 This letter is from Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, appointed by the command of God our Savior and by Christ Jesus our hope.

² It is written to Timothy, my true child in the faith.

May God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace.

Warnings against False Teachings

³ When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to stay there in Ephesus and stop those who are teaching wrong doctrine. ⁴ Don't let people waste time in endless speculation over myths and spiritual pedigrees. For these things only cause arguments; they don't help people live a life of faith in God. ⁵ The purpose of my instruction is that all the Christians there would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and sincere faith.

⁶ But some teachers have missed this whole point. They have turned away from these things and spend their time arguing and talking foolishness. ⁷ They want to be known as teachers of the law of Moses, but they don't know what they are talking about, even though they seem so confident. ⁸ We know these laws are good when they are used as God intended. ⁹ But they were not made for people who do what is right. They are for people who are disobedient and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who murder their father or mother or other people. ¹⁰ These laws are for people who are sexually immoral, for homosexuals and slave traders, for liars and oath breakers, and for those who do anything else that contradicts the right teaching ¹¹ that comes from the glorious Good News entrusted to me by our blessed God.

Paul's Gratitude for God's Mercy

¹² How thankful I am to Christ Jesus our Lord for considering me trustworthy and appointing me to serve him, ¹³ even though I used to scoff at the name of Christ. I hunted down his people, harming them in every way I could. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief. ¹⁴ Oh, how kind and gracious the Lord was! He filled me completely with faith and the love of Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I was the worst of them all. ¹⁶ But that is why God had mercy on me, so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life. ¹⁷ Glory and honor to God forever and ever. He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen.

Timothy's Responsibility

¹⁸ Timothy, my son, here are my instructions for you, based on the prophetic words spoken about you earlier. May they give you the confidence to fight well in the Lord's battles. ¹⁹ Cling tightly to your faith in Christ, and always keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked. ²⁰ Hymenaeus and Alexander are two examples of this. I turned them over to Satan so they would learn not to blaspheme God.

Instructions about Worship

2 I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. As you make your requests, plead for God's mercy upon them, and give thanks. ² Pray this way for kings and all others who are in authority, so that we can live in peace and quietness, in godliness and dignity. ³ This is good and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ for he wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. ⁵ For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is the man Christ Jesus. ⁶ He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone.

This is the message that God gave to the world at the proper time. ⁷ And I have been chosen—this is the absolute truth—as a preacher and apostle to teach the Gentiles about faith and truth.

⁸ So wherever you assemble, I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God, free from anger and controversy. ⁹ And I want women to be modest in their appearance. They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix their hair or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive clothes. ¹⁰ For women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do.

¹¹ Women should listen and learn quietly and submissively. ¹² I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. ¹³ For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. ¹⁴ And it was the woman, not Adam, who was deceived by Satan, and sin was the result. ¹⁵ But women will be saved through childbearing and by continuing to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty. ¹⁵

*We will live holy lives as God directs us. The Old Covenant, (i.e., the Ten Commandments), was written on **Tablets of Stone**. The end result was that because people could not keep the Law in the flesh, it produced **UNBELIEF** in the hearts of people, or **'HEARTS of STONE'**. God promises us that He will replace the **'HEART of STONE'** with a **'HEART of FLESH'**. Thus the heaviness of **CONDEMNATION** under the Old Law is replaced with **CONVICTION** through the Holy Spirit working in us by way of the New Covenant through Jesus Christ living in our heart. God promises to write His Laws on our heart, so that the heavy, 'heart of stone' under the Law of the Old Covenant is transformed into a 'soft heart' through God's promises and the inner working of the Holy Spirit. Thus, God will take the desire to do wrong out of us. (See Ezekiel 36:24-32) –*

Ezekiel 36:24-32 -

NKJV -

²⁴“For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. ²⁸“Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. ²⁹“I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. ³⁰“And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. ³¹“Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. ³²“Not for your sake do I do this,” says the Lord GOD, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!”¹⁶

New Living Translation -

²⁴ For I will gather you up from all the nations and bring you home again to your land.

²⁵ “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart with new and right desires, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony heart of sin and give you a new, obedient heart. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you so you will obey my laws and do whatever I command.

