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# How Should We Then Really Live?

Scriptural freedom vs religious rules

Drew Costen

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## **Scriptural freedom vs religious rules**

**By Drew Costen**

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## Table of Contents

Very important! Read this Introduction first! .....	4
Chapter 1: Walk not after the flesh.....	7
Chapter 2: Flee fornication .....	21
Chapter 3: Adultery in his heart .....	36
Chapter 4: In modest apparel .....	44
Chapter 5: The sin of Sodom.....	49
Chapter 6: Defending traditional marriage .....	57
Chapter 7: Profane hypocrisy .....	61
Chapter 8: Be not drunk with wine .....	65
Chapter 9: Thou shalt not kill.....	68
Chapter 10: You're already a moral relativist.....	80
Chapter 11: Paul-itics.....	85
Chapter 12: Not forsaking the assembling... ..	92
Conclusion.....	109

## **Very important! Read this Introduction first!**

Before we get started, I'd like to ask you to make sure you read the whole book in order, from beginning to end, rather than skipping ahead to a specific chapter or searching for a certain key word to learn what I believe about a particular topic. Because if you don't, you're almost definitely going to miss important information that's required to be known in order to fully understand the topic you're curious about.

And on a similar note, the contents of this book are technically the last chapter of a larger book on the topic of "Concordant" theology that was first published back in 2017 which is currently titled *Biblical Universalism*<sup>1</sup> (it's been renamed a few times since it was first published), and I'd highly recommend reading that whole book instead of this one if you aren't already familiar with the core doctrines of those of us who are sometimes referred to as "Concordant" believers or Biblical Universalists and don't already know what we believe the Bible actually teaches and why, or you're likely going to be extremely confused about a lot of things you read here, since many of the doctrines I explained in *that* book are necessary to be understood before one begins interpreting pretty much *any* of the Bible, including what's written in this book, and you'll get all the same information that's found in this book in its final chapter (that said, if you aren't familiar with our core doctrines but don't have the time to read that whole book, as it is quite long, you can read my book titled *Salvations*<sup>2</sup> instead,

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<sup>1</sup> *Biblical Universalism - Learn the irrefutable scriptural proof that all will be saved by Jesus Christ* by Drew Costen: <https://www.universalism.ca>

<sup>2</sup> *Salvations — An introduction to some of the different types of salvation mentioned in the Bible* by Drew Costen: <https://www.universalism.ca/salvations>

since it contains the bare essentials of what you *do* need to know in order to properly understand this one). That said, if you *are* already familiar with our core doctrines, you can go ahead and read this book instead.

I should probably also quickly discuss the Bible version used throughout this book, before getting into things. You see, A) there are a number of people out there who won't consider scriptural references from anything other than this one particular Bible version, B) because I wanted to reach the largest audience possible, not to mention C) because it's still one of the most popular and recognizable Bible versions anyway, all scriptural references in this book are from the KJV (the *King James Version* of the Bible).

Of course, I do delve into the original Hebrew and Koine Greek a little when necessary, in order to reach a larger audience (as well as to strengthen some of my arguments), since I wrote this book to reach all Christians – whether they be KJV-Onlyists or not – but none of the passages of Scripture in their original languages that we'll be examining will contradict a carefully-and-consistently-interpreted KJV. Still, if you aren't a fan of the way the KJV renders certain things, please feel free to look up the supporting scriptural references in the footnotes and the body of the book in whichever translation you prefer.

And along those lines, I should also point out that some of the writers of the books and articles I linked to in the footnotes *do* use other Bible versions themselves, and they don't necessarily all feel as favourably towards the KJV as I do, but I still highly recommend reading their articles and books even if you are a KJV-Onlyist, in order to learn more details that I didn't have the time to get into here myself. Speaking of those footnotes, please keep in mind that just because I link to specific articles or books doesn't mean that I agree with everything their writers and/or publishers believe and/or teach. In some cases, I link to them for the sole reason that they happen to have better supporting material on a specific point than anybody else I've found so far.

Oh, and please make sure that *you're* the one who actually reads this book. I've spoken with people who were too lazy to actually read the book and who embarrassed themselves by asking so-called "AI" services (really just an LLM, or Large Language Model, since true AI doesn't actually exist, and I personally doubt it's even possible that it ever will) for a summary of the book instead, and as one should expect, it inevitably gave them an incredibly bad summary, making it obvious that they hadn't taken the time to study for themselves, based on the fact that they were *still* entirely unaware of what we *actually* believe the Bible teaches about the topic, not to mention *why* we believe it teaches what we believe it does about this topic, which was made clear by the fact that all they could do was repeat the same so-called "proof texts" that everyone gives and that I'd already explained our interpretations of – not to mention repeat the same bad arguments that I'd already refuted – in the book, without responding to anything I *actually* wrote in the book. So if that's something you're tempted to do, please don't be lazy, but instead actually read the book for yourself.

I should probably also mention that the layout of this book will look strange on certain pages, at least in the PDF version of it that you're reading now. The reason for this was in order to keep each footnote on one page rather than letting them continue over onto the next page, but this does cause some pages of the book to have unusual formatting, as you'll soon discover.

And with all that being said, let's get into it.

## Chapter 1: Walk not after the flesh

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**J**esus said that His yoke is easy and His burden is light,<sup>3</sup> yet the yoke of religious rules that many Christians seem to be trying to impose on you and the rest of the world on a daily basis are anything *but* easy, with some of these rules seeming nigh impossible to keep, so what gives? Well, to put it simply, just as it is when it comes to salvation, nearly everything we've been taught at church when it comes to morality, and even to religious rules in general, is entirely unbiblical. You see, misunderstanding the actual meaning of *numerous* passages in Scripture has led the leaders of the Christian religion to believe that *all sorts* of innocent actions are actually sinful and should be avoided, when there's really nothing wrong with most of these actions at all, and these religious leaders then made sure that the *rest* of the world believed these misinterpretations of Scripture are what the Bible actually says as well. And so, throughout this book I'm going to explain some of the most important truths contained in the Bible that the religious leaders of the world do *not* understand – and definitely do not want you to discover – about morality, truths which will set you completely free from sin's control, and, in fact, from the yoke of *all* religious bondage.

Before looking at some of the specific actions that the religious mistakenly think we need to avoid, though, it should first be noted that the Bible *does* tell us

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<sup>3</sup> Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. — Matthew 11:28-30

plenty of things that God actually *would* prefer people not do without us needing to add to it (even if the list differs depending on which dispensation, or administration, one is living under; it's perfectly fine for members of the body of Christ to eat a ham sandwich, for example, even though it would be a sin for those under the Mosaic law, since members of the body of Christ – and Gentiles in general, for that matter – are not under the Mosaic law the way that members of the Israel of God are (although, if you disagree, you really need to either read the first chapter of my book titled *Biblical Universalism* that I linked to in the introduction of this book, or read my *Salvations* book where I also discussed these details at length). In fact, Scripture even provides a list of things that God actually hates, in Proverbs 6:16-19<sup>4</sup> (that's not the only list, but it's an important one when it comes to general morality itself), and there's nothing at all about most of the things the morality police dislike on *that* list, including some of the biggest hangups religious conservatives have (although there are a number of things on that list which many of them do seem to enjoy, as I'm sure you've seen for yourself firsthand). What He does hate, however, is dishonesty, and I suspect that religious lies are the worst sort of dishonesty since they're lies about God Himself. Basically, if a particular action isn't on one of the actual lists of actions God hates and/or forbids, insisting that it's sinful and making new rules that God Himself never made is really lying about what God wants, just like the religious leaders in Jesus' time did. And remember, it was those very same people who opposed Jesus, and who conspired to have Him (and, later, His followers) killed. That's right, it wasn't the pagans, atheists, or liberals who tried to eliminate Christ and His followers. Rather, it was the religious conservatives of His time who tried to squash Him and His teachings (and any others who taught them as well), just as they do today (as it was then, the greatest enemies of Christ and His true followers are still religious

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<sup>4</sup> These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren. — Proverbs 6:16-19

conservatives, even if these supposed “ministers of righteousness”<sup>5</sup> call themselves Christians now).

All of that aside, though, worrying about morality (at least the way most conservative Christians understand morality) is a huge red herring. What followers of Churchianity (which is what some of us now call the Institutional Church and the “orthodox” religion known as Christianity – as opposed to the supposedly “heretical” religionless doctrines that I now believe the Bible teaches are meant for the body of Christ) don’t seem to realize is that all of the “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not” cause them to completely miss the point of Paul’s teachings to begin with (since, as we learned in the aforementioned *Biblical Universalism* and *Salvations* books, it’s Paul’s teachings that the body of Christ is supposed to concern itself with under the dispensation of the grace of God – and, again, if you aren’t aware of this fact, you do need to go read one of those two books or you’ll go astray in nearly *all* of your interpretations of Scripture). Starting with a flawed presupposition about doctrines like sin and grace will cause one to think that they’re supposed to be concerned with religious rules, when being a member of the body of Christ is actually about something else altogether. Basically, the Gospel that Paul preached isn’t a religious proposition (“do this or else!”); rather, it’s a proclamation (“it’s already been done by Christ, so why not believe this good news and stop trying to please God yourself?”), as you also know, or at least you do if you’re familiar with the doctrines I covered in those other two books, something almost no Christian knows, due to having been taught and believing a false “gospel” and hence not actually being in the body of Christ at all, despite assuming they are.

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<sup>5</sup> For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. — 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

While most religions are a set of rules that people need to follow in order to A) live an enjoyable life, B) avoid suffering negative consequences (either imposed by followers of said religions in this life or by their deity or other beings in an afterlife, or by being reincarnated to live another mortal life again on earth after death), and C) make God happy, Paul promised that A) believers of his teachings are less likely to have a fun life than those who don't believe his message, since they'd be persecuted by those who do prefer religion (including the Christian religion) to the truth,<sup>6</sup> B) explained that we don't have to do anything to avoid suffering a negative afterlife (or life after resurrection, to be more precise) since we've already been justified by faith regardless of what we do,<sup>7</sup> and C) told us that God is already happy (the word "blessed" in 1 Timothy 1:11<sup>8</sup> literally means "happy" in the original Koine Greek). Instead of following a bunch of rules the way followers of various religions (including the Christian religion) do, members of the body of Christ don't have to actively try to avoid sinning by our own strength at all (and, in fact, should actually not ever try to), because we're justified (and living) by faith, and are walking after the Spirit rather than after the flesh.

To hear most Christians talk about it, you'd think that sins are something we should be actively trying to avoid committing. When the street preachers here in Toronto give their sermons, the focus is always on sin and how our sinful actions will send us to an afterlife realm called "hell" if we don't get our sin dealt with by "getting saved" in the manner the preachers believe one needs to do so in (completely missing the fact that Christ's death for our sins in the Gospel is a proclamation, not a proposition, as I just explained, and that sin has

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<sup>6</sup> Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. — 2 Timothy 3:12

<sup>7</sup> Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. — Romans 3:28

<sup>8</sup> According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. — 1 Timothy 1:11

already been taken care of for everybody whether they believe it or not). And if you talk to them one-on-one, you'll discover they believe that, even *after* we "get saved" in the manner they believe one does, we still need to do our best to avoid certain actions these preachers consider to be sinful (as well as do certain things they consider to be commanded of us, I should add). Following rules is basically the foundation of their entire religion, and so when they attempt to interpret passages such as the following ones, they'll tell you Paul was explaining how we need to try to do good, spiritual acts while trying to avoid fleshly, sinful acts:

*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. – Romans 8:1-10*

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,*

*Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. – Galatians 5:16-25*

And while Paul is indeed telling his readers they shouldn't be walking after the flesh – not to mention what the consequences of doing so might be – in those verses, that he isn't telling people to try to actively avoid sinning should be very obvious to anyone who considers the context of the passages. Unfortunately, most Christians are so obsessed with religious rules that they've actually made Sin their lord (anthropomorphically speaking), which keeps them from being able to grasp what Paul actually taught about the topic of sin at all, and results in them walking after the flesh after all.

So what *was* Paul talking about in those passages? Well, if you ask any Christian who has studied Paul's epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, they should be able to tell you that a large part of both books is about how the body of Christ is not under the law,<sup>9</sup> and how we shouldn't allow ourselves to be placed under it at all. The problem is, when they get to passages that talk about "the flesh," most Christians immediately forget this fact and proceed to completely ignore the context of the passages, reading their love of religious rules into the passages instead. Following religious rules isn't even close to what Paul was talking about when he wrote warnings about walking after the flesh, however. In fact, the exact opposite is true. Even though the context of those passages should make it obvious, it can help to read an entirely different passage written by Paul, one which can serve as the key to understanding the other times he writes about the flesh. In Philippians 3:1-11, Paul is warning his readers against

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<sup>9</sup> For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. —  
Romans 6:14

having confidence in their flesh<sup>10</sup> – by which he means trying to be righteous by following rules – telling them they should instead be trusting in the faith of Christ for their righteousness rather than in their own actions (or even in their own faith, as discussed in that *Biblical Universalism* book).

This, along with the context of not being under the law (and the fact that Paul also compares walking after the Spirit with not following the law in that passage from Galatians<sup>11</sup>), should make it clear that Paul was actually telling people to stop trying to follow (and enforce) *any* religious rules at all, because trying to follow religious rules is what it actually means to walk after the flesh (including trying to follow the 10 Commandments, which are indeed a part of the Mosaic law, as Paul made clear by referencing the 10th commandment<sup>12</sup> when he wrote Romans 7:7<sup>13</sup> as a part of his teaching that we shouldn't allow ourselves to be

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<sup>10</sup> Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. — Philippians 3:1-11

<sup>11</sup> But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. — Galatians 5:18

<sup>12</sup> Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's. — Exodus 20:17

<sup>13</sup> What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. — Romans 7:7

placed under *any* parts of the law). So if you are actively trying to avoid (or even trying to do) specific actions in order to please God, you're actually walking after the flesh, not to mention ignoring what Paul said about following ordinances and other commandments of men.<sup>14</sup> And, as we know, he contrasted the concept of walking after the flesh with the concept of walking after the Spirit, and if walking after the flesh means trying to follow religious rules, walking after the Spirit must necessarily mean we *aren't* trying to follow religious rules, but are instead trusting that Christ will live the life He wants us to live through us,<sup>15</sup> and that He'll end up doing the things God wants us to do and avoiding the things God wants us to avoid, Himself, through us. It's only when we start walking after the flesh, meaning we start worrying about religion and trying to follow rules and prohibitions, that we begin doing the very things that God doesn't want us to do, because trying to follow religious rules (be it the Mosaic law, or any other form of religious rules) only leads to more sin.<sup>16</sup>

At this point most Christians will protest and say that, while we aren't under the Mosaic law itself, there are still other rules in the Bible we need to follow, but in making such claims they're ignoring everything Paul taught throughout his epistles. The reason we don't follow the Mosaic law isn't because there's

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<sup>14</sup> Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. — Colossians 2:20-23

<sup>15</sup> I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. — Galatians 2:20-21

<sup>16</sup> Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: — Romans 5:20

anything wrong with the specific rules in the law themselves.<sup>17</sup> The commandment against murder<sup>18</sup> is not a bad rule in and of itself, for example, which means that it isn't simply the specific rules in the Mosaic law we aren't supposed to follow, but rather it's *trying to follow religious rules in general* that we aren't supposed to do.

Which brings us to the next protestation most Christians will make. “What about the long list of sins Paul mentioned in that passage in Galatians we looked at? Wasn't he telling his readers to do their best to avoid those specific actions?” The answer to this will shock most people, but no, he most certainly wasn't. If walking after the flesh means trying to follow religious rules, how could Paul possibly then turn around and say, “But make sure you don't break *these* specific religious rules, okay?” Instead, if you look at the context, it becomes clear that he's warning his readers what will happen if they *try* to avoid sinning out of their own strength. Instead of becoming the holy, righteous people they hope that avoiding those specific actions will make them, those actions are instead exactly what they'll end up doing. Just as positive attributes like love, joy, and peace are the fruit of walking after the Spirit, the various negative actions Paul listed there are the fruit of walking after the flesh, meaning those actions are the fruit that will come forth from trying to follow religious rules.

And so, Paul's condemnation in Romans 10:2-3 can equally be applied to Christians today: “*For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*”

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<sup>17</sup> But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; — 1 Timothy 1:8

<sup>18</sup> Thou shalt not kill. — Exodus 20:13

Bottom line, if you hear someone tell you that one must follow religious rules, especially if they're a part of the Mosaic law in any way, don't walk; run! It means that they are very likely a wolf in sheep's clothing, trying to lure you into their religious trap (presuming you're in the body of Christ anyway; if you're in the Israel of God instead, you can disregard this exhortation). At the very least, they are extremely confused and likely have nothing useful to teach you (at least from a spiritual perspective). Remember that, while not all things are a good idea, all things are technically permitted,<sup>19</sup> and also that to the pure all things are pure<sup>20</sup> (but those unbelievers in Paul's Gospel who are pretending to be believers – likely lying even to themselves about their faith, not to mention often telling themselves that there's really only one Gospel while also completely failing to understand what Paul's Gospel actually means in the first place, as we covered in my *Biblical Universalism* and *Salvations* books – have a defiled mind and conscience that causes them to consider pretty much nothing to be pure). Yes, if someone doesn't have faith that something is allowed, then it would be a sin **for them specifically** to do it<sup>21</sup> (although not because the action itself is necessarily actually sinful in and of itself), but the corollary of this verse must be true too: if that which is not out of faith is sin, then that which is out of faith is not sin. It is true that Paul used food and holy days as specific examples, but the principle still applies to everything.

Remember also that we should think of our old humanity (or our “old man,” as the KJV puts it) as dead,<sup>22</sup> and that we are to, in fact, reckon ourselves dead to

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<sup>19</sup> All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. — 1 Corinthians 6:12

<sup>20</sup> Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. — Titus 1:15

<sup>21</sup> And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. — Romans 14:23

<sup>22</sup> Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. — Romans 6:6

Sin altogether,<sup>23</sup> which means that Sin has no more dominion over us at all – anthropomorphically speaking – because we’re not under law at all, but rather are under grace<sup>24</sup> (and remaining under grace takes away all of Sin’s power over us). To “reckon” isn’t to try make something a fact, meaning to try to avoid sinning in this case, but rather it means to simply look at it as if it’s *already* a fact, and to stop letting Sin reign over you by trying to avoid sinning. And yes, Paul did say, “*they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh*”<sup>25</sup> (and yes, the word translated as “*have crucified*” – σταυρόω/“stow-ro'-o” – is in the Aorist tense in that verse in the original Greek, so it might be able to be said that it’s an ongoing process as well, as some like to point out), but since he also told us to consider ourselves as already being dead to Sin, he obviously wasn’t telling us to try to stop sinning there (since a dead body can’t sin), any more than he was when he said, “*I die daily,*” in another verse.<sup>26</sup> The context of “flesh” in the first verse has to be referring to the same thing as it did in the rest of the passages we just looked at, meaning our self-righteous attempts to please God by following religious rules, and the context of the second verse was just physical death, with Paul simply speaking of how he risked physical death regularly thanks to the various persecutions and perils he faced in his ministry there, as he clarified in the very next verse after he made that statement.<sup>27</sup> And similarly, Jesus’

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<sup>23</sup> Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. — Romans 6:11

<sup>24</sup> For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. — Romans 6:14

<sup>25</sup> And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. — Galatians 5:24

<sup>26</sup> I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. — 1 Corinthians 15:31

<sup>27</sup> If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. — 1 Corinthians 15:32

command to “*take up one’s cross daily*”<sup>28</sup> doesn’t refer to trying to avoid sinning either. Aside from the fact that this was directed specifically to those under the Gospel of the Circumcision instead of to the body of Christ, even if it could be considered a trans-dispensational truth, it wasn’t talking about avoiding sin, but rather about being willing to face death like He was about to do.

