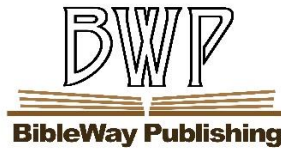


Messages from the Epistles



With an Introduction
of the Book of Acts

Randolph Dunn



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Introduction from the Book of Acts

The Roman Empire had two predominant religions before Christ's atoning sacrifice.

Judaism

The Jews worshiped a living God with commands to be obeyed and acts to be performed. By obeying their God's commands and performing acts, future forgiveness and salvation was earned.

Paganism

The Pagan gods were either mythology or man-made gods, they could not speak so there were no commands. Their acts of worship focused on satisfying sensual desires. Temples were established with male and female prostitutes. Emperor Domitian titled himself as "God of the Earth" insisting he be acclaimed as such refusal resulted in persecution.

The book of Acts begins with the ascension of Christ back to Heaven to be with "The Father". Fifty days later on Pentecost Christ poured out His Spirit on all people not just the Jews. Because it was Pentecost there were in Jerusalem Jews, from all over the Roman Empire. The disciples were together in Jerusalem as Jesus had instructed. "Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting." Upon hearing the mighty sound, the Jews rushed to the sight where the disciples were. (Acts 2:2)

"Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. The prophet Joel prophesied 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.' ... 'And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'" (Acts 2:14-17)

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it." (Acts 2:22-24)

David "seeing this before spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing." (Acts 2:31-33)

... "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them,

"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:36-39)

Author's Comment: The Greek word *kai* translated "and" is a connecting word combining repent and baptism together. Another Greek word *de* also translated "and" separates two words rather than combining them. Thayer's Greek Lexicon states that *Kai* in accordance with the simplicity of the ancient popular speech, especially of the Hebrew tongue links statement to statement.

"The word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people." Some "disputed with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking." So, they brought in "false witnesses who stated "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law." (Acts 6:7-10, 13)

Stephen recounted the history and prophecies of the Jews about Christ to the assembled leaders of the Jews. He then asked "Which of the prophets did not your fathers' persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it. Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him." And Saul (Paul) approved of his execution. (Acts 7:52-55)

Author's Comment: For fear of losing their power and position the religious leaders begin to persecute Christians immediately.

"There arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria." ... "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ." (Acts 8:1 ... 5)

"But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord." ... "As he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.'" (Acts 9:1, 3-7)

The Lord said to Ananias, "'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.' So, Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For some days he was with the disciples at

Damascus. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." (Acts 9:15-20)

"Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people." While they "were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" (Acts 11:25-26 ... 13:2)

Paul began traveling throughout the cities in Asia Minor proclaiming Christ. He wrote letters to Christians in several of these cities encouraging them to remain faithful and live righteously.

Romans

Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection.

The Gospel is Christ's life, atoning sacrifice for forgiveness of sin, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁵ This Gospel is the power of God for salvation.

The righteous live by faith while the life of the ungodly brings God's wrath.

God's eternal power can be perceived by the complexity of His creation.

The ungodly in their futile thinking replace the immortal God with images man created and by myths.

The unrighteous are evil, malicious, covetous, and envious and approve of those who practice ungodly acts.

A Christian's life must reflect God otherwise his message is void.

The righteousness of God is manifested by acts of Christians based on faith in Christ and justified by His Grace.

God's love is now in Christians through the Holy Spirit which He gave to those justified, redeemed, and reconciled by Christ's Blood.

Death spread to all mankind because of sin.

"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all men, because all sinned." (Romans 5:12)

"And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." (Gen 2:16-17)

But eternal Life became available through Christ's atoning sacrifice and by man's trust and obedience to His commands.

“Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ ² Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (6:3-4)

A former Christian's sinful life died and was buried in Christ's blood through baptism. Their former religious beliefs, and traditions, are not to be part of their new spiritual life in Christ. This relationship can be broken by entering into a relationship with Satan through sinful acts which brings spiritual death unless forgiven by seeking forgiveness by change in one's actions and thoughts and returning to Christ. This is just like a marriage covenant ¹⁸ that is dissolved by unfaithfulness to the marriage covenant. Unfaithfulness to the covenant with God or spouse is adultery.

The covenant or “law” given by God through Moses, ceased to exist when Christ was nailed to the cross. In its place, God established a new and better covenant through His Son with all who put their faith, trust, and obedience in Christ.

This Spirit, God put in those He raised from their baptism (burial) in Christ's blood, constantly searches the inner man's heart and mind as He communicates with God.

The will of God will be accomplished by those who love Him and are maturing by conforming to His image.