²⁸ “And you will live in Israel, the land I gave your ancestors long ago. You will be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ I will cleanse you of your filthy behavior. I will give you good crops, and I will abolish famine in the land. ³⁰ I will give you great harvests from your fruit trees and fields, and never again will the surrounding nations be able to scoff at your land for its famines. ³¹ Then you will remember your past sins and hate yourselves for all the evil things you did. ³² But remember, says the Sovereign LORD, I am not doing this because you deserve it. O my people of Israel, you should be utterly ashamed of all you have done!¹⁷

If we do not receive the Holy Spirit and obey Him, we will be judged and it is NOT something that we want to go through...

Ezekiel Chapter 11 -

Judgment on Israel's Leaders

11 Then the Spirit lifted me and brought me over to the east gateway of the LORD's Temple, where I saw twenty-five prominent men of the city. Among them were Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, who were leaders among the people.

² Then the Spirit said to me, “Son of man, these are the men who are responsible for the wicked counsel being given in this city. ³ They say to the people, ‘Is it not a good

¹⁶*The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

¹⁷*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

time to build houses? Our city is like an iron pot. Inside it we will be like meat—safe from all harm.’⁴ Therefore, son of man, prophesy against them loudly and clearly.”

⁵ Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say, “This is what the LORD says to the people of Israel: Is that what you are saying? Yes, I know it is, for I know every thought that comes into your minds.⁶ You have murdered endlessly and filled your streets with the dead.

⁷ “Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: This city is an iron pot, but the victims of your injustice are the pieces of meat. And you are not safe, for I will soon drag you from the city.⁸ I will expose you to the war you so greatly fear, says the Sovereign LORD.⁹ I will drive you out of Jerusalem and hand you over to foreigners who will carry out my judgments against you.¹⁰ You will be slaughtered all the way to the borders of Israel, and then you will know that I am the LORD.¹¹ No, this city will not be an iron pot for you, and you will not be the meat, safe inside. I will judge you even to the borders of Israel,¹² and you will know that I am the LORD. For you have refused to obey me; instead, you have copied the sins of the nations around you.”

¹³ While I was still speaking, Pelatiah son of Benaiah suddenly died. Then I fell face down in the dust and cried out, “O Sovereign LORD, are you going to kill everyone in Israel?”

Hope for Exiled Israel

¹⁴ Then this message came to me from the LORD:¹⁵ “Son of man, the people still left in Jerusalem are talking about their relatives in exile, saying, ‘They are far away from the LORD, so now he has given their land to us!’¹⁶ Therefore, give the exiles this message from the Sovereign LORD: Although I have scattered you in the countries of the world, I will be a sanctuary to you during your time in exile.¹⁷ I, the Sovereign LORD, will gather you back from the nations where you are scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel once again.

¹⁸ “When the people return to their homeland, they will remove every trace of their detestable idol worship.¹⁹ And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their hearts of stone and give them tender hearts instead,²⁰ so they will obey my laws and regulations. Then they will truly be my people, and I will be their God.²¹ But as for those who long for idols, I will repay them fully for their sins, says the Sovereign LORD.”

The LORD's Glory Leaves Jerusalem

²² Then the cherubim lifted their wings and rose into the air with their wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered above them.²³ Then the glory of the LORD went up from the city and stopped above the mountain to the east.

²⁴ Afterward the Spirit of God carried me back again to Babylonia, to the Judeans in exile there. And so ended the vision of my visit to Jerusalem.²⁵ And I told the exiles everything the LORD had shown me.¹⁸

Zechariah Chapter 14 –*The LORD Will Rule the Earth*

14 Watch, for the day of the LORD is coming when your possessions will be plundered right in front of you! ² On that day I will gather all the nations to fight against Jerusalem. The city will be taken, the houses plundered, and the women raped. Half the population will be taken away into captivity, and half will be left among the ruins of the city.

³ Then the LORD will go out to fight against those nations, as he has fought in times past. ⁴ On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives will split apart, making a wide valley running from east to west, for half the mountain will move toward the north and half toward the south. ⁵ You will flee through this valley, for it will reach across to Azal. Yes, you will flee as you did from the earthquake in the days of King Uzziah of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all his holy ones with him.

⁶ On that day the sources of light will no longer shine, ⁷ yet there will be continuous day! Only the LORD knows how this could happen! There will be no normal day and night, for at evening time it will still be light. ⁸ On that day life-giving waters will flow out from Jerusalem, half toward the Dead Sea and half toward the Mediterranean, flowing continuously both in summer and in winter.