To be fair, the Bible does seem to teach that those believers who happen to be saved under the Gospel of the Circumcision do have to be careful to avoid rejecting what they’ve believed and falling back into sin so as to not miss out on their salvation, which means missing out on living in the thousand-year kingdom of heaven (if not more, although the “more” just refers to living in the New Jerusalem during the final age, not to the immortality that everyone will eventually experience by the end of the ages), and unlike those of us in the body of Christ, they *are* required to keep the Mosaic law (at least the parts they’re still able to keep without a temple, similar to the way Daniel and his fellow exiles lived in times past). But as far as those of us in the body of Christ go, while we may or may not all get to reign, we are safe as far as our special salvation goes, regardless of what we do, because Paul told us in Romans 8 that anyone God calls for membership in the body of Christ *will* be justified and glorified,<sup>29</sup> as we’ve already learned, and because he told us not to allow ourselves to be placed under the law at all, since to do so is what it means to fall from grace. So at the end of the day, we just don’t have to worry about Sin, or about trying to avoid sinning, if we’re in the body of Christ, because we’re now dead to Sin.

I should say, after reading all that, some people are still going to misunderstand everything I just wrote, thinking that I’m telling people we actually *should* go

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<sup>28</sup> And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. — Luke 9:23

<sup>29</sup> Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. — Romans 8:30

out and *purposely* commit sins, not to mention that we shouldn't walk worthy of the Lord,<sup>30</sup> but that's not what I'm saying here at all (although it is imperative to remember that the pace at which we walk is entirely in God's hands<sup>31</sup>). In fact, you definitely should *not* be going out and purposely committing sins (at least not actual sins; I'm not talking about the innocent actions that many Christians confuse for sins because they essentially misunderstand the entire Bible). I'm simply saying that we shouldn't be trying to avoid sinning of our own strength, but rather that we should be trusting God to keep us from sinning instead. This also means that if you *aren't* accused of encouraging people to sin, you probably aren't teaching the same things that Paul taught about sin and grace, since this false accusation seems to have also been levelled against him<sup>32</sup> – which is why he wrote Romans chapter 6 in the first place – and so those who aren't accused of being “hyper-grace” or antinomian themselves probably aren't either). And while I need to move on at this point, there's still a lot more<sup>33</sup> that can be said about<sup>34</sup> this extremely important topic,<sup>35</sup> so I want you to read the articles by

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<sup>30</sup> For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; — Colossians 1:9-10

<sup>31</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. — Ephesians 2:10

<sup>32</sup> What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? — Romans 6:1-2

<sup>33</sup> *Death of the Old Humanity, Part 1* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.6.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> *Death of the Old Humanity, Part 2* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.8.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> *Death of the Old Humanity, Part 3* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.13.pdf>

Martin Zender<sup>36</sup> – who goes into so much more detail<sup>37</sup> on this topic<sup>38</sup> than I was able to get into here<sup>39</sup> – that I’ve linked to in the footnotes throughout this sentence.<sup>40</sup>

Still, while worrying about sin is not something those of us in the body of Christ are meant to do, it can be helpful to know *why* some of the activities that conservative Christians think are sinful really aren’t, and how one responds emotionally to what they read in next few chapters will be a good test of whether one is walking after the Spirit or walking after the flesh. Those who aren’t walking after the Spirit will feel their pharisaical flesh crawling and their self-righteous souls getting stirred up because of some of the things that are about to be said, and, as such, they would be wise to consider reevaluating themselves, spiritually-speaking, and also question whether they’re more interested in holding fast to the traditions they’ve been taught by their denominations and religious leaders, or in what Scripture actually teaches.

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<sup>36</sup> *Death of the Old Humanity, Part 4* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.14.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> *Death of the Old Humanity, Part 5* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.15.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> *Death of the Old Humanity, Part 6* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.16.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> *Walking According to Spirit* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.26.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> “*FLESH*” in *Romans 8* By Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.27.pdf>

## Chapter 2: Flee fornication

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Perhaps the best examples of unscriptural traditions when it comes to morality are what most Christians have been taught regarding sex and lust. You’ve almost certainly been taught that premarital sex is a sin, and the primary reason that most conservative Christians are so against premarital sex is one little word: fornication. Depending on your English Bible translation, you’ll find fornication criticized as a very bad thing that one should flee from,<sup>41</sup> and if you look fornication up in an English dictionary you will indeed find that it *can* mean sexual intercourse between unmarried partners, although that isn’t its only, or even its original, meaning, which is very important to keep in mind because the Greek word translated as “fornication” in the KJV is πορνεία/“por-ni’-ah,” which does *not* literally mean “premarital sex” *at all* (that’s not to say that premarital sex by certain people can’t fall under the umbrella of πορνεία under *very specific circumstances*, but that isn’t what the Greek word itself actually means, in and of itself, making “fornication” yet another example of the various False Friends found in the KJV, With “False Friends” being a term certain theologians sometimes use to refer to English words we still use today, but which can now mean something very different – in ways that the average reader is unlikely to be aware of – from what they could mean when our older English Bible versions such as the KJV were first translated).

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<sup>41</sup> Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. — 1 Corinthians 6:18

Of course, some English Bible versions use the term “sexual immorality” to translate the word πορνεία instead, and that’s not necessarily a bad translation, but you *do* have to be just as careful with *this* translation as you do with “fornication,” since it’s really just a broad and general term that doesn’t tell us anything on its own about what sexual acts would actually be considered to be immoral, and to automatically read “premarital sex” into “sexual immorality” is simply eisegesis based on an assumption rather than based on the original Greek, considering the fact that πορνεία just didn’t refer to the act of simply having sex outside of marriage at the time the Greek Scriptures (meaning the books of the Bible that are generally referred to as “the New Testament”) were written (which tells us that assuming the word “fornication” means “premarital sex” in the KJV and other Bible versions that use this translation is *also* a mistake). And “premarital sex” isn’t what the Hebrew word translated as “fornication” in the KJV<sup>42</sup> – זָנָו/“zaw-naw” – meant either, since *that* word literally just meant “prostitution,” generally referring specifically to temple, or cult, prostitution when used in Scripture, which is why πορνεία and זָנָו are often also translated as “prostitution” or “whoredom.”

In fact, even the English word “fornication” itself originally meant something similar, since the word used to either literally just mean “to meet a prostitute under an arch” (the word originated from the Latin words “fornix,” “fornicare,” and “fornicatio,” with “fornix” originally literally meaning “arch” or “vault” – prostitutes used to wait for their customers in ancient Rome under vaulted ceilings where they’d be safe from the elements, and so “fornix” eventually became a term for brothels because of this – “fornicare” referring to a man visiting a brothel, and “fornicatio,” literally meaning “done in the archway,” was used as a euphemism for prostitution), or simply referred to *the act* of

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<sup>42</sup> Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto. — 2 Chronicles 21:11

“prostitution” in some form, and *not* simply to premarital sex, which is *why* “fornication” is yet another False Friend in the KJV.

And so, if your English Bible translation uses the word “fornication” (or even “sexual immorality”), it’s very important to avoid assuming that the term is referring to premarital sex the way most Christians do, since it’s almost always referring to prostitution of some sort instead. That said, one has to be careful here too, because the type of prostitution being referred to by the words πορνεία and זנות don’t refer to the concept of simply trading money for sex as practiced by regular sex-workers today, but normally imply a more illicit affair taking place, especially when used in Scripture (it’s important to keep in mind that sex work on its own – not to mention paying for sex – wasn’t always considered to be the shameful act that it’s considered to be by most people today), which is backed up by the fact that it’s generally agreed upon by scholars that the most broad meaning of πορνεία is closer to “illicit sexual intercourse” than anything else, and if we take the term “illicit sexual intercourse” literally, it just means sexual intercourse that breaks the law. As we all know, at least as of the time this book was written, premarital sex on its own doesn’t break the law here in the western world, and it certainly wasn’t against the law among the Gentiles Paul wrote to when he told believers to avoid πορνεία either, telling us that πορνεία simply *can’t* be referring to premarital sex on its own, at least not when it’s used in Paul’s epistles. Remember, he was primarily writing to Gentiles when he used that word, which means that whatever the Jewish uses of the word might have been at that time was mostly irrelevant in his epistles, outside of very specific cases where he referred to actions performed by certain Israelites as an example of forms of πορνεία to avoid when he used the word. Still, if one *does* dig into the Mosaic Law, they’ll see that it wasn’t ever spelled out as being illegal there either. While there were potential civil consequences for men who had premarital sex with female virgins back in Bible times, depending on the context (note that there’s no indication that premarital sex itself was considered

to be a sin in Deuteronomy 22:28-29, for example<sup>43</sup> – especially since the woman in question isn't actually punished at all, as she would have been if this passage was simply saying premarital sex is a sin, which it definitely doesn't state anywhere in the passage – and this is because it was referring to a property violation against the woman's father, since fathers would get less money for selling their daughters to husbands if the daughter wasn't a virgin; sadly, women were considered to be property in ancient cultures, including that of Israel, and were often basically sold from one "owner," her father, to a new "owner," her husband, through marriage), and a woman deceiving her husband into thinking that she was a virgin before marriage when she really wasn't could also result in harsh penalties, as Deuteronomy 22:13-21 tells us<sup>44</sup> (since her husband would have paid more money for her if he believed she actually was a virgin, and you'll note that there's no penalty prescribed for the man she lost her virginity to, since he hadn't necessarily sinned in sleeping with her, confirming that this is a "false advertising" sin rather than a purity sin),

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<sup>43</sup> If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days. — Deuteronomy 22:28-29

<sup>44</sup> If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid: Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days. But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you. — Deuteronomy 22:13-21

premarital sex on its own was *never* specifically forbidden or called sinful *anywhere* in the Hebrew Scriptures (meaning the books of the Bible that are generally referred to as “the Old Testament”). Of course, premarital sex (or other forms of sex outside of marriage) technically *could* fall under the broad label of πορνεία in some parts of the world (and still can today), but it could (and can) only legitimately do so in regions where this actually was or is considered to be illegal (such as in parts of the Middle East today, for example). Outside of those more conservative regions of the planet, however, it wouldn’t be considered to be wrong by the law and hence wouldn’t be a sin to do so.

But that still raises the question, what sexual acts actually *would* be considered illicit when the word πορνεία was used in Scripture? Well, it would, of course, cover any of the specific sexual prohibitions that *actually were* mentioned in the Mosaic Law, or at least it would for those who were required to follow said law (i.e., members of the Israel of God):

*None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the Lord. The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness. The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover. The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs is thine own nakedness. The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister: she is thy father's near kinswoman. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister: for she is thy mother's near kinswoman. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife: she is thine aunt. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter in law: she is thy son's wife; thou shalt not uncover her*

*nakedness. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness. Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time. Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness. Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her. And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord. Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion. – Leviticus 18:6-23*

*And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man lie with his daughter in law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them. If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you. And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a wicked thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people: he hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity. And if a man shall lie with a woman having*

*her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people. And thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister, nor of thy father's sister: for he uncovereth his near kin: they shall bear their iniquity. And if a man shall lie with his uncle's wife, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless. – Leviticus 20:10-21*

And without even having to go any further, the passages I just quoted prove that premarital sex is not a sin all on their own, because if it were a sin, God wouldn't have had to have gone to the trouble of forbidding sex with animals – or even with other people's wives – since all He'd have to have said is, "Don't have sex with anyone you aren't married to," which is a commandment He never *actually* gave *anywhere* in Scripture. (I should also quickly point out that you won't find masturbation, enjoying the way someone's body looks, or fantasizing about someone in a sexual manner listed anywhere in that list of sexual prohibitions either, which is something important to keep in mind as well – and no, none of these things are what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 5:28,<sup>45</sup> despite the fact that this is what most Christians have misinterpreted that verse to mean, but we'll get to the real meaning of that verse in the next chapter of this book.) The fact that God also never forbade men from having concubines, who were not wives but who were women that men had sex with, and in fact never once condemned the many men in the Bible who were considered to be righteous (relatively speaking) yet had concubines, also makes this quite clear, since sex with those concubines would have been "premarital" sex (or really "extramarital" sex, but that's basically what Christians mean when they refer to "premarital" sex, because otherwise they'd be okay with a divorcee having sex with someone they're not married to, since that sex would

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<sup>45</sup> But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. — Matthew 5:28

no longer be able to be classified as “premarital”). It also makes it obvious that those Christians who claim having sex with someone means one is automatically married to that person haven’t thought things through particularly well either, I should add, since concubines would have then been called “wives” in Scripture instead, if that was the case, considering the fact that God considered polygamy to be acceptable and men to legitimately be said to have multiple wives in the Bible.

As far as those of us in the body of Christ go, however (since we aren’t under the Mosaic law the way those in the Israel of God are), while the word *πορνεία* *literally* means “illicit sexual intercourse,” we have to look at context to determine what sort of sexual activity is being called illicit in Paul’s epistles (and not just automatically jump to the conclusion that it’s premarital sex being referred to, the way most Christians assume it is), and the Hebrew Scriptures actually do help us here because they reveal that it largely referred to sexual idolatry (meaning sleeping with temple – or cult – prostitutes) when Paul used the term, as demonstrated by 1 Corinthians 10:8<sup>46</sup> where Paul used the word to

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<sup>46</sup> Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. — 1 Corinthians 10:8

refer back to the cult prostitutes of Moab mentioned in Numbers 25:1-9<sup>47</sup> (who used sex as a part of worshipping other gods since, in Bible times, Satan used sex to lure people into idolatry, although, now that cult prostitution is basically no longer a thing, he now uses avoiding the forms of sexuality that conservative Christians disagree with as a new supposed “proof of righteousness” instead; and just to quickly get the supposed discrepancy between Paul’s 23,000 in 1 Corinthians 10 and the 24,000 in Numbers 25 there out of the way, it’s simply that Paul chose not to include the “heads of the people” of verse 4 who were hung – amounting to 1,000 people – but referenced only the 23,000 common people slain with the sword, as mentioned in verse 5). Paul presumably (or at least hopefully) would have also been speaking against the rape of the women forced to participate in temple prostitution in his time when he spoke against πορνεία,<sup>48</sup> not just the idolatry aspect of it, but the connection to idolatry was a large, if not the largest, part of it.

That said, it could also be used in reference to sexual practices that actually were considered illicit by the culture in question, practices such as incest, for

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<sup>47</sup> And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor. And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand. — Numbers 25:1-9

<sup>48</sup> *Translating Sex: Issues with the Translation of Sexual Terms in 1 Corinthians* by Roy E. Ciampa: <https://www.viceregency.com/TranslatingSexPaper.pdf>

example – which is an action that Paul was appalled to hear some of his Corinthian readers were participating in, being an action which even the heathens of their society at the time would not have allowed anyone to hear they'd done themselves – using the same Greek word.<sup>49</sup> This particular instance of πορνεία also demonstrates quite conclusively that premarital sex was not considered to be a sin. If it were, the Corinthian believers would never have even considered letting things go this far; they would have stopped long before accepting, and seemingly even taking pride in,<sup>50</sup> this relationship happening among their church members if Paul or anyone else had previously taught them that sex outside of marriage fell under the category of πορνεία-based sins, and he also apparently forgot to tell them it was a sin in this epistle as well when he was telling them to avoid such forms of πορνεία, so anyone who claims it is sinful is just eisegeting their own moralistic bias based on their preconceived religious traditions into their interpretation of the word πορνεία in this and other parts of Scripture rather than exegeting what Scripture actually means by the word.

Of course, some try to argue that Paul *did* tell them to avoid premarital sex a couple chapters later (in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7<sup>51</sup>), when he wrote, “*Now concerning*

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<sup>49</sup> It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. — 1 Corinthians 5:1

<sup>50</sup> And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. — 1 Corinthians 5:2

<sup>51</sup> Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. — 1 Corinthians 7:1-7

*the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband*” (or at least that’s how the KJV translates it), supposedly telling them to get married rather than have premarital sex, but that’s not what he’s actually trying to get at there at all. It would take a much longer study to get all the way into the full meaning of this chapter, but along with actually taking the context of the passage into consideration, there are also idioms in the original Greek text that aren’t obvious if you’re not aware of them<sup>52</sup> (for instance, the phrase “not to touch” in the KJV was a translation of a figure of speech that literally meant “not to have sex with,” at least when used in the context of this passage, and the word “have” was euphemistically referring to having sexual intercourse in that passage as well), so what Paul meant there was essentially: “Now, regarding what you wrote to me – where you said, ‘It is ideal for a man to avoid having sex with a woman’ – well, whether or not that’s true, in order to avoid the temptation that would almost certainly arise to have sex with temple prostitutes instead, let every man continue having sex with the wife he’s already married to, and let every woman continue having sex with the husband she’s already married to as well.” Basically, this passage is just talking about married Corinthian believers who had come to the conclusion that it would be more righteous or holy to avoid sexual intercourse with their spouses altogether (quite possibly because of outside Gnostic influences), but Paul warned them that they should not stop sleeping with their already existing spouses or they could end up inadvertently committing idolatry, as their biological urges would very likely lead the men to sleep with temple prostitutes instead (because they were the easiest people to find sex with aside from with one’s spouse, since people generally didn’t have romantic relationships back then as we do today; marriage was more of a business arrangement until very recently, so outside of marriage and adultery, the easiest and most common way for a man to have sex in that time and place

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<sup>52</sup> *1 Corinthians 7:1 in the NIV* by Gordon D. Fee: [https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/23/23-4/23-4-pp307-314\\_JETS.pdf](https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/23/23-4/23-4-pp307-314_JETS.pdf)

was with a temple prostitute), and the women could even end up committing adultery. Yes, avoiding marriage is honourable if one can handle it (the reason for this isn't because sex is somehow dirty or less than righteous and something that should be avoided in general, however; it's simply because it helps one hold lightly to the things of this earth so they can focus solely on the things of God instead of the concerns of a spouse<sup>53</sup>), but as the writer of Hebrews put it (even if this is a Circumcision writing, I doubt anyone would disagree that this is a trans-dispensational truth which applies to those under both Gospels), marriage (and sex in marriage) is just as honourable,<sup>54</sup> and one shouldn't defile their marriage bed by sleeping with temple prostitutes or by committing adultery (both of which would be temptations if a married couple stopped sleeping with each other in an attempt to keep each other and themselves pure).