God allows people with unique dispositions, good or evil, to come to power to accomplish His purpose and to show His power.

Those who confess Christ as God in the human body of Jesus of Nazareth ¹⁴ who God resurrected from the grave will be saved if their faith produces the action of obedience.

The Gospel is God's call for obedience to those who open their heart.

God regrets that some of His people become contrary and fall away, but they can be restored if they return to Him seeking forgiveness, otherwise, they will be lost eternally.

A living sacrifice by a Christian is a life that does not conform to a worldly life even when tested.

The Church Christ built ¹ is like the human body as both have many parts performing different tasks. These different functions are:

- Delivering His message of forgiveness
- Teaching how to live righteous lives
- Encouraging faithfulness
- Supplying the needs to those in destitute conditions
- Leading and training others to mature into likeness of God
- Showing mercy in love

Christians are to:

- Live in peace.
- Avoid confrontations.
- Not quarrel.
- Not defy authority.
- Pay obligations timely.
- Not pass judgment on a brother's interpretation of scripture that does not agree with their personal understanding. But study with him.
- Avoid those whose interpretations on some teaching ²⁸ is the only possible correct one and who insist their understanding must be accepted by every Christian everywhere and at all times.

1 Corinthians

Divisions in the local congregation are created by Christians following an individual or his teaching. Therefore, the Body of Christ is not a united functioning body of Christians. Following a teacher or preacher does not glorify God or Christ.

To those in the Christ's church, He is the power and wisdom of God. Not many who accept Christ are rich and powerful. They may be lacking in this world's goods and education, but are rich in faith.

The gospel of Christ should be proclaimed in simplicity and humility, not by an orator with lofty words.

God put the Spirit in those resurrected from the burial of baptism ². This Spirit knows your thoughts and is constantly communicating with God.

Division and jealousy within the church body prevents growth. They are unable to understand instructions on how to mature into God's likeness.

The gospel foundation is laid first by someone. Then others teach and equip God's "new creation" how to live pleasing to Him.

Christ's servants are to be faithful to Him. They are not to judge the heart of fellow Christians.

Christian teachers must instruct others about the teachings of Christ and His apostles.

Those proclaiming the gospel are not to be a burden on those being taught, even if working at a secular job becomes necessary.

A Christian's ungodly actions that are unacceptable by the community must never be condoned. Any such action when ignored by the church body indicates approval. It is their responsibility to

confront and correct the individual but if the brother does not change, they are not to fellowship him in order to encourage his repentance and return to Christ.

Grievances and disagreements among Christians are to be settled by the church body, not in a court of unbelievers.

It is better for one to be defrauded by a brother than judged by non-Christians, to do so causes ridicule and dishonors Christ.

The sexually immoral, greedy, marriage covenant breakers and evil-doers will not enter Heaven.

Everything that is good and acceptable, may not be helpful.

Do not allow some secular action to dominate your life.

Living with someone in a marriage relationship but not joined together in marriage ¹⁸ is immoral.

Neither married spouse should withhold themselves from fulfilling fleshly passions – sex, affection, companionship, and love.

In times of stress or persecution, it is better not to marry, which can create more stress.

Those married are not to separate, but if separation occurs, they are to remain unmarried or be reconciled.

Do not divorce an unbelieving spouse if they desire or are willing to remain faithful in marriage.

If one not married is unable to control their fleshly passion, it is best to marry than lust or become sexually immoral.

A widowed ³⁰ Christian either man or woman, should not marry an unbeliever.

Proclaimers of the Gospel should be compensated by other Christians for their work as servants of Christ.

When the Israelites departed from their Egyptian bondage, they passed through water, and under God's cloud, they became children of God under a covenant given by God through Moses. They also ate God's food and drank His water as they matured as His children. This serves as an example of how individuals are immersed (baptized) into Christ's blood becoming Children of God under the New Covenant given by Christ.

Temptation occurs today – "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." (10:12-13)

Author's Comment: Always seek to do what is best for others over your personal desires. Recall Jesus said the second great commandment was "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt 22:39)

One's decision-makers are to be honored by your actions as they are responsible for your welfare and that of others.

Husbands and wives are dependent upon each other as they are joined together as one in marriage.

There can be teachings and practices in a church ^{25 & 27} assembly which cause division. This results in fractured unity and fellowship.

Bread eaten at the "Lord's Supper" is to remind Christians of God I the body of Jesus who offered His sinless body as the only sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. The fruit of the vine represents the blood of His atoning sacrifice which brings forgiveness. Participating in His memorial feast without focusing on Christ's body and blood that brought forgiveness is an unacceptable - a ritual taken in an unworthy manner.