⁹ And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day there will be one LORD—his name alone will be worshiped. ¹⁰ All the land from Geba, north of Judah, to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become one vast plain. But Jerusalem will be raised up in its original place and will be inhabited all the way from the Benjamin Gate over to the site of the old gate, then to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses. ¹¹ And Jerusalem will be filled, safe at last, never again to be cursed and destroyed.

¹² And the LORD will send a plague on all the nations that fought against Jerusalem. Their people will become like walking corpses, their flesh rotting away. Their eyes will shrivel in their sockets, and their tongues will decay in their mouths. ¹³ On that day they will be terrified, stricken by the LORD with great panic. They will fight against each other in hand-to-hand combat; ¹⁴ Judah, too, will be fighting at Jerusalem. The wealth of all the neighboring nations will be captured—great quantities of gold and silver and fine clothing. ¹⁵ This same plague will strike the horses, mules, camels, donkeys, and all the other animals in the enemy camps.

¹⁶ In the end, the enemies of Jerusalem who survive the plague will go up to Jerusalem each year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Shelters. ¹⁷ And any nation anywhere in the world that refuses to come to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, will have no rain. ¹⁸ And if the people of Egypt refuse to attend the festival, the LORD will punish them with the same plague that he sends on the other nations who refuse to go. ¹⁹ Egypt and the other nations will all be punished if they don't go to celebrate the festival.

²⁰ On that day even the harness bells of the horses will be inscribed with these words: SET APART AS HOLY TO THE LORD. And the cooking pots in the Temple of the LORD will be as sacred as the basins used beside the altar. ²¹ In fact, every cooking pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be set apart as holy to the LORD Almighty. All who come to worship will

be free to use any of these pots to boil their sacrifices. And on that day there will no longer be traders in the Temple of the LORD Almighty.¹⁹

Malachi Chapter 4 –

The Coming Day of Judgment

4 The LORD Almighty says, “The day of judgment is coming, burning like a furnace. The arrogant and the wicked will be burned up like straw on that day. They will be consumed like a tree—roots and all.

² “But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture. ³ On the day when I act, you will tread upon the wicked as if they were dust under your feet,” says the LORD Almighty.

⁴ “Remember to obey the instructions of my servant Moses, all the laws and regulations that I gave him on Mount Sinai for all Israel.

⁵ “Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the LORD arrives. ⁶ His preaching will turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the hearts of children to their parents. Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse.”²⁰

Revelation 3:7-22 –

The Message to the Church in Philadelphia

⁷ “Write this letter to the angel of the church in Philadelphia. This is the message from the one who is holy and true. He is the one who has the key of David. He opens doors, and no one can shut them; he shuts doors, and no one can open them.

⁸ “I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can shut. You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny me. ⁹ Look! I will force those who belong to Satan—those liars who say they are Jews but are not—to come and bow down at your feet. They will acknowledge that you are the ones I love.

¹⁰ “Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world. ¹¹ Look, I am coming quickly. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown. ¹² All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. And I will write my God’s name on them, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And they will have my new name inscribed upon them. ¹³ Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

The Message to the Church in Laodicea

¹⁹Holy Bible, *New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

²⁰Holy Bible, *New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

¹⁴ “Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation:

¹⁵ “I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were one or the other! ¹⁶ But since you are like lukewarm water, I will spit you out of my mouth! ¹⁷ You say, ‘I am rich. I have everything I want. I don’t need a thing!’ And you don’t realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. ¹⁸ I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. And also buy white garments so you will not be shamed by your nakedness. And buy ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. ¹⁹ I am the one who corrects and disciplines everyone I love. Be diligent and turn from your indifference.

²⁰ “Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends. ²¹ I will invite everyone who is victorious to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne. ²² Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”²¹

*So as you can see, because of God’s great love for us **we are saved by FAITH in Jesus Christ**, who died on the cross for remission of our sins, (see John 3:16). However, we must be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and we must allow the Holy Spirit to guide our lives. Then we will become like God, and by His very nature we will obey His **WORD**, (=Commandments, or God’s Law of Love). When we do this, not only will we be saved, but we will also be spared!*

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