So contrary to what most have been taught, Paul wasn't telling single people to find marriage partners rather than commit the supposed sin of having premarital sex in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 at all (they generally didn't have boyfriends and girlfriends like we do today anyway, so the idea of unmarried, romantic "couples" having sex probably wouldn't have even crossed Paul's mind); the

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<sup>53</sup> But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. — 1 Corinthians 7:29-35

<sup>54</sup> Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. — Hebrews 13:4

context of this chapter and the previous chapter makes it pretty clear that he was talking to people who were already married in the first seven verses, telling them that the husbands risked going to temple prostitutes if married couples stopped sleeping with each other (to be clear, it wasn't visiting sex workers that Paul was concerned with, but the fact that visiting the type of sex workers who would have generally been available in Corinth would result in idolatry since these were temple prostitutes, which would necessarily involve the men visiting them in worshipping other gods in the process; I'll go into a little more detail on this point shortly, but married men were, in fact, free to have sex with other women as long as it didn't result in some form of πορνεία-based sin or in adultery with an already married woman).

As for those who were once married and wished to remarry (even if Paul's advice in the next two verses might technically also be perfectly valid for those who *haven't* ever been married yet, the word "unmarried" in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9<sup>55</sup> actually refers specifically to widowers, which – for those who aren't aware of the patterns in the Greek that makes this even more clear – should really be more obvious to more people than it seems to be, considering the fact that to say, "the unmarried and the widows," and to be referring to *everyone* who is currently unmarried, would be entirely redundant, making about as much sense as saying "the dogs and the beagles," so obviously that can't be what Paul meant; while there technically *is* a Greek word for "widower," it doesn't seem to have been used in the time period that Paul wrote this epistle – in fact, it appears that it was rarely used at all, even when it was used, at least from what I've learned in my studies – and instead the Greek word for people who were unmarried in general, ἄγαμος/"ag'-am-os," seems to have been used in its place at that time, and if Paul *was* simply referring to those who have never been married when he used that word, then widowers would

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<sup>55</sup> I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. — 1 Corinthians 7:8-9

have been left out of this instruction, and if he'd instead been using it to include both those who have never been married *and* widowers, he then wouldn't have used the term "widow" in the verse as well, so the only logical way to interpret this passage is as meaning "the widowers and the widows," which is confirmed by the patterns in the original Greek anyway), while he'd prefer for them to remain unmarried like him rather than get re-married (in fact, while it's not conclusive, the phrase "*it is good for them if they abide even as I*" in the verse is considered a hint that Paul himself was a widower, especially since it was considered shameful for a Pharisee – which Paul had been previously – to have never married by the age of 20), so they can focus on the things of the Lord rather than on a spouse, he does still say that getting re-married is better for them than burning with whatever desire he was referring to there if they can't control said desire. As for *what* sort of desire he was referring to there, it seems likely that he would have simply been referring to the desire to get re-married, although it could be that he thought those who had been married previously would have *more* desire for continued sexual intercourse than those who had never been married and that they would seek it out from temple prostitutes if they didn't find new marriage partners to sleep with. But either way, since sex outside of marriage hadn't actually been condemned anywhere else in Scripture prior to his writing this epistle, at least as long as it wasn't illegal or idolatrous, and since there's no reason to believe that Paul would have been suddenly adding a new sin that had *never* been mentioned previously in Scripture to the list of already existing sins mentioned there, he clearly wasn't simply saying that sex outside of marriage is a sin in this passage. And as far as those of us in this day and age go, at least here in the western world, there are other ways for widows and widowers to have sex without resorting to visiting temple prostitutes, although if they *are* "burning" to get re-married, they certainly should consider that option (but either way, people who were never married aren't even being spoken to in verses 8 and 9, nor are they told elsewhere to marry rather than have sex outside of marriage, so there's no reason to believe there's something wrong with *them* having sex before marriage either).

Of course, in addition to these more literal interpretations of πορνεία, there was also a figurative meaning to the Greek word (and its Hebrew equivalents in the Hebrew Scriptures), having nothing to do with physical sex at all, but simply being a metaphor referring to outright idolatry. The one thing it and זָנָה *never* meant in Scripture, however, is simply “premarital sex” on its own, or at least by now it should be obvious that there’s quite literally zero scriptural basis for claiming they did (which means there’s no basis for the claim that “fornication” – or “sexual immorality” – means “premarital sex” in our English Bible translations of these words either), despite the fact that your parents and pastor might prefer you believed they did. Of course, they likely only think they want you to. If they understood just how many STDs and unwanted pregnancies this teaching is responsible for, they might change their minds (unless they’re the vindictive sort who want those they consider to be sinners to be punished physically for defying their rules; sadly, there are Christians out there with this mentality). The idea that premarital sex is sinful causes many parents to actively make sure their kids don’t learn about protection and birth control, but since pretty much an equal number of Christians have premarital sex as non-Christians (the religious can’t fight nature and biology any more than the rest of the world can), only without any knowledge of how to minimize the potential risks, young people in conservative areas or with religious parents tend to end up with more diseases<sup>56</sup> and unwanted pregnancies<sup>57</sup> than those who don’t, and if you’re going to judge a doctrine or religious teacher by its or their fruit, it’s easy to see that the conservative Christian view on premarital sex is rotten to the core.

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<sup>56</sup> *How Abstinence-Only Sex Ed Is Driving Up STD Rates* by Jenelle Marie: <https://www.yahoo.com/news/abstinence-only-sex-ed-driving-std-rates-203137849.html>

<sup>57</sup> *The States With the Highest Teenage Birth Rates Have One Thing in Common* by Matt Essert: <https://www.mic.com/articles/98886/the-states-with-the-highest-teenage-birth-rates-have-one-thing-in-common>

## Chapter 3: Adultery in his heart

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**E**ven with everything we just learned in the last chapter being said, many Christians will still try to defend their indefensible claims about premarital sex, by pointing us towards Jesus' comment about "lust" and "committing adultery in one's heart" in Matthew 5:28,<sup>58</sup> attempting to convince us that this makes premarital sex sinful by default since you wouldn't have sex without sexual desire (they like to use this argument to condemn masturbation and pornography too). However, because so few understand the difference between the teachings relevant to the body of Christ vs the teachings relevant to the Israel of God, as we learned in my *Biblical Universalism* and *Salvations* books, not to mention what Scripture says in its original languages, they don't realize that He was actually speaking about something else altogether in that passage from what most people assume. In fact, when you discover what "lust" really refers to in Scripture you'll realize that it's actually often encouraged, and that it's also time to reconsider your thoughts on pornography as a general concept as well.

To put it plainly, to "lust," in Scripture (with ἐπιθυμέω/"ep-ee-thoo-meh'-o" being the verb form of the word in Greek, and ἐπιθυμία/"ep-ee-thoo-mee'-ah" being the noun, as well as קָמַד/"khaw-mad" being the Hebrew verb), doesn't simply mean to have sexual attraction to someone the way that most people who read this sort of False Friend of an English word assume it does, but is rather a

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<sup>58</sup> But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. — Matthew 5:28

synonym for coveting something,<sup>59</sup> or strongly desiring to own or obtain something or someone, and sometimes lusting/desiring is a good thing (the Lord’s statutes and judgements are to be lusted for/desired more than gold,<sup>60</sup> and even Jesus “lusted/desired” according to Luke 22:15<sup>61</sup> – with these passages both using those Hebrew and Greek words I just mentioned – and Paul himself, in fact, encouraged ἐπιθυμέω at times as well, such as in 1 Timothy 3:1,<sup>62</sup> for example; simply put, there’s nothing about sexuality inherent in these Hebrew and Greek words that are sometimes translated as “lust” in Scripture, even though they can refer to a strong desire to obtain someone sexually, of course, depending on the context of the passage they’re included in). What Scripture *does* condemn when it comes to lust is desiring to take something that already “belongs” (so to speak) to someone else, such as someone else’s property (or wife, since, again, women were considered to be property back then, unfortunately), which is what the 10th Commandment is all about. But to “lust” in the modern sense of the word, meaning to enjoy the way someone looks, or even to fantasize sexually about someone, isn’t what is being criticized when ἐπιθυμέω actually is spoken against in Scripture; intent to take someone else’s “property” without permission also needs to be there for the coveting to be wrong (otherwise, accepting something you desire as a gift, or even finding your own spouse sexually appealing, would also technically be wrong). So for

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<sup>59</sup> What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. — Romans 7:7

<sup>60</sup> The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. — Psalm 19:7-10

<sup>61</sup> And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: — Luke 22:15

<sup>62</sup> This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. — 1 Timothy 3:1

ἐπιθυμέω over a woman to be considered “committing adultery in one’s heart,” in addition to needing to have intent to actually possess her (meaning the man in question would have to intend to follow through with the act if he could), she would have to also belong to someone else already, which is, thankfully, not possible in the western world today since women are no longer considered to be property. And, of course, that passage only applied to Israelites, and even then only to some of them (it was a part of the Sermon on the Mount, which was all about elaborating upon the Mosaic law, something that never applied to Gentiles, and doesn’t apply to Jews saved under Paul’s Gospel either, so even if Jesus did mean what most Christians assume He did here, it wouldn’t apply to most people anyway).

But even if those saved under the Gospel of the Uncircumcision did somehow fall under this particular point in Jesus’ sermon (which they don’t, as I proved in my *Biblical Universalism* and *Salvations* books, but for the sake of argument, let’s pretend they do), the word “adultery” in that passage really tells us everything we need to know about the context of the passage. By definition, a man (even a married man, which should be obvious based on the fact that Scripture allows for Jewish men to have concubines) couldn’t “commit adultery” with a woman who wasn’t married (or at least betrothed) back then, since in Bible times the word translated as “adultery” in our English Bibles (μοιχεύω/“moy-khyoo'-o” in the original Greek, and נָאֵף/“naw-af” in the original Hebrew) didn’t have the same meaning as the English word “adultery” does today, and was actually a property violation rather than a purity violation back then<sup>63</sup> (as is also demonstrated by the fact that Jesus didn’t condemn women for lusting after men in that verse,<sup>64</sup> sexually or otherwise, because it wasn’t possible for a woman to do so in the biblical sense of the word, since a wife was

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<sup>63</sup> *Biblical Discussion of Adultery* by Dave of Liberated Christians, Inc.: <https://www.libchrist.com/bible/adultery.html>

<sup>64</sup> But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. — Matthew 5:28

always the property of a husband and never the other way around at that time, and hence a woman couldn't own a man through marriage; so if this verse actually *was* a condemnation of "lust" in the manner we use the word today, it would mean that only men could commit this sin, but that women could lust after men without sinning, which obviously makes no sense, telling us that it can only be referring to what I just explained, especially since there was never any condemnation of "lusting" in the modern sense of the word by either men *or* women *anywhere* in the Hebrew Scriptures). In fact, while "adultery" by its modern, English definition is certainly possible to commit (and is something one shouldn't do, since it isn't a loving action), it's quite impossible for anyone today in the western world to commit adultery in the manner the Bible uses the term, because women are no longer considered to be property. So no Gentile (or Israelite in the body of Christ) has to worry about even accidentally committing this particular sin here in the western world – or anywhere else that women are no longer considered to be property – today. (And just as a quick but related aside, this also means that in most parts of the world today, married couples with "open marriages" technically aren't committing the sin of μοιχεύω either, since the wives in a modern marriage aren't "owned" by their husbands, and so as long as it's completely consensual for everyone, and also not against the secular law where they live, of course, there's no scriptural reason to say it's forbidden.)

Few Christians seem to remember, especially when reading passages about sexuality and lust, that it's extremely important to interpret a passage of Scripture using the definitions of the time it was written rather than basing our interpretations on modern definitions of English words (using modern definitions rather than the definition of a word at the time it was written is how we ended up with all of the confused and unscriptural doctrines of the Christian religion we've been looking at in this and my other books in the first place). It's also important to remember that, prior to this sermon by Jesus, neither sexual fantasy nor enjoying the way someone looks (sexually speaking)

had ever been condemned anywhere in the Hebrew Scriptures (or anywhere else in the Greek Scriptures either, for that matter; and before someone brings up Job 31:1,<sup>65</sup> they need to remember that this was spoken during his defence of his self-righteousness, which isn't an example anyone should be bragging that they're following, especially since Job's personal decision there wasn't based on any rule laid out anywhere in Scripture anyway), as I just mentioned. When one realizes all this, it becomes apparent that Jesus wasn't creating a new law for Israelites to follow (or informing them of a sin that God had somehow forgotten to inform them of until that point), but was simply expanding on a rule His audience was already familiar with (the 10th Commandment), pointing out that for a Jewish male to covet his neighbour's wife with the intention of actually having her would basically be the equivalent of breaking the 7th Commandment<sup>66</sup> as well, but there's absolutely no reason to believe He was even hinting that finding other people sexually appealing, or admiring their bodies (or even fantasizing about them) was at all wrong.

In fact, those who do try to force sexual desire out of their (and others') lives are actually demonstrating a symptom of a far more pernicious form of lust than any mentioned already, one which affects (and infects) Christianity to a fatal degree. This, of course, would be the religious lust<sup>67</sup> known as self-righteousness.<sup>68</sup> So if a religious leader tries to convince others that simple sexual attraction and fantasy (or even premarital sex) is sinful, it would be wise to question any and all of their teachings, since they're demonstrating how little they likely know about Scripture, and it seems unlikely that they've even been

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<sup>65</sup> I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? — Job 31:1

<sup>66</sup> Thou shalt not commit adultery. — Exodus 20:14

<sup>67</sup> *The truth about sexual lust; Part 13.* — *Religious Lust, Part 1* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF6.24.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> *The truth about sexual lust; Part 14.* — *Religious Lust, Part 2* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF6.25.pdf>

saved yet (relatively speaking, of course), since they probably don't even understand the Gospel (considering the fact that they clearly don't seem to know the difference between the Gospel of the Circumcision and the Gospel of the Uncircumcision). Of course, another reason that religious conservatives are so opposed to "lust" (and anything even related to premarital sex) is simply basic erotophobia. Thanks to the harmful purity culture that conservative Christianity has inflicted upon the world,<sup>69</sup> too many people grow up with the idea that sexuality (anything from simple sexual desire to any form of sexual activity itself) is inherently dirty and shameful. Most Christians will deny this and claim that sexual thoughts and acts are only "dirty" or sinful when they're outside the context of a monogamous, heterosexual marriage, but aside from misunderstanding what the Bible says about sexuality in the first place, they also don't realize just how deeply the effects of purity culture have rooted into their subconscious, eventually blossoming into full-blown erotophobia, which in turn forces them to have to believe that their misinterpretations of Scripture are true because anything else could allow the sexuality they so fear to enter their lives.

It's also important to keep in mind that something generally has to be spelled out as a sin in the Hebrew Scriptures or else it's very unlikely to actually be a sin. Neither Jesus nor Paul (nor anyone else writing any of the Greek Scriptures, for that matter) were adding new sins to the list of sins when they wrote or spoke about these topics, nor were they revealing actions that were actually always sinful but which weren't recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures (if they were, that would mean the Israelites under the Mosaic law had no way of knowing what was *actually* expected of them until these new sins were first revealed – long after the giving of the law or even the writing of the final book of the Hebrew Scriptures – and that God didn't tell them how to truly avoid all

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<sup>69</sup> *Purity culture harmed thousands of evangelical teens; what did the Church get wrong about sex?* by Leah MarieAnn Klett: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/purity-culture-harmed-thousands-of-evangelical-teens-what-did-the-church-get-wrong-about-sex.html>

sins until that time), so these passages in the Greek Scriptures have to be interpreted in light of what came before (and while the cultural context at the time does need to be considered as well, aside from the fact that Paul wouldn't have been adding new actions to the definition in the first place, especially not without explaining exactly what the precise actions were and why they were sinful, it's not like premarital sex was considered wrong by the Gentile culture of those he was writing to anyway, so there's literally no reason to assume it was suddenly being included in the definition of *πορνεία* in Paul's epistles). And since the Hebrew Scriptures didn't call premarital sex a sin, but did call idolatrous sex and incest sins, it stands to reason that one or more of these have to be what Paul was actually talking about (especially since, for Paul to suddenly add new sins that had never been included in the definition of the word *πορνεία* into its definition would mean he'd have to be very careful to explain what these new sins are, exactly, that were now being included in its definition, if he expected anyone to understand that these actions were *now* considered to fall under its definition and be sinful, which Christians have to admit is something he didn't do in any of his epistles, since there's no verse anywhere in Scripture where Paul says, "premarital sex is included in the list of actions referred to as *πορνεία*"). Likewise, as I pointed out near the beginning of this book, Jesus said that His yoke is easy and His burden is light, and since we know that A) "lusting" the way religious conservatives interpret the word (enjoying the way someone looks, and even fantasizing about them sexually) had never been condemned in the Hebrew Scriptures, and B) there's no way that avoiding "lusting" in the manner that today's religious conservatives understand the concept could ever be considered to be easy, or a burden that is light in any way whatsoever (anyone who isn't asexual or doesn't have a hormonal imbalance – and no judgement to anyone who is or does – who is being truly honest with themselves knows I'm right), it has to mean something other than what most people assume (which it does, as I've already covered). And yes, I realize that Jesus' statement there was technically to the Israel of God, not the body of

Christ, but if His yoke is easy for them, just think about how much easier it must be for those of us who aren't under the Mosaic law at all.

This also means that those who try to avoid – as well as try to convince others that they need to avoid – their completely normal biological drives are trying to ignore not only what Scripture actually teaches, but the natural instincts God gave us as well, and this is why those who teach the conservative religious perspectives on lust and sexuality are the true perverts, since they're perverting the natural desires God gave us by trying to avoid them, as well as perverting what Scripture actually says about these desires and the actions related to them.

Now, there's a lot more that can be said about this complex topic (and I recommend digging more into it for yourself to learn other details that I didn't get into here<sup>70</sup>), but the bottom line is that there's literally no scriptural reason to assume consensual sexual relations between an unmarried couple today – as long as no worship of other deities is involved, and it isn't actually illegal where they live – is wrong, or that any of the actions connected with what Christians today think of as “lust” are wrong either, and anyone who tells you otherwise is guilty of reading their assumptions, and even perverted desires in some cases, into Scripture.