When Christians assemble for the purpose of a common meal, unity, and fellowship should exist.

The Spirit gives different activities for members of Christ's Body to perform. Therefore, every member is not expected to do every function. These different activities include:

- encouraging others to be faithful,
- teaching how to live acceptable and pleasing to God,
- proclaiming the Gospel, and
- assisting all members toward maturity through their teaching, their example, and by observing their activities.

Without love the spiritual man is nothing. When time ends hope becomes reality and faith ceases as all things are seen. But love is God's essence and endures forever.

When those in Christ assemble together, all are expected to participate. But all participating at the same time causes confusion and outsiders consider you weird and out of your mind. To eliminate confusion, individual speakers should speak in sequence, one at a time, for the purpose of training and encouraging. There is no mention of a prepared message by a professional speaker, such as a pulpit preacher.

Wives ³¹ of the one speaking must show honor and respect by waiting to ask for clarification in the privacy of their home. "As the law says" was probably a tradition among the Jews.

The Gospel¹⁰ is Christ - His atoning sacrifice for sin, burial, resurrection, appearance, and ascension.

Adam through disobedience brought death.

Christ through obedience brings life.

One's companions have a great influence over their actions, both good or evil.

The physical seed must die before new life can begin. This is also true for spiritual seeds. There must be a death to the sinful life, a burial in Christ's blood (also referred to as baptism) before a new spiritual life can be resurrected by God.

Bodies ³ of the physically dead will be changed into an imperishable ones.

When one commits to provide assistance for the needy, they are to regularly set funds aside and not wait until the last minute.

2 Corinthians

God comforts His Children in their afflictions which should cause one to rely on God rather than self.

Prayer comforts and helps others overcome trials and stress.

God's Spirit was put into the risen new creation as His seal. This spirit is in constant communication with God.

Removal of fellowship¹, by the majority, from a willingly sinning brother may be necessary in order to bring about repentance.

A living sacrificial life replaces personal desires.

The Old Covenant brought death. The New Covenant brings life, freedom and ultimately a transformed body into the likeness of God.

Pleasures of life are the "gods" of this world and they bind the mind of the unbeliever.

The physical body is a temporary residence. The permanent residence of the spiritual body of those in Christ is a house not made with hands. It is Paradise is now in Heaven ³ as evidenced by Paul being "caught up into Paradise" and heard "things "which man may not utter."

But first one must appear before Christ to receive things done in the flesh.

A "new creation" results from death to sin, a burial in Christ's blood and a resurrection to a new life, thereby becoming an ambassador to reconcile others to God through Christ. The New Christian should:

- Do not be united in fellowship with unbelievers.
- Rejoice when a brother repents and returns to Christ.
- Give self to Christ results in doing what is best for others.

- Finish commitments willingly, not regretting making the commitment.
- Allow God to multiply one's efforts toward righteousness.
- Be alert! Some deceitful people disguise themselves as a brother but they do not teach Christ.

Examine your faith continually so you do not fall away.

Galatians

At first glance, the epistle to the Galatians appears to be addressed to Christians who were drifting back or clinging to their traditions of Judaism. Some of them were demanding Gentile Christians to also accept the Old Covenant doctrines which included circumcision, which was the requirement for a proselyte to Judaism.

Author's Comment: A "righteous proselyte" is a Gentile who has converted to Judaism. He is bound to all the doctrines and precepts of the Jewish religion and is considered a full member of the Jewish people. The proselyte is circumcised as an adult, if male, and immersed in any natural collection of water to formally effect the conversion. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proselyte)

Christians today ²⁷ have their own tradition by their interpretations of scripture, then demand others to follow them to be in fellowship with them and Christ. Often these traditions are from their former religious teachings. Therefore, it is incumbent on every Christian to search Christ's message, understand what God desires, then obey through faith and trust. When man demands compliance, and obedience, to his interpretations he divides Christ's Body – His Church.

Forgiveness of sins is –Christ, God's gift of Grace. A gift can be accepted or rejected but not earned.

The New Covenant message ¹⁰ is accepting Christ as one's atoning sacrifice and living according to His life and teachings through faith in Him and obedience to His commands. "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse" for one cannot keep all the Old Covenant Laws perfectly. But "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" ... "so, that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." The Law "was added because of sins until the offspring (Jesus) should come to whom the promise had been made."

"The Scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Now before faith came (Christ), we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of

you as **were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.** ² There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." (3:22-29) Christ God's gift of forgiveness and salvation is not restricted by nationality, race or gender.

"But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?" (Galatians 4:9)

"For freedom Christ has set us free; **stand firm** therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision (accept reliance on Moses – another gospel), Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision (becoming bound by its doctrines and precepts) that he is obligated to keep the whole law. **You are severed from Christ**, you who would be justified by the law; **you have fallen away from grace.**" (Galatians 5:1-4)

As "sons" of God, **do not follow the desires of flesh** ¹⁷ for those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

These desires include

- sexual immorality
- impurity
- sensuality
- idolatry
- sorcery
- enmity
- strife
- jealousy
- fits of anger
- rivalries
- dissensions
- divisions
- envy
- drunkenness
- orgies

But as "sons of God", through faith and obedience, live a life producing fruit of Spirit: which are:

- Love
- joy
- peace
- patience
- kindness

goodness
faithfulness
gentleness
self-control

Those in Christ are to gently restore a fellow Christian caught up in sin

Those who were taught and accepted God's gift – Christ's life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, teachings and life while on earth are obligated to take care of the needs of proclaimers of the Gospel.

The life you live is the seed you sow. Therefore, the seed of fleshly desire will reap corruption. Whereas the seed of the spirit reaps eternal life.

Ephesians

God created man in His nature, image, and likeness with the ability to choose. Knowing that ultimately His creation would choose their desires over His commands. **God planned in advance** way to reconcile mankind to Him. This is often referred to as predestination.

Deity ¹⁴ in the form of a human, Jesus - the Christ, became the atoning sacrifice as the gift for forgiveness. Then any Jew or Gentile who chose to accept His gift by trust and obedience to Christ were put **in Him**, His Church, His Body. It is **in Him** one is forgiven, redeemed, and reconciled - God's mystery ⁵ from the beginning. So, at just the perfect time during the last age, the time following the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, all mankind would have the opportunity to have their sins forgiven and salvation by obedience to Christ's Gospel.

Those IN CHRIST have:

Redemption
Unity
An inheritance
Hope
Access to the Spirit of God
Dwelling place with God
Eternal life

These redeemed are to be united, striving to mature into God's nature and likeness

Humble
Gentle
Patient
Merciful
Loving

Speaking truth
Sharing with anyone in need
Doing honest work
Putting off deceitful desires
Not sinning when angry
Not stealing
Avoiding
 sexual immorality
 filthy and foolish talk
 crude and obscene jokes

When Christ ascended, He gave to some specific functions to: ¹

- a. Apostles, eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ - to announce the Good News that the Savior and His gift of forgiveness and salvation is available to all who accept His gift.
- b. Prophets to give God's revelation received from the Holy Spirit.
- c. Evangelists to proclaim the Good News, Christ, to the lost.
- d. Pastors and Teachers – to guard, watch, teach, and guide brethren to maturity and unity in Christ, not opinion

However, all **in Him** are to:

- a. Observe how they live their spiritual life
- b. Withstand fleshly body desires
- c. Understand God's will
- d. Be filled with God's Spirit – His nature
- e. Put the needs of their brethren above personal desires

For protection against dark powers of Satan, Christians must surround themselves with God and His armor which is:

- a. Truth
- b. Readiness of the gospel
- c. Faith
- d. Word of God
- e. Salvation
- f. Prayer

Specific instructions were given to certain groups of Christians:

Wives – honor, respect husbands and do what pleases God

Husbands – provide for wife's physical and spiritual needs

Children - listen attentively, heed to a command or authority

Bondservants, – to serve Christ as one completely given over to another, not eyeservice but doing the will of God from the heart.

All Christians are to:

Perform functions needed by the Body of Christ

Obey the teaching of Christ and His apostles

Do good works pleasing to God.

Proclaim the resurrected Christ, His life and His message

Philippians

The Christians are partners of the gospel. In this case Paul and the Philippians. All Christians everywhere are to encourage evangelists and provide for their physical needs as they proclaim the gospel. Visiting them where they work is an excellent means of encouragement and a way to communicate the congregation's love and concern for the dedicated servant who suffers many hardships as he proclaims Christ.

Paul, as today's evangelists should do, sent his thanks, love, and concern to the Philippians. He encouraged them to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ, to abound with knowledge to discern what is pure and blameless, and to continue living a life pleasing to God:

- Be united ²⁹.
- Do nothing out of selfish ambition.
- Look to what is best for others.
- Do all things without grumbling or disputing.
- Hold fast to the word of life.
- Diligently strive to attain the goal of Eternal Life in Heaven with God.
- Watching and observing those enemies of Christ who try to convince you to return to your former way of life.
- Servants of Christ should agree in the lord - not quarrel.
- Do not worry or be anxious about the physical or spiritual.
- Do not argue over opinions and personal interpretations.