Premarital sex and lust aren't the only activities that religious leaders incorrectly consider to be immoral and have insisted that people shouldn't participate in, however. There are so many other traditional religious ideas about supposed sins that aren't actually in the Bible but which you've no doubt been told you must abstain from – not to mention actions that they say are sinful to *avoid* participating in – as well. I'm not going to get into all of them, but I'll cover some of the most common actions they talk about in some of the upcoming chapters.

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<sup>70</sup> *PORNEIA: The Making of a Christian Sexual Norm* by Kyle Harper: [https://www.academia.edu/1368753/PORNEIA\\_The\\_Making\\_of\\_a\\_Christian\\_Sexual\\_Norm](https://www.academia.edu/1368753/PORNEIA_The_Making_of_a_Christian_Sexual_Norm)

## Chapter 4: In modest apparel

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Perhaps the action that is most connected with what we've just gone over has to do with the biblical False Friend commonly referred to as "modesty." As you know, most Christians assume that revealing too much skin or the outline of one's body is both immodest and a sin. Biblical modesty, however, is the opposite of vanity, not nudity. Nudity was extremely common in Bible times, yet never called a sin in the Bible. God did not condemn Adam and Eve for being naked (in fact He created them naked and saw them as "very good,"<sup>71</sup> and if nudity wasn't inherently sinful before the fall then there's no reason to claim it suddenly became sinful after the fall), but rather asked them who told them they were naked after they sinned and realized they were. He didn't say, "Oh no, your nakedness has been exposed! How could this have happened?!" (He made them that way and left them to enjoy the garden in that state, so it would have been strange to suddenly consider their nudity to be wrong just because they'd sinned when He didn't consider it to be wrong a moment prior to their sin.) The reason they sewed and put on clothing was because they were suddenly ashamed, not because they were suddenly naked (and the reason God made new clothes for them out of animal skins<sup>72</sup> was because the dead animals covering them were a type of

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<sup>71</sup> And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. — Genesis 1:31

<sup>72</sup> Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them. — Genesis 3:21

Christ covering sin, not because they suddenly needed clothing – they already had clothing at that point, after all<sup>73</sup>).

The truth is that sin distorts our perceptions and makes people feel ashamed of their bodies, just as it makes them feel guilt and shame over all sorts of innocent things. Puritanism over our physical bodies is not a scriptural virtue, but it is a form of gnostic dualism, which is enough to tell us we should be avoiding that kind of prudishness. In fact, God even sent Isaiah out to prophesy naked,<sup>74</sup> so obviously nudity just can't be considered sinful or else God would have been commanding Isaiah to sin. Modesty is still important, but it's about not showing off wealth, position, or power rather than about not showing skin or curves. When Paul called for women in the church called the body of Christ to dress modestly, he meant to dress "*with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.*"<sup>75</sup> It had nothing to do with their bodies and everything to do with their attitudes. Basically, he was telling them not to wear fancy outfits that would make them appear more important than those who weren't able to appear as wealthy as them. Similarly, Peter wrote to the church called the Israel of God telling them that they should not let their adorning be "*outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not*

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<sup>73</sup> And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. — Genesis 3:7

<sup>74</sup> At the same time spake the Lord by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. — Isaiah 20:2-4

<sup>75</sup> In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. — 1 Timothy 2:9-10

*corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*<sup>76</sup> Nobody in their time would have looked twice at somebody showing a bit of skin, or even at being completely naked, and Scripture certainly didn't condemn it, so neither should we. But the Bible is clear that we should not try to make ourselves look better or more important than those around us with expensive clothing and lavish hairdos, so true modesty (which is based on humility) is something we should certainly aim for. And as for the concern that not dressing like a prude might cause men to lust, we've already covered what "lust" really means, and that the idea of "lust," as religious conservatives understand the concept, isn't actually a problem at all. So if someone tries to use that argument, they really need to read this book (or, better yet, my *Biblical Universalism* book) and learn that for themselves so they can finally abstain from their perverted assumptions about modesty.

This all means that there's no basis for the idea of pornography and masturbation being sinful either, contrary to what many Christians claim. If God was okay with people being naked in public, viewing naked people couldn't be a sin either, even on paper or on a screen, and we already know that there's no command against fantasizing sexually about someone, since the form of "lust" that Jesus condemned had nothing to do with that at all, as we've now learned. And there's nothing in Scripture condemning masturbation either (no, the sin of Onan wasn't masturbation, but was just not providing his dead brother's wife

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<sup>76</sup> Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. — 1 Peter 3:3-4

with a child as God specifically commanded him to do,<sup>77</sup> and which was later also required under the Mosaic law<sup>78</sup> – a law the body of Christ is not under), so the idea that either of these things are sinful is just more extrabiblical conservative puritanism. In fact, not only is masturbation harmless, it's actually good for one's health.<sup>79</sup> And it's definitely the safest form of sex, so Christian leaders should really be recommending it, along with pornography to assist with it for those who find porn useful for such purposes (especially because multiple studies<sup>80</sup> have demonstrated that where porn usage increases, instances of rape and other forms of sexual violence actually decrease<sup>81</sup>). And I know some Christians will point to Romans 13:14, which says, "*But put ye on the*

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<sup>77</sup> And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her. And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan. And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him. And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the Lord: wherefore he slew him also. — Genesis 38:1-10

<sup>78</sup> If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. — Deuteronomy 25:5

<sup>79</sup> *What Religion Gets Wrong About Masturbation* by Phil Zuckerman: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-secular-life/202010/what-religion-gets-wrong-about-masturbation>

<sup>80</sup> *How the Web Prevents Rape* by Steven E. Landsburg: <https://slate.com/culture/2006/10/proof-that-internet-porn-prevents-rape.html>

<sup>81</sup> *More Porn, Less Rape? The Controversy Revisited* by Michael Castleman: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/all-about-sex/201707/more-porn-less-rape-the-controversy-revisited>

*Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”* But if we’re going to apply this to actions that aren’t actually condemned as sinful anywhere in Scripture, this would really have to apply equally to *anything* one finds physically pleasurable (from watching a sunset to playing sports to even eating a tasty meal that one enjoys), so limiting that verse to things which actually are sinful is the only way to go if we want to avoid descending into absurdity and even harmful cult-like behaviour.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Are you in a cult? Comparing the Christian religion vs the body of Christ to the BITE model* by Drew Costen: <https://www.universalism.ca/cult>

## Chapter 5: The sin of Sodom

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**A**nother very common assertion by conservative Christians is that being gay (or being a homosexual) is forbidden in the Bible, but the truth is, Scripture says nothing about the topic of being gay at all. That might seem like a strange statement, since I'm sure you can think of plenty of verses which you believe talk about the topic, but like many of the things discussed in this book, this is an assumption based on a misconception. Remember, "homosexuality," or "being gay," is simply the state of being attracted (sexually and/or romantically) solely to members of the same sex, and doesn't inherently have anything to do with actually having sexual intercourse with – or even touching in a romantic or sexual manner – someone of the same sex at all (someone who is gay might never have sex with anyone of the same sex, and someone who is heterosexual or bisexual very well might – in fact, I've been told that a lot of gay porn is actually filmed with straight actors, who do it not because they have any attraction whatsoever to people of the same sex but rather do it for the money), and simply being attracted to somebody isn't a sin, in and of itself (even if same-sex relations *were* sinful, being tempted is not a sin, since even Jesus was tempted and He never sinned,<sup>83</sup> and the fact remains that sexual attraction to people of the same sex was *never* condemned in the Bible anyway, whether or not having intercourse with someone of the same sex was). That said, as far as same-sex relations go, the absolute most one could possibly argue is that the Hebrew Scriptures *might* forbid anal sex between males

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<sup>83</sup> For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. — Hebrews 4:15

outside the context of rape and/or idolatrous prostitution (which is always wrong, and quite possibly what it's actually forbidding according to many scholars, although there are other possible interpretations of the passages generally interpreted as forbidding it too<sup>84</sup>), but even if so, this would only apply to those who are under the Mosaic law since the Hebrew Scriptures are the only part of the Bible where it *might* have forbidden it on its own outside the context of rape and/or idolatry; it's never forbidden on its own anywhere in the Greek Scriptures, as I'll discuss shortly.

And regardless of whether it does forbid anal sex between men, it doesn't say anything about love, romantic relationships, or other forms of sexuality between males. The passage about a man lying with a man in Leviticus would have to be strictly referring to anal sex – presuming it's referring simply to sexual intercourse between men at all, and not referring to temple prostitution or something else altogether, as many believe it does. For those who disagree with me here, if it were including other forms of sexuality, such as oral sex, for example, there would have also been a verse in that chapter forbidding women from lying with other women or from performing oral sex on other women, and since there isn't, there's literally no good reason to believe it's including that particular act between men either. In fact, the Bible actually never says anything *anywhere* about love, romantic relationships, or sexuality between females. The passage in Paul's epistle to the Romans about idolatry that

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<sup>84</sup> *Leviticus and Paul on Homosexuality* by Andrew P.: <https://universalistheretic.blogspot.com/2022/11/leviticus-and-paul-on-homosexuality.html>

many mistakenly use to argue against homosexuality<sup>85</sup> does not actually condemn women lying with women as many believe, and is most likely talking about women lying with animals (an action that actually *was* forbidden in the Hebrew Scriptures) when the context of worshipping the creature in that passage is taken into consideration – although some argue that it instead refers to women participating in a certain sort of shrine prostitution,<sup>86</sup> which is also possible, but either way, the idea of women lying with other women hadn't ever been forbidden in Scripture. You see, the prohibitions in the Hebrew Scriptures that most people think literally forbid men from lying with other men don't include women in the passages, all while being next to other rules which *do* forbid women from specific sexual actions, so even if the commandment they're thinking of means what these people assume, it can't be applied to both sexes without ignoring important hermeneutical principles, which means there's no justification for claiming it was all of a sudden being forbidden by

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<sup>85</sup> Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. — Romans 1:21-32

<sup>86</sup> *Does Romans 1:26 condemn lesbians?* by Rick Brentlinger: <https://www.gaychristian101.com/does-romans-126-condemn-lesbians.html>

Paul in Romans either (again, Paul didn't make up new sins that were never previously mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures). And, of course, there's also the fact that the actions mentioned in this passage in Romans were actually negative "consequences." Paul's point in this passage wasn't that he was telling people to avoid certain sexual sins, but rather that the sin of idolatry would lead, or more likely led (past tense, probably referring to "sacred orgies" that included same-sex intercourse performed in worship of Baalpeor in "Old Testament" times), certain people to certain negative consequences, such as performing acts that went against their nature. And the fact that the passage talks about men going against their nature is very telling as well. The phrase "leaving the natural use of the woman" implies that these men were, by nature, heterosexual. You see, the word translated as "leaving" in the KJV is ἀφίημι/"af-ee'-ay-mee" in the Greek, which means to leave behind, forsake, neglect, or divorce. Simply put, the men in question divorced themselves from their own heterosexual nature when they were consumed with passion for one another during the idolatrous ceremonies in the past that Paul was almost certainly referring to in that passage in Romans.

As far as the rest of the passages in the Greek Scriptures that people normally use to argue against same-sex relations go, those passages are also terribly misunderstood. I'm not going to get into all the details here (although others have done a good job of digging deeper on the subject, so I recommend looking at some of their studies on the topic<sup>87</sup>), but when Paul wrote about same-sex relations in his other epistles, it's very likely only idolatrous prostitution between males that he's specifically condemning (much like the πορνεία issue between men and women was in many cases when he wrote against it, as we just learned in the previous chapters of this book). Most Bible versions say things like, "*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?*"

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<sup>87</sup> *The Bible, Christianity and Homosexuality* by Justin Cannon: <https://www.gaychurch.org/homosexuality-and-the-bible/the-bible-christianity-and-homosexuality>

*Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind ... shall inherit the kingdom of God.*<sup>88</sup> That translation from the KJV makes it somewhat confusing if you aren't aware of the Greek words it's translated from, since the word "fornicators" there is πόρνος/"por'-nos" in the Greek, referring simply to a man who has illicit sex with a woman, specifically a man who has sex with a female temple prostitute (a πόρνη/"por'-nay" in the Greek) in this particular case, based on the context of the latter part of the chapter<sup>89</sup> (the context of a passage is always extremely important to consider when trying to determine the meaning of a part of Scripture, or even of a specific word within it), which is men committing idolatry and worshipping other deities by joining themselves with a temple prostitute (or a "harlot," which is what the KJV translates the word πόρνη as). With that in mind, and based on the fact that sexual intercourse on its own was never forbidden between unmarried men and women, apart from specific circumstances primarily involving idolatry, as we just learned (which tells us there's basically no reason to assume there's something wrong with sex between men and other men either; and definitely not between women and other women, which I trust you've noticed is *not* a situation mentioned in this passage, a passage that is *very* specific about what gender – or at least which sex – a person committing each sexual sin listed in it is, as is made particularly evident in the original Greek: while certain types of male/female and male/male relations are condemned in it, female/female relations aren't even hinted at as

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<sup>88</sup> Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. — 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

<sup>89</sup> What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. — 1 Corinthians 6:16-20

they certainly would be if they actually were forbidden), it stands to reason that the two Greek words which are used for same-sex relations between men in this passage are also referring to an idolatrous form of same-sex relations between men. When we again consider the context of the rest of the chapter, it suggests that the two words are almost certainly referring to temple prostitution, just like πόρνος and πόρνη are. The first word is μαλακός/“mal-ak-os’,” likely referring, at least in this case, to a male temple prostitute (the word can technically be used to mean other forms of same-sex relations as well, which is likely why it was translated as “effeminate” in the KJV, but based on the context of the passage it seems pretty likely to be what Paul meant when he used the word in his epistles), and the second word being ἀρσενοκοίτης/“ar-sen-ok-oy'-tace,” which the KJV rendered as “abusers of themselves with mankind,” and is a word some people believe that Paul actually had to make up (it doesn’t appear to occur in any Greek writings prior to Paul’s use of it in his epistles, at least none from before that time have been discovered that I’m aware of as of the time this book was first written) because there didn’t seem to be an equivalent word to πόρνος for a man who slept specifically with male temple prostitutes (and those who want to argue that, because the compound word ἀρσενοκοίτης is made up of two Greek words which, when placed next to each other in a sentence, would mean something along the lines of “man bedders,” euphemistically speaking, it *must* simply refer to “men who have sexual relations with one another” – despite the fact that there were already existing Greek words Paul could have used instead rather than making one up – have to *also* believe that the insect we call a butterfly is actually either a stick of butter that flies or a fly made out of butter, based on the same logic). So, to break it down, in Paul’s epistles a πόρνος would almost certainly be a male who sleeps with female temple prostitutes, a πόρνη would be said female temple prostitute, an ἀρσενοκοίτης would likely be a male who sleeps with male temple prostitutes, and a μαλακός would then be said male temple prostitute. Bottom line: it’s all about committing idolatry and doesn’t seem to have anything to do with simple sexual desire or same-sex relations outside of temple prostitution and the worship of other deities (at least

in the Bible; knowing how some of these words might have been used outside of Scripture can be helpful, but considering consistent context – not only of the specific section a word is used in, but of Scripture as a whole – can be even more important when it comes to biblical interpretation, since words can mean different things in different parts of Scripture, as well as mean different things from the way they were used outside of Scripture at times too). Even if someone does decide to ignore all of the above, however, they should be warned that Scripture is very clear that it's the anti-gay conservatives who are actually guilty of “the sin of Sodom”<sup>90</sup> (which, contrary to the popular misunderstanding of the term, had nothing<sup>91</sup> to do with homosexuality<sup>92</sup> at all<sup>93</sup>) today, and I wouldn't want to be in the shoes of these religious conservatives at the final judgement. Even if only indirectly, homophobic (not to mention transphobic) conservatives are responsible for many homeless youth,<sup>94</sup> as well as for numerous suicides,<sup>95</sup> not to mention all the assaults against, and even murders of, people who are different from them when it comes to their sexuality (and even their gender identity), and pretty much each and every

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<sup>90</sup> Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good. — Ezekiel 16:49-50

<sup>91</sup> *What Was the Real Sin of Sodom?* by Patrick S. Cheng: [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-was-the-real-sin-of-b\\_543996](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-was-the-real-sin-of-b_543996)

<sup>92</sup> *The Sin of Sodom: A Study in Homophobic Interpretation* by Andrew P.: <https://universalistheretic.blogspot.com/2022/11/the-sin-of-sodom-study-in-homophobic.html>

<sup>93</sup> *Anti-gay Evangelicals admit the Sodom story is NOT about homosexuality* by Rick Brentlinger: <https://www.gaychristian101.com/Sodom.html>

<sup>94</sup> *Homeless rates for LGBT teens are alarming, but parents can make a difference* by Jaimie Seaton: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2017/03/29/homeless-rates-for-lgbt-teens-are-alarming-heres-how-parents-can-change-that>

<sup>95</sup> *Homosexuality and Suicide: LGBTQIA+ Suicide Is a Serious Issue* by Natasha Tracy: <https://www.healthypace.com/gender/glbtt-mental-health/homosexuality-and-suicide-lgbt-suicide-a-serious-issue>

conservative (whether they're religious or not) is going to have to answer for their culpability in these horrors when they're standing at the Great White Throne Judgement. Because even if they're only indirectly responsible, they all still have a responsibility for all of this suffering nonetheless.

## Chapter 6: Defending traditional marriage

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**W**hat about gay marriage, though? Even if the Bible is actually okay with people being gay, as we can now see is the case, didn't God declare marriage to only be between one man and one woman? Well, while the context of the passage typically used to defend this idea was technically about divorce,<sup>96</sup> one could still perhaps say that this is the *ideal* when it comes to marriage, at least from a spiritual perspective. The reason for this is because marriage between a man and his wife was meant to eventually be used for typology, though, to picture Christ and His body (even if this mystery, meaning secret – and for those who don't know, “secret” is what the Greek word μυστήριον/“moos-tay'-ree-on,” which is transliterated as “mystery”

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<sup>96</sup> The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. — Matthew 19:3-6

in the KJV, literally means – wasn't known until Paul revealed it to the body of Christ<sup>97</sup>).

This form of marriage being used as typology doesn't mean that *other* forms of marriage aren't considered acceptable to God, however. Nearly every Christian I've met is well aware of the fact that polygamy and other forms of non-monogamy *were* considered to be an acceptable practice for people by God in the Bible, with the possible exception of local church overseers/elders (which are referred to as bishops in the KJV<sup>98</sup>) and deacons<sup>99</sup> (although there's good reason to believe that the passages about "bishops" and deacons are actually just saying that an elder or deacon should have at least one wife – meaning they should not be single – not that they can't have more than one wife, but I'm not going to get into that debate here, and will leave it up to you to dig deeper into that argument if you're curious about it). God even told David that if he had wanted more wives, rather than taking someone else's wife, he should have just

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<sup>97</sup> Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. — Ephesians 5:25-33

<sup>98</sup> A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; — 1 Timothy 3:2

<sup>99</sup> Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. — 1 Timothy 3:12

asked God for more,<sup>100</sup> and if polygamy is a sin, that would mean that God would have been offering to help David sin, which is not something God would have done.