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” (4:8-9)

A congregation should provide for their evangelists' physical needs but also express their love and concern, so he does not feel he is alone.

Colossians

A Christian needs to be filled with the knowledge of Christ's will and be able to live worthy and bear fruit. Christ has delivered those who have put their trust through obedience in Him from

Satan's domain of darkness, his residence and transferred them to the Kingdom of Christ ¹ by forgiveness through Christ's atoning sacrifice.

Christ is the exact image and mystery of God ⁵

- All things were created by and through Him in Heaven and on Earth.
- He holds all things together.
- God dwells in Him.
- He is reconciling all things to himself through His blood sacrifice. **IF** Christians continue in faith not moving away from the Gospel, He will make them holy. By implication, those who do not continue in faith have moved away from Christ and will not be made holy.
- Christ is the mystery ⁵ hidden from Jew and Gentile. For in Him, there is the opportunity of forgiveness and redemption.

Warning to Christians

- Do not allow human traditions ²² to deceive you and make you a captive of Satan. Remember Christ is deity. He dwells in Christians as they have been circumcised spiritually by the removal of the body of sin and buried in Christ's blood known as baptism or immersion. After which God forgave their sins, he resurrected them and put them in the Kingdom of Christ- - His Body, His Church.
- The regulations of festivals and things not to eat or drink are of the earthly Old Covenant which was only a shadow ²¹ of the better Heavenly covenant. This heavenly covenant would come directly from Jesus as God in a human body.
- Do not rely on self-abasement, or asceticism, to make you holy. Holiness comes from being in Christ.

The New Creature – One In Christ

Christians must rid themselves of

- Earthly sexual and impure passions
- Covetousness
- Anger
- Malice
- Slander
- Obscene talk
- Lying

Become a new spiritual person. Live as Christ lived ¹⁶ in love which will bind all good things together. Knowledge of God's will produce

- Compassionate hearts
- Kindness

- Humility
- Meekness
- Patience

Teach, admonish and encourage one another in the name of and by the authority of Christ. ¹²

Treatment of others is to be based on what is best for the relationship.

Wives, husbands, children, bondservants and masters are to treat all in the manner and love of Christ who is Lord of all.

1 Thessalonians

Those in Christ should be examples of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness. They are to stay alert to Satan's temptations and encourage one another while doing the will of God.

The Gospel proclaimers

- Proclaim in times of trials and conflicts
- Are to be aware of those who preach for money, power or prestige.
- Must not be focused on what pleases the hearers
- Should expect to be tested
- Work so as not to be a burden to others
- Exhort and encourage
- Aspire to live quietly and mind your own affairs
- Esteem those who devote their life to the work of Christ
- Live in peace not conflict
- Encourage, pray, rejoice and be patient
- Seek ways to do good
- Give Thanks in all circumstances
- Keep body, soul, and spirit blameless

The Resurrection of the Christian dead

The time of the Second coming of Christ, the resurrection, is unknown. But when it occurs the bodies of Christians in the grave will be resurrected and transformed into an immortal spirit ³ body and meet Christ in the clouds. Then the living in Christ will join them.

2 Thessalonians

Do not be alarmed by rumors regarding Christ's return. Christ will not come again until Satan deceives those perishing because **they refuse to love the truth** in order to be saved. He will

deceive by working through others by his power and fake signs and wonders. When Christ comes, He will administer justice with vengeance, eternal death, on those who persecuted His people.

Since the time of Christ's Second Coming is unknown, continue as servants of Christ by proclaiming the Gospel, doing good works and living a life glorifying Him. Do not feed or supply necessities of life to those who are able but refuse to provide for themselves. In fact, do not associate, or have fellowship, with them. But do not treat them as enemies.

1 Timothy

Confront those who teach Christians must keep traditions of their former religious beliefs. Beliefs contrary to Christ's and the apostle's teachings. They have **turned away and gone back** to their former religious beliefs.

Make intercessions and prayers, for all people, including rulers of countries.

Pray without the stain of unforgiven sin – holy hands.

Teach women not to call attention to the sensual by dressing that entices, as do the rich and influential.

Men who desire to lead ¹ their brethren to become righteous servants desire a good or noble **work – not an office** of power and prestige. ¹ Their work is to help those in Christ to mature into the likeness of God, by teaching and guiding them to do God's will. They "must be well thought of by outsiders, so that they may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil."

Some Christians will devote themselves to deceptive lies. Thus they sear their consciences with such practices as forbidding one to marry and abstain from eating certain food.

Do not rebuke the aged man or woman.

Children and grandchildren must take care of their needy parents

Some teach for personal gain messages other than those of Christ, not found in the Bible. ²⁷

People who desire to get rich set their hope on the uncertainties of money rather than God.

The rich should be generous and ready to share with those in need.

2 Timothy

Always encourage servants of God, especially those away from home proclaiming Christ.

A Christian's eternal destiny ³ is simple:

"If we have died with Christ, we will also live with Him;

if we endure, we will also reign with Him;

if we deny Him, he also will deny us;

if we are faithless, He remains faithful for He cannot deny himself.”

Do not quarrel about words and your personal interpretation. ²²

Christian brothers **can depart** from the body of Christ.

There are some in Christ’s Body who turn from spiritual uncleanness- vessels of dishonor - to righteous – vessels for honorable use so they can serve God.

Some brothers will be lovers of self, greedy, proud and arrogant. They may have the appearance of Godliness - You should have nothing to do with them.

Brothers and sisters who live a Godly life in Christ will be preserved.

All in Christ who live faithfully, while performing God’s will, have the assurance of Heaven.

Desires of Christians, whose lives are not under control revert back to their former worldly life.

All Scripture is God-breathed ⁶ and is useful for teaching and training.

Recognize and be aware of those who oppose Christ and His message.

Titus

Elders must confront teachers who are greedy for money, power or prestige. They teach myths ²⁵ and salvation based upon something other than Christ causing brothers away from Christ.

Be sure to teach

- Older men – to be self-controlled, sound in faith, and clear thinkers.
- Older women – to be reverent in behavior, self-controlled, not slanderers, not addicted to alcohol, and to teach younger women to be affectionate to their husband and children, self-controlled, keepers of the home.
- Young men – Self-controlled, model of good works, have integrity and dignity.
- Employees – perform the task your employers assign without arguing or complaining and not to take what belongs to the employer.

Christ came to earth to bring forgiveness and salvation, and teaching people to renounce ungodliness and worldly passion. He saves by mercy and obedience - not by works. Remind Christians to:

- Be submissive to governmental authorities
- Be ready to perform good works
- Speak evil of no one
- Avoid quarreling

- Be gentle and courteous to all people
- Devote yourself to good works
- Avoid foolish controversies such as the Jews do by attempting to show one is “God’s chosen” by their genealogy as children of Abraham.

Philemon

Sharing your faith results in hearers being refreshed.

Because of your life and love for the Gospel, God can and often uses undesirable events to be a great influence on others. Grateful and glorify God for using you to do His will.

Hebrews

Adam and Eve were created as righteous earthly beings and placed in a paradise to live in God’s presence. But they

- a) **chose** to listen to the lie of Satan, a rebellious angel;
- b) **desired** Satan’s promise;
- c) **rejected** God’s commands;
- d) **received** the consequences of their actions – pain, and death.

Following Satan’s lies and man’s sin, God revealed to Satan that an offspring of man would destroy his hold over man which is death. So, at just the perfect time Deity was born in the human body of Jesus, chose to come to earth and live among His creation to be the only and perfect sin offering. The Father accepted Jesus’ sin offering as evidenced by His resurrection the Victory over Death. Now the sins of the righteous under the old Covenant were forgiven. Thereafter forgiveness, redemption and **reconciliation became available** to all who **seek forgiveness** by obedience.

This reconciliation process ¹⁰ is described in many places in the Holy Scriptures beginning on the first Pentecost following Jesus’ resurrection and ascension as recorded in Acts 2. The forgiven also have a choice to live righteously or yield to their earthly desires. Yielding means accepting Satan’s lie to return to their former sinful life and enjoy their “temporary earthly pleasures”.

The writer of Hebrews issues a stern warning to those in Christ’s Church, who are tempted by Satan’s lies. Be aware, **listen** carefully to Christ’s and the apostle’s teachings or you **may drift** away and ultimately reject His saving grace. Having established the superiority of Christ over all creation over Old Covenant High Priest, and angels, Christians are warned about becoming unfaithful by returning to their former non-biblical religious teachings.

Christ Superiority

God initially spoke directly to man and later through prophets. But NOW, He speaks through Christ, His Son ¹⁴ the resurrected Christ, is superior to all creation – man and angels.

Christ is the Mediator between God and man, a Christian's high priest, on the order of Melchizedek. A priest not dependent on one's genealogy, an inherited position, as were the High Priests under the covenant given through Moses.

The world to come eternal life and everlasting death are subject to Christ.