And so, if God considered a form of marriage *other* than monogamous marriage to be acceptable – even if perhaps not the ideal – and since we now also know that homosexuality is not a sin in and of itself, we can surmise that God doesn't seem to be *too* concerned with whether a marriage *is* the ideal form mentioned by Jesus and Paul in those passages we just looked at or not. So, even if you don't personally agree with gay marriage because it isn't a traditional form of marriage practiced in Bible times, at the very least we can't argue against it because it isn't the ideal form of marriage. Besides, even if you don't believe gay marriage *is* a true form of spiritual marriage (if there even is such a thing), if it's legal where one lives, it *is* still a *legal* marriage, so I believe you can still go celebrate the love and commitment of those getting married to someone of the same sex if you want to.

But bottom line, those religious conservatives who claim they're fighting to promote "traditional marriage" really aren't. If they were, they'd be promoting polygamy at the very least,<sup>101</sup> since it was a very traditional form of marriage in Bible times too, and was one that God allowed for, as we've now learned. (And I should add, if monogamy was actually natural, cheating wouldn't be so common in so many relationships – yes, even in Christian relationships.) Besides, we also now know that marriage in Bible times was more about ownership of a woman than it was about love or partnership the way it is today, so technically almost *no* marriage that anyone participates in today (at least

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<sup>100</sup> And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. — 2 Samuel 12:8

<sup>101</sup> *The Truth of Polygamy — A Brief Presentation* by Brian R. Kelson: <https://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/bsn746.pdf#page=3>

here in the western world) qualifies as a biblical – or traditional – marriage anyway.

## Chapter 7: Profane hypocrisy

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Whether a Christian sees this next prohibition as sinful depends a lot on where one lives, but many Christians believe that swearing is indeed a sin as well, and at the very least, many of them will say that “*evil communications corrupt good manners*”<sup>102</sup> in order to discourage the practice. The only thing that looking down on profanity does, however, is demonstrate what an unspiritual (and likely hypocritical) snob one is.<sup>103</sup> I’m not going to exegete all the passages in the Bible about language, though I will quickly point out that saying “oh, my God” isn’t taking the Lord’s name in vain, since “God” isn’t even close to being the Lord’s name (His actual name is likely either Yahweh or Jehovah in English, or something along those lines anyway), but is actually just a title, similar to the title of “President” (and the commandment in question<sup>104</sup> – which is technically a part of the 10 Commandments, and as such isn’t directed to the body of Christ anyway, although taking the Lord’s name in vain is still good to avoid doing – isn’t even talking about profanity; it’s basically referring to perjury after swearing not to while using the Lord’s name in your oath). Instead I’ll point out the hypocrisy, not to mention haughtiness, of having trouble with profanity. All profanity means is “outside the temple,” i.e., anything that isn’t sacred. I won’t get into

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<sup>102</sup> Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. — 1 Corinthians 15:33

<sup>103</sup> *The Case of Cussing Christians — An unapologetic look into God’s opinion of what constitutes vile language* by Martin Zender: <https://www.martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF2.15.pdf>

<sup>104</sup> Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. — Exodus 20:7

the problems with the secular/sacred dualism most Christians hold to (which is essentially Gnosticism), but technically anything non-religious (such as eating a hamburger) is, by definition, “profane,” not just certain words.

However, pretending for a moment that certain words somehow *are* more “profane” than others, the idea that words can be bad in the first place quickly becomes comical when you begin to deconstruct the idea. I mean, it’s not like the Bible has a specific list of “forbidden words” included anywhere in it, so what makes a specific word wrong to say? Is it the particular combination of letters, or the specific sound the word makes when spoken, that makes a word wrong to use? It’s obviously ridiculous to think so, since otherwise the words “damn,” “hell,” and “ass” shouldn’t be read in the Bible, or spoken aloud in a sermon, as they’d be just as inherently bad in Scripture or sermon as when used in everyday parlance. But maybe it’s the meaning behind the word that makes it wrong? Well, if so, simply saying “have sexual intercourse” or “sleep with” (or “rats” or “ouch” any other number of expressions) would be just as bad as saying “fuck”; and saying “crap” or “faeces” would be just as bad as saying “shit,” as would saying the words “droppings,” “dung” (which is a word actually used in the KJV itself<sup>105</sup>), or even “waste” (which is also a word used in the KJV<sup>106</sup>). But maybe it’s the intent behind the words. For instance, is it okay to say “fuck” if you’re referring to sex with your partner, or just using it as a playful adjective, but wrong to use in anger against another person? I’m okay with this, but only inasmuch as I am with the idea that we shouldn’t be saying *anything* with the intention of hurting another person (whether in anger

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<sup>105</sup> Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, — Philippians 3:8

<sup>106</sup> And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? — Mark 14:4

or not), regardless of what words we're using (in fact, this is a biblical principle<sup>107</sup>).

And on top of all this, there are many words that are considered “swearing” in one part of the world that wouldn't even be blinked at in others (or that are considered to be “swearing” today when they weren't necessarily seen that way in the past), so is it wrong to use a word in one location simply because it's traditionally considered “vulgar” in that area and time period, while not wrong to use it in other parts of the world where nobody is currently offended by the word? If so, that means it's the act of offending people that would be the actual sin there, and we could never do anything that might offend another person (including evangelism, which offends all sorts of people). Just as the existence of so-called “swear words” in our English Bibles proves, this also means that no word is inherently wrong to use in and of itself, but is instead only considered wrong by certain people because they've decided the words are wrong, meaning these people have created an extrabiblical doctrine making it immoral to use words they don't like. The reality is, getting offended by these “vulgar” words implies that you think you're too good to hear everyday, common language, and that you probably need to be brought down a peg or two. Honestly, the old childhood saying about sticks and stones is true, and words can only hurt you if you allow them to. But, if you really insist on being offended by certain words, how about choosing to be offended by those words intended to hurt people who don't happen to share your particular values or preferences or skin colour instead of words that simply add a bit of colour to everyday speech. However, I'll make a compromise. Get offended by the many injustices and atrocities being committed not only around the world but even in your own backyard, and I mean offended enough to actually do something about it, and I'll try to pretend you're not a snob when you turn up your nose at

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<sup>107</sup> But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. — Matthew 5:22

everyday language. In fact, I won't even say the word uterus<sup>108</sup> around you if that helps.

That said, I should also point out that the reference to evil communications corrupting good manners from 1 Corinthians 15 that I mentioned earlier has nothing to do with swearing, or “profane” language, at all either. Instead, at least from what I've been able to determine in my studies, the Greek phrase translated that way in the KJV was actually a well-known saying (possibly originating from a play, although its actual first usage is uncertain) in Paul's time that essentially just meant something along the lines of, “Bad teachings result in bad actions,” and Paul's readers would have almost certainly recognized the quote and known that he was telling them to stop listening to false doctrines because they can lead you astray – specifically the false doctrine about the resurrection of the dead not being true in this case, as that was the context of the chapter Paul quoted the popular line in (and he definitely would have been referring to the topic at hand rather than have gone onto an entirely unrelated aside about profane language there). This is a case where one might need to be aware of the historical context of a passage in order to understand it, because the literal meaning of the words on their own are unlikely to help one understand the actual intent of the writer without knowing a bit of background information (I should also say that this passage is kind of like the “*abstain from all appearance of evil*” verse in 1 Thessalonians 5:22, which people also misinterpret in similar ways because they're unaware of the context of verses 20 to 21 before it,<sup>109</sup> not realizing that this somewhat unclear translation in the KJV was an exhortation about prophecy by Paul, where he was telling his readers to hold fast to the good – meaning true – prophecies, but to avoid any that appear evil, meaning any that seem to be false).

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<sup>108</sup> *Is “Uterus” a Dirty Word?* by Twinkle Um: <https://skyenoor.wordpress.com/2011/04/08/is-uterus-a-dirty-word>

<sup>109</sup> Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. — 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22

## Chapter 8: Be not drunk with wine

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**M**any Christians also believe that drinking alcohol is not allowed. And while it might not be pro-intoxication<sup>110</sup> or in favour of over-drinking,<sup>111</sup> the Bible actually recommends,<sup>112</sup> and in some places even commands,<sup>113</sup> the consumption of alcohol for certain people (and God certainly wouldn't have commanded it if it were a sin). And in fact, under the Old Covenant, wine was considered to be a blessing,<sup>114</sup> with the absence of wine being considered to be a curse.<sup>115</sup> Besides, as we all know, Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine (and yes, it was wine, not grape juice, as John 2:10

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<sup>110</sup> And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; — Ephesians 5:18

<sup>111</sup> The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; — Titus 2:3

<sup>112</sup> Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. — Proverbs 31:6

<sup>113</sup> And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, — Deuteronomy 14:26

<sup>114</sup> And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. — Deuteronomy 7:13

<sup>115</sup> Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. — Deuteronomy 28:39

makes pretty obvious,<sup>116</sup> not to mention as the fact that the Greek word for wine in this account – οἶνος/“oy'-nos” – is the exact same word used in Ephesians 5:18 where Paul warns against getting drunk on wine also makes clear, unless you think he was warning against getting drunk on grape juice). And, of course, Jesus used wine to represent the new covenant in His blood,<sup>117</sup> so it should be pretty obvious that drinking alcohol in moderation is certainly allowed.

And while I'm not sure how wise marijuana usage is, at least for non-medicinal purposes, the Bible doesn't seem to specifically condemn partaking of cannabis, so that appears to be something best left to one's own conscience. That said, yes, it's *possible* that the Greek word φαρμακεία/“far-mak-i'-ah” – translated as “witchcraft”<sup>118</sup> or “sorceries”<sup>119</sup> in the KJV – *might* include marijuana usage, based on the connection of the word to drugs, potions, and poisons, but it's generally believed that the word is referring more to idolatry or forms of spiritism (or just to negative things in general, such as poisoning someone, for example) when used in Scripture, so I personally think it's extremely unlikely (although not impossible) that using marijuana would fall under the biblical

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<sup>116</sup> And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. — John 2:10

<sup>117</sup> And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. — Luke 22:14-20

<sup>118</sup> Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, — Galatians 5:20

<sup>119</sup> Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. — Revelation 9:21

condemnation of “sorceries.” Still, many conservative Christians seem to think (even if, perhaps, not as strongly today as they might have used to) that it should be illegal to grow marijuana plants, and that these plants should be removed wherever they’re found growing. But to make this sort of claim is really to claim that God made a mistake in creating these plants and allowing them to grow in the first place,<sup>120</sup> which seems somewhat blasphemous to me.

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<sup>120</sup> *God’s terrible mistake* by Drew Costen: <https://www.universalism.ca/gods-terrible-mistake>

## Chapter 9: Thou shalt not kill

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**A**nd finally, at least as far as the specific prohibitions we’re going to discuss go, most Christians definitely believe that abortion is condemned in the Bible as murder, and hence is a sin. However, regardless of one’s feelings on abortion, and even whether abortion actually is a sin or not, it’s important to know that, because murder is a legal term, abortion *can’t* legitimately be defined as murder in any place where it’s not illegal.<sup>121</sup> Yes, abortion might involve killing, and the killing could even theoretically be a sin – I’m actually not making a definitive judgement one way or the other as to the morality of the act at this point – but regardless of whether or not abortion *is* a sin, killing can only be classified as murder if the killing is unlawful under one’s secular, human government, because otherwise capital punishment and the killing of enemy combatants in war would also have to be called murder, as would killing in self-defence, and so the claim of many anti-abortionists that abortion is murder (at least in most of the western world, or at least as of the time this book was first written) isn’t something even worth taking into consideration. Now, some have tried to get around this fact by saying, “It doesn’t matter how humans define the word; the only thing that matters is how God defines it.” Well, “murder” is an English word, and like all words, if we aren’t all using the same definition when we use it, the word becomes entirely meaningless as far as a discussion goes, and there’s no point in even using that word to begin with.

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<sup>121</sup> *Abortion Is Not Murder* by Jennifer Wright: <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/politics/a19748134/what-is-abortion>

That said, even if we were going to redefine the word based on what Scripture says about the topic, something most Christians aren't aware of is that abortion isn't actually condemned, or even ever discussed, in the Bible at all, which means the idea that God calls it murder doesn't appear to be true anyway. Of course, most Christians believe the Bible does condemn abortion, so we should quickly take a look at the passages which they use to defend this claim:

*Thou shalt not kill. – Exodus 20:13*

That verse isn't going to work if we're going to support the death penalty and war and cops carrying guns in the line of duty, as we've already discussed. Other translations render this verse along the lines of, "You shall not murder," which is what the passage had to have meant because otherwise God would have been telling the Israelites to sin when He commanded them to kill various people back in "Old Testament" times, and since murder technically means "illegal killing," if abortion is legal, again, it then can't actually be labelled as murder.

*Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. – Jeremiah 1:5*

All this verse really tells us is that God knew Jeremiah before he was born. And unless this mean we exist as spirit babies before we're born, all it does for those of us who aren't Mormons is explain that God foreknew Jeremiah's existence and planned for him to become a prophet beforehand (and what God plans for will happen, as we've now learned).

*For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and*

*that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.*  
– Psalm 139:13-16

This passage is just more of what Jeremiah 1:5 essentially said, explaining God’s foreknowledge and predestination, and doesn’t mention abortion at all.

*And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* – Luke 1:39-42

Apparently fetuses in the womb (the Greek word βρέφος/“bref-os,” referred to as “babes” in this passage in the KJV, doesn’t strictly mean “baby,” as it’s also used for embryos and fetuses) can leap when the Holy Spirit causes them to do so, although what that has to do with abortion being wrong I’m not sure.

And with that being said, I’m all out of passages, unless there’s been some new ones brought up that I’m unaware of since I last studied the topic. Still, at least we know that God loves children (already born or otherwise) and would never do anything to harm them:

*For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits. Every*

*living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. – Genesis 7:17-23*

Huh. It seems that God Himself kills babies (and there's no way there weren't any pregnant women alive at the time of the flood, so it appears He kills fetuses too). But that's different; God can kill whoever He wants, right? At least He'd never want humans to kill fetuses or children.

*Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys. – 1 Samuel 15:3*

Well, apparently God not only kills children, He commanded humans to kill children in the past as well (and, again, there's no way there weren't any pregnant women among that group of people, meaning He commanded certain pregnancies to be aborted in the past, which means abortion can't be a sin or else He'd have been commanding the Israelites to sin). So the idea that God believes all fetuses have "a right to life" and wants them all to be born just isn't a defensible claim, at least not based on the Bible, which means the idea that God calls abortion murder doesn't appear to be true anyway, and that people will have to decide about the morality of the act for themselves based on entirely extrabiblical perspectives (if you disagree, however, please let me know what passages I missed that prove otherwise), outside of one very telling verse that we haven't looked at yet:

*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. – Genesis 2:7*

This verse tells us that it was when God breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils that he became conscious, figuratively referred to as becoming "a living soul" in this verse (keeping in mind that "souls" don't exist as ontological objects, as I explained in my *Biblical Universalism* book, but rather that the word is used as metonymy for a human existing as a conscious being in this verse). Now, I can't definitively prove that the time every subsequent human became "a living soul" was at the time *they* breathed their first breath on their own, the way it was for Adam, but this is far more scriptural of an assertion than any of the arguments *against* abortion based on the Bible are, so I'll just leave that there for you to consider. (And to quickly get the inevitable questions about how fetuses seems to be able to react to outside noises, songs, voices, and such out of the way, if it's true that babies become "living souls" upon their first breath, these would then simply have to be unconscious, autonomic reflexes programmed into developing fetuses; most of us Biblical Universalists would say that, in reality, the "life" of the yet-unborn fetus is the life of the mother, and that it "lives" its mother's life, so to speak, rather than its own – and this applies to the oxygen it receives as well, since it receives its mother's breath through its umbilical cord while gestating rather than having its own breath of life prior to birth.)

Still, based on other doctrines they hold to, it's surprising that most Christians aren't the most pro-abortion group of people out there. Why? Well, most evangelicals, aside from certain Calvinists, believe in a doctrine called "the age of accountability." A child supposedly reaches the age of accountability when they are old enough to understand the difference between right and wrong and can be held accountable for their sins. Up until they reach this age, children who die supposedly go to heaven as ghosts (or so the doctrine goes, although, as we also learned in my *Biblical Universalism* book, people actually cease to exist as conscious beings when they die) because they're too young to understand the consequences of, and hence be held responsible for, their

actions. However, once someone reaches this age (which supposedly varies from individual to individual) they will end up in an inescapable place called “hell” if they happen to pass away without first becoming a Christian (or they would if the popular Christian doctrine of Infernalism – referring to the doctrine of never-ending torment for those who die without getting saved – were scriptural).

Now, I’d estimate that 90% or more of the human population would suffer in the Christian version of “hell” without end, if the Infernalist view that this is the fate of non-Christians who die in their sins were true, so if never-ending torment for non-believers past the age of accountability did happen to be true then perhaps abortionists should be considered the greatest missionaries there are since they’d probably be responsible for helping more souls avoid the traditional Christian idea of “hell” than all of the missionaries alive today combined. Not only that, shouldn’t those Christians who have babies be thought of as the greatest monsters there are, seeing as they’re willing to risk the souls of their offspring simply to satisfy a desire (either for children, or simply for sex for those who believe that birth control is wrong)? If there was a greater than 90% chance that your child will end up tortured without end if they reach the age of accountability (the odds might vary depending on where and when you happen to live, but they’re still pretty grim), wouldn’t you be much better off killing them before they get that old? If you believe in never-ending torment in “hell” for those past this age, then would not someone like Andrea Yates, who killed her children so they would be sure to avoid such a terrible outcome,<sup>122</sup> be one of the best examples of good motherhood we have? Sure, it might be a sin to commit murder, but sins can always be forgiven while you’re still alive, and her children are now guaranteed a place in heaven, or so the logic should go if the Infernalists are correct (especially since we’ve already

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<sup>122</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrea\\_Yates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrea_Yates)

determined that abortion *can't* legitimately be considered to be murder in most cases).

If a parent allowed their child to participate in any activity where their kid has a 90% or greater chance of dying, or even just getting seriously injured, one would (rightly) consider that parent to be negligent and report that parent to the child protective agencies, and yet how many Christian parents are willing to gamble their children's soul with a fate far worse, and infinitely longer, than simple death or injury? And as we've already learned, abortion generally can't be classified as murder, so, again, women who have abortions, and even the doctors who perform them, should be seen by Christians who believe in never-ending torment as the greatest heroes ever for saving so many souls.

No matter how horrible this might sound to you, I challenge you to show me where I'm wrong. I've made this challenge before and have yet to have anyone correct my logic, and I don't expect to have it happen anytime soon either.