Christ is now at God's side having offered His human living body as the only sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. By doing so, He **fulfilled the promise to Abraham** and made the Covenant made through Moses obsolete by **establishing a new covenant**. All who choose Christ through obedience will be cleansed spiritual beings when they:

- a) confess Jesus is God,
- b) die to sin,
- c) are buried in His blood are put by God into Christ's Body, His Church.

Just as a cleansed physical man can become dirty again so can a cleansed spiritual man. If this were not true then there would be no need for a mediator or to warn Christians not to fall away and turn back to one's former sinful life.

Warnings About Falling Away

A brother **could give way to an unbelieving heart** and fall away from God. (3:12)

Do not harden your heart and **do not reject** His voice, His message. (4:7)

Strive to enter into His rest, Heaven, so you **do not fall by disobedience**. (4:11)

Hold fast – don't turn loose - know only Christ's death, burial and resurrection but also His life and how to become mature in His likeness. (4:14)

For those enlightened and forgiven **who return to their prior sinful life**, it is difficult for them to return to Christ. (6:4)

There is no sin sacrifice for those who **go on deliberately** (continue) **sinning**. (10:26)

"Do not throw away your confidence which has a great reward." (10:34)

"My righteous one shall live by faith and **IF he shrinks back** my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of **those who shrink back and are destroyed**." (10:38 – 39a)

Those "who have faith preserve their souls." (10:39b)

Understand -Belief – Faith – Trust - Action

One can hear but not understand, understand but not enough to believe, and believe but be unwilling to commit to Christ and put their trust in Him. Those who trust will take action proving their faith and trust by their actions.

“By faith Abel **offered** to God a more acceptable sacrifice.” (Heb 11:1)

“By faith Abraham **obeyed** when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. (Heb 11:8)

“By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death.” (Heb 11:5)

“By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear **constructed** an ark for the saving of his household.” (Heb 11:7)

“By faith he (Abraham) **went to live** in the land of promise, as in a foreign land.” (Heb 11:9)

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, **offered** up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.” (Heb 11:17-19)

“By faith Isaac **invoked** future blessings on Jacob and Esau.” (Heb 11:20)

“By faith Jacob, when dying, **blessed** each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.” (Heb 11:21)

“By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and **gave directions** concerning his bones.” (Heb 11:22)

“By faith Moses, when he was born, **was hidden** for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.” (Heb 11:23)

“By faith Moses, when he was grown up, **refused** to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.” (Heb 11:24-25)

“By faith Moses **left** Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.” (Heb 11:27)

“By faith he **kept** the Passover and sprinkled the blood.” (Heb 11:28)

“By faith the people **crossed** the Red Sea as if on dry land.” (Heb 11:29)

“By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.” (Heb 11:31”

“These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having (hope) acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.” (Heb 11:13-14)

James

God does not tempt anyone. However, he allows the testing of one's faith to produce steadfastness when one remain faithful.

Temptation occurs from desire. When one gives into their desire sin occurs.

When angry, be slow to speak as wrath is not of God.

Christ's message of salvation ¹⁰ when obeyed and retained in the inner being, produces faithful living and workers – not pew sitters (spectators).

Christians worship when by desire take care of widows and others in need.

Treating the rich better than the poor displeased God for the poor are rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom.

Mercy negates the punishment of justice demands.

One's actions display their degree of love and faith – no action no faith.

What is spoken can produce good or evil. So, if one cannot control what and how they speak they should not teach.

Ambition to achieve power and prestige causes jealousy and dishonor rather than gentleness, mercy, and peace.

A Christian who breaks his covenant relationship with God through his relationship with the world is a spiritual adulterer.

A constant relationship with God keeps the Devil away.

Do not speak evil or slander anyone.

Riches acquired by greed cry out to God.

Godly and righteous people do not need to call upon others to attest to their word. They have no reason to swear.

Brothers can wander away from Christ. They need help and encouragement to remain faithful.

1 Peter

Through the resurrection of Christ, there is hope of eternal life for all who are born again. They are born again by dying to sin, being buried into Christ's blood, raised a new spiritual body and put into Christ's Kingdom by God.

Trials will occur to test one's faith.

Prophets foretold of God's Grace through Christ's life.

Those who accept Christ's message are to prepare themselves for action as God expects all His servants to work and do His will.

Do not continue living as you did before obedience to Christ. You are to be holy in your conduct and glorify God.

God foreknew, He predestined, that He would be manifested through the One He would raise from the dead. Thus, faith and hope would rest upon Him.

Purification cleansing comes through a rebirth from a pure, trusting, and obedient heart.

Christ's life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension is the Goodnews ¹⁰ that offers forgiveness of sins to everyone TODAY and ever after. Those who accept His offer are to consume spiritual food in order to mature and grow into their salvation.