That said, since all mankind will be saved because of what Christ accomplished, nobody is going to end up suffering in hell without end (and you should believe in that too, since I proved it beyond a shadow of a doubt in my *Biblical Universalism* book), which means I'm obviously not suggesting anyone *actually* kill their children here. I'm simply making this point to challenge yet another inconsistency in Christian ideology.

Of course, most people today also aren't aware that abortion (at least if performed during much of the first two trimesters) was not actually considered to be immoral by most Christians throughout much of history either<sup>123</sup> (at least among Christians who hold to *Sola scriptura*, and the theological perspectives of those who don't hold to *Sola scriptura* are rarely even worth considering).

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<sup>123</sup> *The Truth About Christianity And Abortion* by Christina Forrester: [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-truth-about-christianity-and-abortion\\_b\\_58f52ed7e4b048372700dab5](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-truth-about-christianity-and-abortion_b_58f52ed7e4b048372700dab5)

This doesn't necessarily matter as far as one's consideration of the morality of abortion goes, since those of us in the body of Christ don't base our theology on what Christians have historically considered to fall under the purview of "orthodoxy" or "orthopraxy" anyway (because we consider the doctrines of the Christian religion to be entirely wrong about nearly everything), but it is still useful for us to know that, until relatively recently, evangelicals and other Protestants have actually been mostly okay with abortion,<sup>124</sup> and that it was only due to the machinations of certain politically-minded evangelicals – who decided to join forces with the Roman Catholics in their fight against abortion (although it appears that even Catholic opinions on abortion have changed over the years<sup>125</sup>) in order to create the movement sometimes known as the Religious Right so they could gain political power (mostly so they could fight against desegregation and continue to promote racism,<sup>126</sup> at least in the United States, although the rest of the evangelical world tends to follow what American evangelicals do) – that nearly everyone has been swayed into incorrectly assuming abortion has always been thought to be a sin by all Christians.<sup>127</sup>

And it's also important to note that a large number of Christians who today claim the "Pro-Life" label are only actually against abortion when it comes to other people's abortions, thinking that the abortions they themselves have had are somehow okay, but that everyone else's abortions are wrong and should be

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<sup>124</sup> *How Evangelicals Decided That Life Begins at Conception* by Jonathan Dudley: [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-dudley/how-evangelicals-decided-that-life-begins-at-conception\\_b\\_2072716.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-dudley/how-evangelicals-decided-that-life-begins-at-conception_b_2072716.html)

<sup>125</sup> *The Bishops Are Wrong About Biden — and Abortion* by Garry Wills: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/27/opinion/biden-bishops-communion-abortion.html>

<sup>126</sup> *The Real Origins of the Religious Right* by Randall Balmer: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/05/religious-right-real-origins-107133>

<sup>127</sup> *The 'Biblical View' That's Younger Than The Happy Meal* by Fred Clark: <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/slacktivist/2012/02/18/the-biblical-view-thats-younger-than-the-happy-meal>

illegal, basically telling us that they believe the only moral abortions are the abortions they have,<sup>128</sup> as well as that a large reason they're fighting against abortion is actually because they want to punish other women for enjoying sex, and to ensure that those women suffer long-lasting consequences for their actions (they'll argue that it's actually because they think abortion is immoral and that they believe in "the sanctity of life," but their hypocrisy, along with the way they treat those who have been born – especially in the United States, where religious conservatives only appear to care about the unborn until they're born, after which it's up to those who are born to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, as far as these conservatives seem to be concerned – reveals the real truth about them to the rest of us: that they don't actually believe in "the sanctity of life," or in ethical practices at all, for that matter). In fact, this quote on Facebook by a Christian pastor named Dave Barnhart explains the real reason most conservative politicians and religious leaders fight against abortion:

*“The unborn’ are a convenient group of people to advocate for. They never make demands of you; they are morally uncomplicated, unlike the incarcerated, addicted, or the chronically poor; they don’t resent your condescension or complain that you are not politically correct; unlike widows, they don’t ask you to question patriarchy; unlike orphans, they don’t need money, education, or childcare; unlike aliens, they don’t bring all that racial, cultural, and religious baggage that you dislike; they allow you to feel good about yourself without any work at creating or maintaining relationships; and when they are born, you can forget about them, because they cease to be unborn. It’s almost as if, by being born, they have died to you. You can love the unborn and advocate for them without substantially challenging your own wealth, power, or privilege, without reimagining social structures, apologizing, or making reparations to anyone. They are, in short, the*

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<sup>128</sup> “The Only Moral Abortion is My Abortion” by Joyce Arthur: <https://joycearthur.com/abortion/the-only-moral-abortion-is-my-abortion>

*perfect people to love if you want to claim you love Jesus but actually dislike people who breathe.*

*Prisoners? Immigrants? The sick? The poor? Widows? Orphans? All the groups that are specifically mentioned in the Bible? They all get thrown under the bus for the unborn.”<sup>129</sup>*

But what are the scientific facts when it comes to abortion? Well, from what I’ve been able to determine, the brain physically can’t have consciousness until at least 24 weeks of gestation have passed (and perhaps even more<sup>130</sup>) because it doesn’t have the structures necessary to develop consciousness or sentience (at least based on what I could find when researching this topic). Therefore, since only about 1% of abortions take place after the 21st week, abortion in the overwhelming majority of cases doesn’t seem to kill something that was ever a conscious being, and hence doesn’t seem to be the killing of something that was ever a “person.” Sure, it might kill something that has human DNA, but the root of a human hair that has been plucked from a human head also has human DNA and nobody would call its removal from someone’s head the killing of a human person because it was never a conscious human itself, and if a fetus was never a conscious being either, there’s no legitimate way that I’m aware of to say a “person” is being killed in an abortion performed within that timeframe (in addition, scientists believe that it takes even longer than that – not until at least the 29th week – before a fetus could feel pain,<sup>131</sup> in case that’s a concern you might have). And yes, at this point, many people will try to argue that Jews and many slaves weren’t considered to be legal “persons” by the Nazis and certain

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<sup>129</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/dave.barnhart/posts/10156549406811031>

<sup>130</sup> *When Does Consciousness Arise in Human Babies?* by Christof Koch: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/when-does-consciousness-arise>

<sup>131</sup> *7 persistent claims about abortion, fact-checked* by Jaclyn Diaz, Koko Nakajima, and Nick Underwood: <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/06/1096676197/7-persistent-claims-about-abortion-fact-checked>

slaveholders in the past either, but this is just an attempt to distract from the fact that most fetuses were never conscious beings even once prior to an abortion, whereas the Jews and slaves in question were, which means this is nothing more than a bad faith argument with no bearing on the topic at all.

It's also important to note that abortions in the third trimester almost only ever take place because something has gone horribly wrong and the baby is going to die anyway (often in an extremely painful manner), and many times because the pregnant mother will jeopardize her health (and even her life) if she continues with the pregnancy as well. Almost no woman goes through months of pregnancy only to abort it near the end unless something is very wrong, and few doctors would do so for any other reason either (and no, the mythical “post-birth abortions” that some people bring up in order to win elections aren't actually a real thing either), so these are all facts to keep in mind whenever someone insists that abortion is definitely wrong.

Now, some like to argue that a fetus has a soul, and that killing a “living soul” would be wrong. Well, whether or not fetuses have souls, killing someone or something that has a soul isn't necessarily wrong anyway. We kill animals for food (and animals obviously have souls – or, to be more precise, *are* “living souls” – which is a fact the Bible clearly agrees with as well, I might add, since the word translated as “life” in Genesis 1:30<sup>132</sup> is the same Hebrew word – נֶפֶשׁ/ “neh'-fesh” – which is translated as “soul” in other passages<sup>133</sup>), and God commanded the killing of lots of people in Bible times, as we've already discussed, not to mention killed plenty of them Himself, so killing “living souls” is obviously not something God forbids, nor considers to be inherently wrong.

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<sup>132</sup> And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. — Genesis 1:30

<sup>133</sup> And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. — Genesis 2:7

So even if fetuses actually were “living souls” (and the assumption that they are is not only far from proven, but seems scripturally unlikely), it wouldn’t necessarily even matter.

## Chapter 10: You're already a moral relativist

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All that being said, I'm not here to tell you that you should (or should not) have or perform abortions. This is a very personal matter, and one that people have very strong feelings about. The only thing I'm here to do is to remind you that, regardless of the conclusions you've come to as far as the sinfulness of having or performing an abortion goes, if you're in the body of Christ, you aren't called to condemn the rest of the world for what they do, or to try to influence it to straighten up their walk. All you're called to do is walk after the Spirit, and let the rest of the world make their own decisions about morality, not to mention the many other actions that certain Christians believe should be avoided, including listening to certain types of music, watching certain movies or television shows, playing cards or various other types of games, viewing or participating in sports, gambling, or even dancing, to name just a few of the various things the religious think we should avoid, despite not being forbidden *anywhere* in Scripture (and I'll include a chart near the end of this book listing the various doctrines and actions that members of the body of Christ *should* be willing to separate from others over, as well as be willing to agree to disagree with each other on, as I think many of you will find it helpful).

Still, if you really want a general principle of morality to live by under the dispensation of the grace of God, I can give you the philosophy of morality I myself live by (just don't take this as a rule; it's simply my own principles that my conscience, faith, and common sense led me to). In no particular order, I ask myself a number of questions, such as, "Is it loving to do so?" If it's done (or

avoided) out of actual love or compassion, odds are high that it's fine to do. I'll also consider whether it's harming anybody unnecessarily against their will. This is because certain actions can harm people without being sinful, actions such as defending someone against an attacker, for example, or a doctor amputating a limb to protect against the spread of a disease, based on the definition of "evil," which those who have read my *Biblical Universalism* book know is really just "to cause something to be damaged or broken," so sometimes harmful/evil actions are necessary (and the "against their will" part is because something such as piercing someone's ears when they want it done is technically causing them "harm," or is at least damaging their body – even if only the tiniest bit – but it's not to a fatal or even serious degree, and it's their desire to have it done, so a professional piercer can rest assured that they aren't sinning by causing this sort of harm or damage, so long as they have faith that it is okay, of course<sup>134</sup>). But if an action would result in unnecessary harm to somebody against their will, it should likely be avoided. Another consideration is whether an action would get one in trouble with the police or break a secular law of the land. If it would, it's probably best to do something else instead, since Paul advises us to obey the government.<sup>135</sup> Of course, I also look to Scripture to see whether Paul has spoken against a specific action I might be wanting to do. While his teachings were exhortations rather than commandments (meaning they were good ideas to follow, but not required of us, for the most part), it's still a good idea to see what he had to say about things if you're in the body of Christ (and as for those who are members of the Israel of God instead, they should be looking to what the Circumcision writings say they should do and not do). And last (but definitely not least), I think about whether it's an idolatrous

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<sup>134</sup> Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. — Romans 14:22-23

<sup>135</sup> Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. — Romans 13:1-2

action that would result in the worship of another deity (or the worship of anything/anyone other than God). If so, I definitely don't do it. But if something is loving, isn't harming others unnecessarily against their will, isn't illegal, doesn't go against properly interpreted Scripture, and isn't idolatrous, I have the faith that it's generally perfectly fine to do so. If you don't have the same sort of faith about a specific action, however, it would be a sin for you to do it, and you should avoid any actions that would go against your own conscience until you have legitimately changed your mind about them being wrong (just don't judge another person for their actions – presuming these aren't actions that harm others unnecessarily against their will, aren't illegal, and aren't idolatrous – if it isn't going against their conscience).

At this point, I should probably say that when Christians learn about my theology as it pertains to issues of morality, they often accuse me of moral relativism. While the reason they make this accusation is generally due to not having actually dug into why I believe what I do (since they assume I'm ignoring what the Bible teaches, when in reality I believe what I do about morality 100% *because* of what I believe the Bible really teaches), they are right about one thing: I am indeed a moral relativist. And if they truly recognized God as God,<sup>136</sup> they would be moral relativists themselves.

Of course, just as with nearly everything I've written about theology, this probably sounds strange to most people who read this assertion for the first time. But as always, if you think it over carefully you should realize that it's the truth. I mean, think about it: If morality is absolute rather than relative, it means that there are certain actions which are *always* inherently wrong to do, no matter who the person is, and that would have to include God if the action is inherently wrong in-and-of-itself (this would apply to avoiding actions which are

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<sup>136</sup> Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. — Romans 1:21

always wrong to abstain from as well, I should add). In fact, if any actions were *always* wrong from an absolute perspective (which would be the case if morality wasn't relative), it would mean there's a "moral law" (for lack of a better term) which is greater than God Himself, a law which even God would be obligated to follow. And if there is something greater than God (even a "law"), then God would not truly be sovereign because He'd be obligated to follow said "moral law," and couldn't decide not to do so.

It's only when morality is relative to what God decides it is that He maintains His sovereignty. Ironically, most Christians who protest moral relativism actually already believe that God is the basis for morality, not realizing that they're actually teaching moral relativism when they say this. If this still doesn't sound right, though, let's take a look at an example to really demonstrate the fact that most Christians are already moral relativists (even without realizing that they are).

Perhaps the best example of the moral relativism that pretty much all Christians hold to is the topic of killing other human beings. Is killing always morally wrong, in-and-of-itself, or is it relative to the situation one finds themselves in? Well, if killing humans is always wrong, with no exceptions, then killing people in war, or in the defence of others, or even in self-defence, would, by definition, be immoral. And not only that, it would be wrong for God to ever kill anyone as well, if killing humans is always wrong, with no exceptions, which means that all the times God is said to have killed people in the Bible, not to mention all the times He commanded the Israelites to do so, would have been examples of God sinning (or commanding others to sin). So I trust it's now clear that killing is only "wrong" under the specific circumstances that God tells us it's wrong to do so, which means that the morality of killing humans is relative to God's desire and commands rather than being absolutely wrong (and that the Bible actually does support situational ethics). And if you agree with me on that, welcome to the world of moral relativism.

Before moving on, though, I should reiterate something I wrote earlier in the book, which is that some people who have made it this far will have felt their pharisaical flesh crawling and their self-righteous souls getting stirred up because of some of the things they've just read. and if that's the case for you, it means you really need to reevaluate whether you're more interested in holding fast to the traditions you've been taught by your denomination and religious leaders, so that you can continue walking in accord with flesh, or in what Scripture actually says, so that you can begin walking after the Spirit instead.

## Chapter 11: Paul-itics

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**A**s Paul essentially asked in 1 Corinthians 5:12,<sup>137</sup> what business is it of ours to judge those outside the church? And so, regardless of one's views on morality, whatever the Bible might actually say about the topic as it applies the body of Christ, it's limited to the body of Christ (and this goes equally for those in the church called the Israel of God, I should add, since the Mosaic law that their morality is based on never applied to anyone outside of Israel anyway), contrary to what so many Christians seem to believe (although most of the members of the Christian religion are technically a part of the very world they condemn, since they're not in the body of Christ, nor are most of them even in the Israel of God, due to having believed a false "gospel," so it actually might make sense for them to judge the world they're a part of, but they're judging it based on their horrible misinterpretations of Scripture, which doesn't help). Trying to force those who are not a part of the body of Christ or the Israel of God to live a supposedly "righteous life," by legal means or otherwise, is not even slightly justifiable, since nowhere in the Bible is it even hinted at that either church is called to influence (or force) our cultures to become more conservative or to follow religious laws, at least not at the time this book was written. In fact, the only thing those of us in the body of Christ are asked to do regarding our governments is to obey the secular laws and

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<sup>137</sup> For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? — 1 Corinthians 5:12

to pay our taxes<sup>138</sup> (even when these laws harm us and should not exist in the first place).

Slavery is a good example of this. Contrary to what many people think, when Paul told slaves in the body of Christ to obey their masters,<sup>139</sup> since he was all for trying to gain freedom if it could be done legally,<sup>140</sup> and this exhortation was only for members of the body of Christ anyway, he obviously wasn't promoting slavery as a good thing that society in general should be practicing. It's simply that he was exhorting believers to obey the law, whether it's an unpleasant law,<sup>141</sup> whether the authorities making said laws are ungodly, and even whether we might think the laws themselves might be ungodly<sup>142</sup> (which isn't to say that those who are *not* members of the body of Christ shouldn't do what they can to make the world a better place where possible, including fighting to completely

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<sup>138</sup> Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. — Romans 13:1-7

<sup>139</sup> Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; — Ephesians 6:5

<sup>140</sup> Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. — 1 Corinthians 7:21

<sup>141</sup> *No authority except under God* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF6.31.pdf>

<sup>142</sup> *God's use of ungodly authorities* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF6.32.pdf>

eliminate slavery; and if that's something you really want to do as a member of the body of Christ, you technically can, but it isn't something we're called to do in Scripture).

Yes, it is true that, in a democracy, "we the people" technically help determine the secular laws to a certain (in practice, extremely limited) extent, but there's still zero excuse for trying to create laws based on religious morality (especially when we consider the fact that most religious morality isn't at all scriptural, as we've now learned from this book), or for trying to turn one's nation into a theocracy (the world will be a theocracy in the future, but not until Jesus returns to the earth, and no attempt to create a theocracy in the meantime will ever provide anything other than horrific results, at least based on every attempt to do so by Gentiles thus far). And culturally, there also isn't any reason to go around putting down non-believers for doing things that go against one's moralistic sensibilities (particularly, again, since most of the things that religious conservatives think are sinful aren't actually even slightly sinful to begin with), for trying to pressure the rest of the world into acting the way religious conservatives want them to, or for any number of the cruel or unnecessary actions that too many of those who are religious conservatives seem to feel obligated to perform against those in their communities and countries – actions such as trying to get people fired, kicking people out of their homes, or not being willing to sell things to people, all based simply on who they happen to be attracted to or what gender they identify as, for example; or actions such as trying to enforce prohibitions against consuming certain beverages or plants that God Himself made, or at least enforcing prohibitions against purchasing such things on certain days of the week (to name just a few of many examples).

Really, all that attempting to legislate religious morality, or even to pressure the rest of the world into following one's religious leanings, will do nothing but drive people even further away from the faith one no doubt wants them to embrace, and will also continue to cause everyone to misunderstand what the

Gospel is actually about (hint: it's not about trying to be as big of an asshole as possible towards those who don't believe and act the way you do, as so many conservative Christians act like they think it is).

This is an important factor for parents to keep in mind too, by the way. Raising your kids to be good citizens who live loving, quiet, respectful, and peaceable lives is important,<sup>143</sup> and they should certainly be brought up with the training and instruction of the Lord so that they'll understand what they need to know about God and Scripture,<sup>144</sup> but trying to force people to live "godly lives" misses the entire point of Paul's teachings. You can't stuff the Holy Spirit into somebody (and if God hasn't elected your child for the special salvation, you aren't going to be able to convince them to believe the Gospel – either Gospel – and get saved now anyway), and trying to make people (children or grown adults) live according to religious rules will only cause them to sin and rebel all the more, as Paul makes quite clear (that was the purpose of the existence of the Mosaic law, after all). And even if those within Churchianity were correct about what is right and wrong (which they definitely aren't), getting people who aren't already saved (relatively speaking) to live "righteous" lives and stop sinning isn't going to get them saved, or make them any less lost, unless you believe that salvation actually is by works, so it just doesn't make any sense to begin with to try to force the rest of the world to live by religious standards since it won't help them in the long run anyway (at least not according to the most common soteriology of Churchianity).

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<sup>143</sup> And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing. — 1 Thessalonians 4:10-12

<sup>144</sup> And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. — Ephesians 6:4

History is very clear about all of this as well, of course. When religious “morality” gains control of government, people suffer. There’s almost nothing scarier, or more antithetical to freedom, than a theocracy or theonomy run by mortal humans (remember, it is for freedom that we have been set free, as Galatians 5:1 is telling us;<sup>145</sup> it wasn’t so we would put ourselves back under religious bondage). When religious conservatives run governments without a liberal and secular hand to balance their policies out, people are censored, fired, expelled from their homes, imprisoned, tortured, and even executed simply for their beliefs (or lack thereof), as well as for the most innocent of actions. If someone challenges the religious status quo or does things considered sinful in a theocratic society, religious conservatives become extremely evil towards such heretics, apostates, and infidels (and even today in more secular countries you find religious conservatives trying to take or keep civil rights away from people who might live differently from them for no reason other than the fact that these differences might not line up with their religious beliefs).

This is one reason I like to stay far away from religious conservatives in general (or at least only meet with them in public places). Perjury,<sup>146</sup> assault, torture,<sup>147</sup> theft, and killing<sup>148</sup> are a major part of the heritage of nearly all conservative religions, including the Christian religion, and I have no doubt that many of them would bring that legacy back into practice if they could. That’s not to say all religious conservatives would do this if they had the opportunity, but I still wouldn’t want to take that chance. And regardless of their propensity towards violence, it goes without saying that most of them would definitely (and happily)

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<sup>145</sup> Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. — Galatians 5:1

<sup>146</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day-care\\_sex-abuse\\_hysteria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day-care_sex-abuse_hysteria)

<sup>147</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inquisition>

<sup>148</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salem\\_witch\\_trials](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salem_witch_trials)

fight against freedoms and civil rights for people who are different from them in various ways, particularly when it comes to sexuality and gender, and I see no good reason to have much to do with people who would be so heartless and cruel.

Religious conservatives sometimes talk about a culture war, and they are right, there is one happening. The problem is, they're on the wrong side of this battle, having exchanged the truth for an attempt at holding political power<sup>149</sup> (although Daniel warned us that the Christian religion, along with all of the world's other false religions – based on Daniel chapter 7, presuming A.E. Knoch interpreted the prophecy correctly in pages 162 to 179 of his commentary on the book of Daniel,<sup>150</sup> which I personally do believe he did – will be utterly destroyed eventually, and that God will kill many within this religion during the Great Tribulation, so they do this at their own peril).

Now, some members of the body of Christ will disagree with me on this next part, because there are a fair number of believers who do lean more towards conservatism when it comes to their political preferences, so please keep in mind that this paragraph is simply my own opinion and not necessarily the opinion of the majority of “Concordant” believers, or even other members of the true body of Christ who might not be “Concordant” in their theology, but in my personal experience (at least as a North American), conservatism appears to basically be about selfishness, greed, hunger for power, paranoia, racism, sexism, homophobia (among other forms of erotophobia), transphobia, and just having a lack of empathy towards one's neighbours in general, rather than loving one's neighbour. All of this ultimately leads to people trying to control the lives and actions of those who might be a little different from what they

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<sup>149</sup> *The Lie: Recipe for Babylon — The Seduction of Religion and Politics* by Dan Sheridan: <https://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/bsn412.pdf>

<sup>150</sup> *Concordant Studies in the Book of DANIEL* by A.E. Knoch: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/unsearchablerich/booksonwebsite/©CPC+Concordant+Studies+in+the+Book+of+Daniel.pdf>

consider to be “the norm,” and religion only makes conservatism worse since it leads people to believe their harmful mindsets and actions are sanctioned (or even commanded) by God. So if you’ve ever wondered why some people remain wary of religious (and even secular) conservatives, it should be pretty obvious at this point. All that being said, I should add that I’m not claiming political liberalism will save the world (or even your country). Scripture is quite clear that no human government can ever do that. Still, true liberalism is actually about compassion, empathy, and taking care of those in need (basically, the exact opposite of what conservatism seems to be about, at least as far as I’ve ever been able to see), and those living under truly liberal governments (and not just liberal governments in name only) tend to have much better lives in general than those living under more conservative governments do, so I’d much rather be in a more liberal part of the world any day of the week (which as a Canadian, thankfully, I am, at least at present).

But regardless, as you’ve already learned, especially if you’ve read much of what I’ve written over the years, members of the Christian religion are wrong about basically everything anyway, and since the vast majority of the members of the Christian religion are conservative, it stands to reason (at least in my mind) that there’s literally no way conservatism can possibly be correct if nearly every single member of this religion holds to it. At the end of the day, however, members of the body of Christ are aliens here on this planet, since our citizenship is in the heavens,<sup>151</sup> so the politics of earth<sup>152</sup> really aren’t meant for us to begin with.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: — Philippians 3:20

<sup>152</sup> *God and Country — The Dangers of Contemporary Christian Americanism* by Jon Zens and Cliff Bjork: <https://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/bsn223.pdf>

<sup>153</sup> *Politician? or Paulician?* by Alan Burns: [https://www.studysshelf.com/art\\_burns\\_politician.pdf](https://www.studysshelf.com/art_burns_politician.pdf)

## Chapter 12: Not forsaking the assembling...

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**C**hristians don't only tell us that certain things are forbidden that actually aren't, however. They also try to convince us that certain things are required that aren't either. If you do attend the traditional church services of the Christian religion and become a member of a particular local assembly, for example, you'll likely sit through a number of sermons meant to make you feel guilty if you don't give them a percentage of your money on a regular basis, sermons which completely ignore the fact that the tithe was meant solely for followers of the Mosaic law. Members of the body of Christ (whether Jewish or Gentile) are not supposed to follow the law of Moses, and those who do try to follow any of it are under a curse of being obligated to follow all of it, according to Paul<sup>154</sup> (that means no more bacon or shrimp, or clothes with certain mixed fabrics, or doing chores or running errands on Saturday).

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<sup>154</sup> For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. — Galatians 3:10

Of course, a truly biblical tithe is actually in the form of food, drink, or livestock, and only goes to the Levitical priests<sup>155</sup> or to the needy<sup>156</sup> (with the exception of the tithe that wasn't given away at all, but was rather consumed by the tithers themselves<sup>157</sup>). Unless your pastors are Levites who perform animal sacrifices, they have no scriptural basis for demanding it from anyone (no, not even Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek helps their case, unless perhaps one's pastor is the king of Salem and they're tithing of the spoils they took from their enemies in battle<sup>158</sup>). There's absolutely nothing in the Bible about the body of Christ having to give a tenth (or any amount) of their money to their religious leaders or organizations.

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<sup>155</sup> At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest. — Deuteronomy 14:28-29

<sup>156</sup> When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; — Deuteronomy 26:12

<sup>157</sup> And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee: Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, — Deuteronomy 14:24-26

<sup>158</sup> For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. — Hebrews 7:1-4

Still, while tithing isn't a biblical idea for members of the body of Christ, what is recorded as having happened during Paul's time is members of local church assemblies giving financial gifts to those in need.<sup>159</sup> And while this seems to have only been done for the sake of helping members of the Israel of God who were living in Jerusalem<sup>160</sup> (perhaps because they were struggling due to a famine at that time<sup>161</sup>), it is still good for us to help the poor.<sup>162</sup> What believers didn't do at that time, however, was just give money to pastors who simply wanted to live off church members' hard-earned money or keep the power running in a church building.

Those church buildings and pastors themselves, by the way, are also a big problem, since modern church services and the buildings they take place in don't have any biblical justification for existing in the first place. The church known as the body of Christ in Paul's time didn't gather in chapels or temples.

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<sup>159</sup> Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. — 2 Corinthians 8:1-4

<sup>160</sup> Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me. — 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

<sup>161</sup> And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. — Acts 11:27-28

<sup>162</sup> Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do. — Galatians 2:10

Instead, they met in the homes<sup>163</sup> of members<sup>164</sup> of their local assemblies.<sup>165</sup> And a gathering wasn't a few songs and then a sermon by a pastor. There might have been songs, and even a speech or two, but the early church gatherings apparently included a meal and discussions, not just a bite of bread, a sip of wine (or grape juice), and a sermon.

“The Lord’s Supper” for example, appears to have been a part of a real meal meant to demonstrate the communion, meaning the unity, of the members of the body of Christ<sup>166</sup> – at least as it was partaken of by those in the body of Christ – and so it wasn’t just a tiny snack they were partaking of.<sup>167</sup> The idea that this was a ritual or ordinance which believers had to participate in for salvation or otherwise is a concept that arose later among those who apostatized from Paul’s teachings by merging his Gospel with Israel’s Gospel (thus creating the false “gospel” of the Christian religion), likely because they misunderstood certain things that Jesus was recorded as saying in John 6.<sup>168</sup> Of course, even if Jesus *did* literally mean for His listeners to eat His flesh, what He

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<sup>163</sup> Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. — Romans 16:5

<sup>164</sup> Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. — Colossians 4:15

<sup>165</sup> Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house: — Philemon 1:1-2

<sup>166</sup> For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. — 1 Corinthians 11:29

<sup>167</sup> For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. — 1 Corinthians 11:21

<sup>168</sup> Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. — John 6:53-55

said there was only for members of the Israel of God, not the body of Christ, as we learned in my *Biblical Universalism* book. As everyone in the actual body of Christ knows, our salvation is based 100% on what Christ accomplished, and not on any actions we take, so the idea of partaking in rituals related to the bread and wine would contradict everything Paul taught us about salvation. And since our dispensation has no rudiments (meaning elements) or ordinances,<sup>169</sup> because we are complete in Christ<sup>170</sup> (who is the end of all religion for those in His body), returning to the shadows and types of rituals and rites in any way whatsoever would rob us of the full enjoyment of both our possessions and freedom in Christ. (That said, the idea that Jesus was literally referring to eating His flesh when He spoke to Israelites is a misunderstanding of His words, as He made clear by using the *exact same Greek phrase* translated as “*hath everlasting life*” in verse 47 of the same chapter to say they gain it by believing on Him,<sup>171</sup> and as “*hath eternal life*” in verse 54 to say they gain it by “eating His flesh,” telling us that these are one and the same action, only stated metaphorically the second time He says it, in order to scare away those who

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<sup>169</sup> Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, — Colossians 2:20-23

<sup>170</sup> Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: — Colossians 2:8-10

<sup>171</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. — John 6:47

were not among the elect, since they also missed this fact,<sup>172</sup> after which Peter, who *was* among the elect, confirmed that Jesus really was just referring to believing on Him,<sup>173</sup> which for them meant to believe that He's their Messiah and the Son of God.<sup>174</sup>)

Very few members of the body of Christ actually do partake of this dinner anymore, though, partly due to the fact that many actually believe – for reasons that I don't have the time to get into here – that it was meant to end around the time of Paul's imprisonment, and partly due to the fact that there are so few members of the body of Christ alive today that it's difficult to actually gather together in person anymore anyway. Still, while practicing the Lord's Supper as a ceremony would not be at all scriptural, choosing to share a meal together in a manner that demonstrates our communion with one another (so long as it isn't a practice that's enforced upon us, and we're actually sharing the meal with everyone in the church rather than selfishly consuming it all before everyone has arrived), meaning that it helps us recognize that we're all members of the

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<sup>172</sup> These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. — John 6:59-66

<sup>173</sup> Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. — John 6:67-69

<sup>174</sup> But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. — John 20:31

same body,<sup>175</sup> seems like the exact opposite of a religious ritual to me, and I see no problem with doing just that when gathering as a local church in one's home (if one is able to find such a church) if the group so desires.

As far as the rest of the “church service” goes, it appears they had actual conversations and dialogues rather than just a monologue by one preacher. This is demonstrated by how, when Paul spoke to the believers at Troas in Acts 20:7,<sup>176</sup> the Greek word translated as “preached” in the KJV there is διαλέγομαι/ “dee-al-eg'-om-ahee,” which literally means “to converse with someone,” or “to argue or discuss something with someone,” as is also made clear by the way the KJV translated this word as “disputing” in Acts 19:8.<sup>177</sup> Still, this isn't to say that the occasional lesson or presentation isn't helpful, and there *are* plenty of great messages preached at the various conferences held by various “Concordant” Universalists, but it wasn't why the original members of the body of Christ were gathering together in the first century.<sup>178</sup>

Just remember that church buildings and the current structure of the Institutional Church's weekend “services” didn't exist until some time later (in fact, the word “church” is translated from the Greek ἐκκλησία/“ek-klay-see'-ah,” which is why it's sometimes also transliterated as “ecclesia” in certain Bible versions, and which is a word that simply refers to a “group” or “assembly” of

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<sup>175</sup> The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. — 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

<sup>176</sup> And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. — Acts 20:7

<sup>177</sup> And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. — Acts 19:8

<sup>178</sup> *Problems and Limitations of the Traditional "Sermon" Concept* by Darryl M. Erkel: <https://www.truthaccordingtoscripture.com/documents/church-practice/traditional-sermon.php>

people, by the way; it never referred to a building in the Bible). To be fair, though, it's not the buildings themselves that are the real problem; it's the "organization" and lack of real, spontaneous, Spirit-led fellowship, not to mention theological and spiritual dialogue between members. Yes, you will almost certainly hear the word "fellowship" in most traditional church meetings, but you also almost as certainly won't experience much (if any) there, despite how much so many pastors seem to love the word (it's hard to fellowship with the back of someone's head while sitting in pews listening to a sermon). But you can technically meet in a home and still be an Institutional Church, or rent a room in a building (or really even own a whole building) other than a home and be a relational, open church (as church gatherings that follow the pattern of the first assemblies are sometimes called<sup>179</sup>). As nice as a home gathering is, it's really the openness and fellowship and discussions about Scripture that are the important factors. That said, if a local assembly does own a whole building that they meet in – even if they just call it a chapel or a hall – you should probably stay far away. Perhaps there's a slim possibility of the rare exception existing, but in general, owning a building for worship and sermons seems to be a good litmus test for a local church, demonstrating that they likely know extremely little about biblical theology and what Scripture actually says. In fact, you'd be much better off spiritually (and even physically) in a strip club than in a so-called "house of God"<sup>180</sup> (as many mistakenly call these buildings). At least in a strip club nobody is deceiving you about what Scripture teaches when they try to take a percentage of your money.

Speaking of teaching, the idea of a pastor or priest or any professional preacher who rules over a church isn't in the Bible either. Local churches were overseen

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<sup>179</sup> *The Open Church* by James Rutz: <https://www.amazon.com/Open-Church-James-H-Rutz/dp/0940232502>

<sup>180</sup> *Clanging Gong News, Volume 3, Issue 5* by Martin Zender: [https://www.martinzender.com/clang\\_gong/archives/Volume3-Issue5.pdf](https://www.martinzender.com/clang_gong/archives/Volume3-Issue5.pdf)

by a group of unpaid elders or overseers<sup>181</sup> (or “bishops,” as the KJV renders the word), not run by one paid man (that’s not to say that evangelists shouldn’t be paid to evangelize,<sup>182</sup> but elders and evangelists aren’t necessarily always the same people). If you have one person leading (and basically performing the entire ministry in) a local gathering of believers, I would suggest not having much of anything to do with their gatherings if you value your spiritual well-being (and while not all clergy are dangerous or are con-artists – many are just confused – I’d suggest you do play it safe and be cautious when interacting with them, just in case, since a lot still are<sup>183</sup>).

Also, just as a quick aside on the topic of spiritual things, the “charismatic” spiritual gifts that some pastors say one should have really aren’t meant for those under the dispensation of the grace of God today either (meaning for those in the body of Christ). They might still be active for some people saved in connection with the Gospel of the Circumcision, I should say (and based on certain testimonies I’ve heard from some people who I suspect are members of the Israel of God – even if they don’t necessarily realize it themselves, not being aware of the difference between the two churches and their two respective Gospels – this very well might be the case), since these gifts were basically meant as a sign for Jews anyway. Even those in the body of Christ in the first century were mostly “speaking in tongues” as a sign for unbelieving Jews<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> *Is the One-Pastor System Scriptural?* by Mark Frees: [https://web.archive.org/web/20210225190103/http://www.cnview.com/churches\\_today/is\\_the\\_one\\_pastoral\\_system\\_scrip.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20210225190103/http://www.cnview.com/churches_today/is_the_one_pastoral_system_scrip.htm)

<sup>182</sup> Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. — 1 Corinthians 9:14

<sup>183</sup> *Black Collar Crime Archives* curated by Bruce Gerencser: <https://brucegerencser.net/tag/black-collar-crime>

<sup>184</sup> Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. — 1 Corinthians 14:22

(who often required a sign to accept Jesus as their Messiah<sup>185</sup>), but for those of saved in connection with the Gospel of the Uncircumcision, these gifts appear to have come to an end when Israel as a whole fully rejected the Messiah, quite possibly around the time recorded in Acts 28 (although, for the record, I should state here that I'm a Mid-Acts "Hyperdispensationalist," to use the theological label, and not an Acts 28 "Ultradispensationalist"<sup>186</sup>), as evidenced by the fact that even Paul, whose simple handkerchiefs could heal those who touched them at one time,<sup>187</sup> could no longer heal people by the end of his ministry,<sup>188</sup> and even suggested that Timothy take some wine for his stomach and other ailments<sup>189</sup> rather than seek the gift of healing as those saved under the Gospel of the Circumcision were instructed to do.<sup>190</sup> That's not to say God can't or doesn't ever do miracles for those of us in the body of Christ anymore (and it definitely doesn't mean that God doesn't still guide us through His Spirit), just

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<sup>185</sup> For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: — 1 Corinthians 1:22

<sup>186</sup> *Acts 28 Dispensationalism Revisited: A Response to "Proof of Paul's Progression" (Part One)* by Aaron Welch: <https://thathappyexpectation.blogspot.com/2016/03/acts-28-dispensationalism-revisited.html>

<sup>187</sup> So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. — Acts 19:12

<sup>188</sup> Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. — 2 Timothy 4:20

<sup>189</sup> Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities. — 1 Timothy 5:23

<sup>190</sup> Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. — James 5:13-18

that they're the exception rather than the rule<sup>191</sup> while the reason for the sign gifts has been mostly paused for the time being<sup>192</sup> (so, until the final Gentile meant to enter the body of Christ does so, and God's focus returns to Israel and the Gospel of the Kingdom becomes the preeminent Gospel to be proclaimed on earth once again).