Christians as God's servants are to offer their life as a living sacrifice, as priests to proclaim God's excellencies, Christ's message of reconciliation. So, abstain from passions of the flesh.

Live in accord with governing rulers, to the demands of employers while being free in Christ.

Wives are to honor and respect their husbands for by their gentle and humble nature they may penetrate the heart of their unbelieving husband.

Husbands are to show honor to their wives by understanding their concerns and needs.

Be united ²⁹ in heart and mind with your Christian family without any desire to get even.

Prepare yourselves to explain why you are different from the majority.

Christ delivered a message to those in Hades, the abode of the souls of those who have died.

Noah obeyed God and built the Ark saving him and his family through water which is an example for those who call on God to forgive through their act of baptism (immersion) ² in Christ's blood.

The gospel was to be preached to those who were alive but now dead so they might LIVE in spirit.

When you suffer as a Child of God, you glorify God. Suffering as a result of an evildoer, such as a theft or murderer, does not glorify God.

Men who willing, not for gain, devote their life humbly leading, not driving, their brethren to mature in God's nature and work as His servants are examples of love and humility.

Always be on alert looking for agents of the Devil who desire to devour and destroy one's faith.

Therefore, you grow in faith by growing in:

Virtue - high moral standards

Self-control of desires and actions

Faithfulness

Godly affection

Love – God's nature

Be diligent in practicing these qualities

Christ's message as recorded in the Bible did not come from man's knowledge or his interpretation but from God.

Some brothers deny the deity of Christ. They teach for greed - money, power, fame claiming Christ was only a phantom. ⁹ They are condemned.

Angels have sinned. God sent them to the deepest part of Hades, *tartarus*, until Christ returns and then the judgment. ⁷

Some people who indulge in passion and despise authority attempt to fellowship with Christians. But their heart is trained in greed. "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are **again entangled** in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness." (2:20-21)

God wants everyone to have the opportunity to turn from sin to Him. He is patient as time is meaningless because He is eternal.

Some teachings are difficult for those with little knowledge of God or His will. Some perhaps by choice but others due to teachings of others who have twisted the meaning of the scriptures to conform to their belief. ²⁸

1 John

Jesus was a real person ²⁶ attested to by those constantly with Him who heard, saw, and touched him. They are eyewitnesses. ¹⁵

God is righteous and those in Christ are in fellowship with Him because of Christ's cleansing blood. His atoning sacrifice makes one holy, **IF** they keep His commandments. This means we have the option to obey or refuse to obey Him and His teachings.

Since God is love anyone who hates (wishes evil rather than good) does not "live" or "walk" in Him.

Those in Christ who desire passions of the flesh and are proud rather than humble are of the world. **They have abandoned Christ.**

Some within Christ's church, who deny Jesus was God in a human body, are the antichrist.

Those who have accept Christ and abide in Him have eternal life.

Occasional sin can be forgiven but "Christians" who **practice** living in their sin, do not abide in Christ.

Christ's message is "God is Love" – one can choose either to abide in love or death.

God answers prayers offered by the authority of Christ ¹² when asked according to His will.

All who believe show their belief by their actions of love and obedience.

Christ is Eternal Life, so one continuing in sin leads to everlasting death.

Deity came to earth in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth and offered His message of forgiveness and salvation ¹⁰ to all people. Those who accept Him and His message through obedience have Eternal Life.

2 John

Love one another for God is Love.

Love is living according to God's will.

Deceivers have gone out, they are **no longer in His Church**, because of their love for worldly things. They deny Jesus is the Christ.

Christians who do not live according to Christ's teachings have **abandoned** Him.

3 John

It is right for Christians to assist those who proclaim Christ and His message of forgiveness and salvation.

There will be some “Christians” who desire to control the lives of other Christians with power and authority. Therefore, be aware of them as they are living and teaching contrary to Christ. Therefore, do not encourage them by providing assistance.

Jude

There are ungodly people who assemble with the Christian body for personal gain. They rely on opinions outside of Christ ²⁷ and His teachings leading some astray. “These are grumblers, malcontents, who follow their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.” (vs. 16)

“There will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions. It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.” (vs. 18-21)

These ungodly people and scoffers were formerly in His Body but now follow their worldly desires while still assembling as if a Christian.

Superscripts

1. A Kingdom Not Made With Hands
2. Baptism Into Christ
3. Body, Soul and Spirit - Where Do They Go When You Die?
4. Bride of Christ
5. Christ, The Mystery of God
6. Compiling and Translating God’s Word
7. Creation Before The Genesis Creation
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