Aside from tithing (and “speaking in tongues,” depending on one's denomination), there's one more unbiblical tradition that religious leaders will condemn you for if you don't do it on a regular basis, and that is regularly attending their gatherings, particularly on the day they believe to be the Sabbath.

Almost anybody who has ever suggested they might stop “going to church” regularly has been given a guilt trip and has been told that we aren't supposed to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, completely misrepresenting the meaning of the passage in Hebrews 10:25 they use for this purpose<sup>193</sup> (while also ignoring the fact that the book of Hebrews wasn't written to the body of Christ anyway, but was written specifically to those referred to as Hebrews, aka Israelites). The Greek word ἐπισυναγωγή/“ep-ee-soon-ag-o-gay',” translated as “assembling” in this verse, is never used to refer to “gathering” in the sense that one would use when speaking of “going to church” when it's used in the Bible. In fact, the only other place in Scripture where ἐπισυναγωγή is used is when Paul was talking about the Snatching Away of the body of Christ in his second epistle

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<sup>191</sup> *Where's Your Miracle?* by Justin Johnson: <https://graceambassadors.com/intervention/wheres-your-miracle>

<sup>192</sup> *Why Spiritual Gifts Stopped* by Justin Johnson: <https://graceambassadors.com/spirit/spiritual-gifts/why-spiritual-gifts-stopped>

<sup>193</sup> Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. — Hebrews 10:25

to the Thessalonians,<sup>194</sup> which tells us that the writer was warning his readers against forsaking the hope of being assembled together to Christ when He returns near the end of the Tribulation (also confirmed by the context, as told to us by the words “*as ye see the day approaching*” at the end of the verse), and wasn’t speaking of “going to church” at all (although, while the writer of Hebrews and Paul were both speaking about being gathered to Christ around the time of His return, it is important to remember that there is a difference between the time the members of the body of Christ are gathered to Him in the air at the Snatching Away, and the time the members of the Israel of God are gathered to Him in Israel at His Second Coming<sup>195</sup>). That said, gathering with like minded believers, if you can find them, is still beneficial, so please don’t think I’m saying that one shouldn’t gather with the body if one can find other members nearby, be it on the Sabbath or on any other day.

As far as what day the Sabbath is goes, this is one where various sabbatarian denominations are partially correct, while also being quite wrong about it at the same time. The Sabbath is indeed Saturday, as they claim; nowhere in Scripture does it say that it was changed to Sunday (and Sunday is not the Lord’s Day either; the Lord’s Day – which anyone who understands how possessive apostrophes work should be aware is also known as the Day of the Lord – is an event that hasn’t happened yet,<sup>196</sup> at least not as of the time this book was written). But since those saved under the Gospel of the Uncircumcision are not under the Mosaic law in any way whatsoever, it doesn’t really matter to us what

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<sup>194</sup> Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, — 2 Thessalonians 2:1

<sup>195</sup> *Myths and misunderstandings about the Snatching Away* by Drew Costen: <https://www.universalism.ca/snatching-away>

<sup>196</sup> *WHAT IS “THE LORD’S DAY” OF REVELATION 1:10?* by Shawn Brasseaux: <https://forwhatsaiththescriptures.org/2016/08/13/lords-day-revelation-1-10>

day the Sabbath is.<sup>197</sup> In the very beginning of the church, believers didn't pick one specific day to gather together when they did get together for fellowship; they could meet any day of the week (possibly doing so more than one day a week, and very likely often happening later in the afternoon or evening after work rather than first thing in the morning, based on the fact that some were eating all the food and getting drunk before the poor could arrive at their gatherings, presumably due to having to work later into the day than the rich had to<sup>198</sup>). That said, there's nothing technically wrong with meeting on a Sunday. In fact it's often the most convenient day to do so on at this point in history, since the Institutional Church has managed to convince most people that it is the new Sabbath thanks to the influence it's had over our society, but it's really not any different from any other day of the week so don't feel any obligation to treat it like a special day (if you're a part of the Israel of God, on the other hand, you *do* need to follow the rules in the Mosaic law regarding the Sabbath, which actually begins on Friday at sunset and ends on Saturday at sunset).

And on the topic of esteeming certain days above others, be they new holidays invented by (or pagan holidays that were "Christianized" by) the Institutional Church (such as Lent,<sup>199</sup> such as Easter,<sup>200</sup> and such as Christmas,<sup>201</sup> to name

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<sup>197</sup> *You Do Not Need Holy Sabbath Days* by Justin Johnson: <https://graceambassadors.com/tradition/you-do-not-need-holy-sabbath-days>

<sup>198</sup> For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. — 1 Corinthians 11:21

<sup>199</sup> *Fat Tuesday and Fleshly Fasting* by Justin Johnson: <https://graceambassadors.com/life/fat-tuesday-and-fleshly-fasting>

<sup>200</sup> *SHOULD CHRISTIANS CELEBRATE EASTER? IS IT NOT A PAGAN HOLIDAY?* by Shawn Brasseaux: <https://forwhatsaiththescriptures.org/category/holidays/should-christians-celebrate-easter-holidays>

<sup>201</sup> *How Christ Ruined My Christmas* by Justin Johnson: <https://graceambassadors.com/tradition/holydays/how-christ-ruined-my-christmas>

just three) or days that are observed by Jewish followers of the Mosaic law,<sup>202</sup> while it might not always be a great idea, it's not necessarily wrong to celebrate a specific day if it's something one enjoys doing just for the fun of it (or if it's something one who is weak in faith still feels they need to do<sup>203</sup>). Just realize that none of these days are required for the body of Christ any more than the

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<sup>202</sup> *ARE CHRISTIANS OBLIGATED TO OBSERVE PASSOVER?* by Shawn Brasseaux: <https://forwhatsaiththescriptures.org/2014/04/15/christians-observe-passover>

<sup>203</sup> Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. — Romans 14:1-23

Sabbath is (you won't find any commandments, or even exhortations, in Scripture for the body of Christ to celebrate any of these days), and that nobody should be looked down upon for not participating in these "holy days." And, of course, please be aware of the fact that Jesus didn't actually die on a Friday,<sup>204</sup> wasn't resurrected on the day we call Easter on our modern calendars (which should be more obvious than it seems to be to most people, considering the fact that it's on a different day each year), and almost certainly wasn't born on December 25th either (while it doesn't really matter when He was born, since we aren't told to celebrate His birthday in Scripture, there's good reason to believe it was actually in September or October on our modern calendar<sup>205</sup>). That said, if you're going to celebrate Christmas or Easter, consider doing so mostly from a secular perspective, focusing on the chocolates and eggs and gifts and such. To do otherwise (meaning, to celebrate them as remembrances of Jesus' birth and death) is to know Christ after the flesh, which is something the body of Christ is called to move past.<sup>206</sup>

To sum it all up, we already know that all things are permitted us,<sup>207</sup> so while you certainly can visit Christian church buildings (especially for weddings and the like), and even attend church services and participate in other things that Christians like to do when it comes to church and holidays and such, not all things are a good idea, so please use wisdom if you are going to flirt with such things, because modern Churchianity is not even close to the innocent

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<sup>204</sup> *WAS JESUS CHRIST REALLY CRUCIFIED ON FRIDAY?* by Shawn Brasseaux: <https://forwhatsaiththescriptures.org/category/denominations-cults-false-teaching/was-jesus-christ-really-crucified-on-friday>

<sup>205</sup> *List: Fables Concerning the Nativity of Jesus* by Justin Johnson: <https://graceambassadors.com/tradition/myths-about-the-nativity-of-jesus>

<sup>206</sup> Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. — 2 Corinthians 5:16

<sup>207</sup> All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. — 1 Corinthians 10:23

institution that Christians believe it to be<sup>208</sup> (which should now be very obvious to anyone who has read this whole book from the beginning, not to mention my other books).

Of course, with the rise of Christian Nationalism in certain parts of the world, there is a chance that a Christian theocracy could take control of one or more countries somewhere in the world at some point and mandate church attendance and participation, not to mention require the following of other laws based on misunderstandings of Scripture. And if things ever *do* get that bad, as we already learned, it's best to obey the law, so in that case it might be advisable to play along and attend a Christian church as required by the law. Because ours isn't a religion, it's a faith, which means it takes place entirely within, and what happens outside (church attendance and participation) can't affect what you already know to be true, nor will it affect your salvation or how God feels about you (especially considering the fact that He's in charge of everything that happens, at least from an absolute perspective).

All that being said, while the western world *is* still relatively free (at least as of the time this book was last updated), you now know that you can be free too, from the power of sin and from the fear of hell, as well as from slavery to the many religious rules that were never even biblical to begin with (or, as far as most the rules that *are* biblical go, only ever applied to the Israel of God and not to the body of Christ at all, much less to any Gentiles of the nations). So if you've come to believe the truths I laid out in this book, as well as in my *Biblical Universalism* book, please go enjoy the life of freedom of a Biblical Universalist. And while I pray that this never happens here in the western world prior to the Snatching Away, if you *are* reading this at a point in time when the west has become less free thanks to some sort of religion gaining power over the government (or if you're perhaps instead reading this in a country where some

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<sup>208</sup> *Sex with the devil* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF7.49.pdf>

other religion already controls the laws of the land), if you *have* become a Biblical Universalist (or perhaps a “Concordant” believer, if you prefer that label the way some do), even if you might have to follow certain religious laws in order to remain *physically* free, you’re now still far more *spiritually* free than any Christian is, or than any follower of any other religion is as well.

### Keeping Doctrine In Its Place

Primary Doctrines	Secondary and Tertiary Doctrines	Conscience Matters
Nonnegotiable issues for people who enjoy the <b>special salvation</b> connected with Paul’s Gospel. They are known as the body of Christ (not to be confused with the biblical Israel of God or the unbiblical Christian religion). Be willing to separate over these issues.	Secondary Doctrines* are important issues we <i>should</i> all agree on, but we still shouldn’t separate over disagreements about them, and we definitely shouldn’t separate over disagreements about Tertiary Doctrines (listed in descending orders of importance).	These are issues of personal ethics, and are actions that aren’t necessarily inherently right or wrong. Follow your God-given conscience, don’t cause the weak in faith to stumble, and use wisdom.
<b>PAUL’S GOSPEL (1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4)</b>	<b>WORLDVIEW</b>	• Food
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>General salvation</b> of all, based <b>solely</b> on Christ’s death for our sins</li> <li>• Unconsciousness of Christ while buried (no immortality of the soul)</li> <li>• Physical, bodily resurrection of Christ on the third day</li> <li>• <b>Special salvation</b> is <b>solely</b> through faith the above Gospel is true</li> <li>• Faith for <b>special salvation</b> is a gift of God, not our choice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *God controls <b>all</b> things, including sinful/evil choices and events</li> <li>• *Do not follow the Mosaic law to perfect self or spiritual walk</li> <li>• Mid-Acts vs Acts 28 Dispensationalism (or other related views)</li> <li>• Timing of the Snatching Away and other end-times details</li> <li>• Whether the second death is a literal death or a figurative correction</li> <li>• Pre-existence of Christ</li> <li>• Scriptural manuscripts and Bible versions/translations</li> <li>• Whether miracles currently occur</li> <li>• What rewards one receives at the Judgement Seat of Christ</li> <li>• Whether a true believer can stop believing Paul’s Gospel</li> <li>• The ages (also known as the eons) and the disruption of the world</li> <li>• Age of the earth and whether God used evolution for any creation</li> <li>• Global vs local flood</li> <li>• Shape of the earth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holidays and celebrations</li> <li>• Games and hobbies</li> <li>• Gambling</li> <li>• Music, television, movies, and other media</li> <li>• Personal healthcare decisions</li> <li>• Political views and involvement</li> <li>• Pacifism</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Occupations</li> <li>• Personal finances and donations</li> <li>• Body modification (including tattoos and piercings)</li> <li>• Most matters related to sexuality and relationships</li> <li>• Clothing</li> <li>• Abortion</li> <li>• Drugs (including alcohol and smoking)</li> <li>• Language (including swearing and profanity)</li> </ul>
<b>DOGMA</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inerrancy and authority of Scripture for doctrine today</li> <li>• Impossibility of losing <b>special salvation</b> after believing Paul’s Gospel</li> <li>• God as infinite, personal, and one being (no Trinity or Modalism)</li> <li>• Jesus Christ is the sinless Son of God, not “God the Son”</li> <li>• Mortality (and hence sinfulness) of all humans with human fathers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership within local churches, and if they should even still exist</li> <li>• Whether the Lord’s Supper is still to be practiced (when possible)</li> <li>• How to evangelize</li> </ul>	
<b>PRACTICE</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love God (which includes not worshipping other gods/idols)</li> <li>• Love others (including Christ, believers, and unbelievers)</li> <li>• Do not teach body of Christ members to obey other gospels</li> <li>• Avoid egregious actions that bring the body of Christ into disrepute</li> </ul>		
<b>Please visit <a href="http://www.universalism.ca">www.universalism.ca</a> to learn more about the true body of Christ and actual scriptural theology</b>		

As promised earlier, this is a chart which includes the primary doctrines that members of the body of Christ should all agree on, as well as some of the secondary and tertiary doctrines – not to mention practices – we sometimes disagree on, for reference to help you know which doctrines we should be willing to separate over and which doctrines and practices we should be willing to agree to disagree on if you’ve come to believe Paul’s Gospel after reading my *Biblical Universalism* book and are now in the actual body of Christ.<sup>209</sup>

<sup>209</sup> *Fellowship, and keeping doctrine in its place* by Drew Costen: <https://www.universalism.ca/fellowship-and-keeping-doctrine-in-its-place>

## Conclusion

I could go on and on about the multitude of ideas that those within the Christian religion are confused about thanks to the flawed assumptions they begin with, and a lack of desire to actually take the time to dig into what the Bible really says, preferring to simply accept what their religious leaders teach instead, but that should be more than enough to explain why I couldn't ever return to Christianity and why I no longer "go to church." Of course, at this point the real question isn't why I couldn't return to the Christian religion, but why you yourself might still consider having anything to do with such an unscriptural, not to mention harmful, institution (and why you would risk your soul within its "sanctuaries").

Just as I said in the conclusion of my *Biblical Universalism* book about the doctrines contained within it, nearly everything in this book should really be considered a part of "Scripture 101," and everyone who has read through the Word of God should already be completely familiar with most of what I've covered. However, just as it is when it comes to all the doctrines I discussed in *that* book (which technically includes the doctrines I discussed in this book as well), I suspect that most of what I've written *here* is brand new for many who are reading it for the first time too. Sadly, it seems Satan's false apostles, deceitful workers, and ministers of righteousness within Churchianity<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. — 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

(aka the vain talkers and deceivers<sup>211</sup> who are leading and teaching the followers of the Christian religion today) have hijacked the Bible, convincing billions that Scripture is actually a much more conservative set of documents than it really is (not to mention convincing them that it's a rulebook which every human alive is expected to follow in its entirety), and have also managed to deceive billions into thinking that God is capable of allowing never-ending torture to occur, or is at least willing to leave the majority of humans to remain dead permanently (with both false teachings causing people to reject God altogether thanks to the monstrous false image of God we've been told is the real God). These lies, along with the other errors that seem to keep the majority of humanity (including most Christians) from experiencing "everlasting life," making the Christian religion the most nefarious cult there is (yes, that's what the Christian religion really is). The actual truths of Scripture set people completely free,<sup>212</sup> but the traditional, "orthodox" teachings of Christianity only enslave people through its unscriptural rules, unnecessary shame, unloving discrimination, and threats of unending punishment (although it's important to also keep in mind that, at least from an absolute perspective, it's not ultimately the fault of those people who are leading the Christian religion that this is so<sup>213</sup>).

Unfortunately, this means that some who have made it all the way through this book might not be sure what to believe, or will think it's so foreign to what they were taught growing up that they'll simply reject it out of hand, which could just mean that God hasn't chosen them to be a member of the body of Christ, or at least perhaps hasn't called them yet. However, for those chosen few of you who do dig deeper and then realize that you need to reject organized religion

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<sup>211</sup> For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: — Titus 1:10

<sup>212</sup> And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. — John 8:32

<sup>213</sup> *Lies in the mouths of prophets* by Martin Zender: <https://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF8.3.pdf>

and the teachings and practices of Christianity, you'll be left wondering what you should do instead. Well, first of all, it means that you get to sleep in on Sunday (or Saturday) mornings if you want to (at least as of the time this book was written, since we don't live under a Christian theocracy at present). Beyond that, however, if you can find a nearby church that *actually* believes what Scripture says, it might be a good group to check out. That said, many, if not most, of the members of the body of Christ have to go it fairly alone, or at least without a local church to fellowship with, since it seems there are very few members of the body of Christ in any particular area. I should say that this is not a new problem; the church made up of the body of Christ has been extremely small from almost the beginning, and I'd be surprised to see this change before Jesus comes for His body. As I've said elsewhere, it fell into apostasy and people separated from it very early on,<sup>214</sup> some of these divisions and separations from Paul's Gospel and the actual body of Christ becoming the so-called Orthodox and Catholic denominations we know today (a number of the so-called "Early Church Fathers" of these denominations, Polycarp and Irenaeus for example, were from the very province that Paul said "all" had turned away from him in during his imprisonment,<sup>215</sup> which makes any of their teachings, and then any of the later teachings by those who accepted their teachings, suspect to begin with), and it seems to have never regained its original size.

This means that, if you can't find any fellow members to fellowship with where you live, you should just keep studying the Scriptures. You're far better off not participating in any church gathering than you are participating in

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<sup>214</sup> *The Myth of the First Century Church* by Justin Johnson: <https://graceambassadors.com/tradition/history/the-myth-of-the-first-century-church>

<sup>215</sup> This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. — 2 Timothy 1:15

Churchianity,<sup>216</sup> so I'd suggest leaving the Institutional Church behind completely if you're able to.<sup>217</sup> Yes, it's beneficial to fellowship with like-minded believers if you can find them, but you won't find many, if any, of them in the Christian denominations, at least not if you happen to agree with the conclusions I've come to in this and my other books. That said, at least as of the time this particular edition of this book was written, we do have a Discord server (which is a sort of online chat room), and there are also a number of other websites and YouTube channels for English speaking members of of the body of Christ, many of which you can find linked to on the *Concordant Gospel Resources* webpage (along with the link to the Discord server), so please check them out.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> *How To Quit Church Without Quitting God* by Martin Zender: [https://www.martinzender.com/books/htqc\\_pb\\_enlarged.htm](https://www.martinzender.com/books/htqc_pb_enlarged.htm)

<sup>217</sup> But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. — 2 Timothy 2:20-21

<sup>218</sup> *Concordant Gospel Resources* curated by Drew Costen: <https://www.concordantgospel.com>