

**“Mark them
...and avoid them”**

God’s no-contact ruling

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In this end-time, God is sounding a critical warning message of repentance to His people. We must urgently seek Him and ensure our ways are in accordance with His. In Zech 3:8, God warns and admonishes us to walk in His ways! We *must* take heed if we are to be accounted worthy to escape the coming Great Tribulation (Rev. 3:10).

To help us walk in His ways, God clearly outlines a no-contact ruling within the pages of His Bible. This ruling has been misunderstood, misapplied or disregarded over the years; the greater majority of God's people still don't understand it! Exactly how are we to apply the no-contact ruling? It is now time to understand!

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Chapter 1

Works of the flesh

Satan is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). He has been successful in blinding the world at large, but has also blinded many of God's people in this end-time (Rev. 3:17). What a tragedy!

Many individuals spoken of in the pages of the Bible knew the power of the enemy which they were up against. Notice the following quote in which King David cried out to God:

“Consider mine enemies; for they are many;
and they hate me with cruel hatred” (Ps. 25:19).

Here we see David speaking about spiritual wickedness in high places warring against him. David understood the power of the enemy; he knew that he was a target of Satan the devil and turned to God for help. Evidently, the effects of the enemy against him were getting stronger and more difficult to fight (Ps. 25:17).

God's people must never underestimate Satan's power. Each of us must understand that, today, Satan has a bull's eye on each of our backs and is vehemently working to line up his scope. We are in aggressive spiritual warfare! Just as in any war, there are victims and there are survivors. We need to know what to look out for and how to react when we face Satan and his destructive tactics, lest we become another victim. Understanding our enemy and knowing the subtlety in which he operates is the only way to be better prepared to fight this war - and win.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,
but against principalities, against powers,
against the rulers of the darkness of this world,

against spiritual wickedness in high places”
(Eph. 6:12).

God’s people war against wicked and malicious spirits. The world, ruled by Satan the devil, is in a spiritual state of darkness as he inspires evil and leads wicked, carnal men on this earth. We are in a spiritual war and we must exert absolute resistance to sin and temptation if we are to win. To be successful and prevail, we must put on the whole armor of God *and* feverishly supplicate our Father:

“Wherefore take unto you the *whole armour of God* that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the *breastplate of righteousness*; And your *feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*; Above all, taking the *shield of faith*, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the *helmet of salvation*, and the *sword of the Spirit*, which is the word of God: *Praying always* with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints”
(Eph. 6:13-18).

While prayer is not part of the spiritual armor, it is one of the tools (together with fasting) which accompanies it and keeps it all securely fastened and intact. We must effectively use the available armor and aggressively employ the spiritual tools so that we can reject, successfully resist and have victory over the attacks leveled upon us by Satan the Devil.

Satan is sly and cunning and walks about ‘seeking whom he may devour’ (1 Pet. 5:8). He uses various tricks as he sets out to deceive and allure us into his perverted lifestyle. Notice what is told to us in Galatians 5:19-21:

“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”.

The ‘works of the flesh’ represent the state of individuals who are not led by the Spirit of God. These works represent various characteristics of evil human nature which lead man into committing all kinds of crime against God and His law. The above verses are clear in saying that if the ‘works of the flesh’ are manifest in us, we will not inherit the Kingdom of God - ***unless we repent*** (Lk. 13:5)!

Let us now take a brief look at the “works of the flesh” to understand what we must guard against:

Adultery

- acts of sexual immorality *after* marriage which defiles the marriage bed. Adultery is a result of the flesh rebelling against God’s laws of marriage and comes about because of a selfish desire to satisfy the flesh. The mind can easily drift if not restrained: God says that if you ‘look on a woman in lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart’ (Matt. 5:28). We must guard our thoughts and ensure they are in accordance with God’s will!

Fornication

- sin which violates God’s moral law of sex *before* marriage. The sin of fornication completely goes against God’s law of marriage and family, marital responsibility and blatantly rejects the necessity of

God's approval of a marital relationship. Sex is the intimate union which God wants reserved for marriage between a husband and a wife; fornication violates the sanctity of marriage and also steals from a future marriage union. Scripture admonishes us to flee fornication (1 Cor. 6:13, 18)!

Uncleanness

- negative attitudes and vices which the mind dwells upon, and which the body then commits. We must guard our minds because the tiniest seeds of thought develop into words and actions! Uncleanness refers to thoughts, words and actions which conflict with God's nature and hinders His plan to create holy, righteous character within us. An unrepentant individual will find it difficult to access God through prayer because He does not – and will not – dwell with sin. Caution must be exercised when choosing what to allow into our mind, including the types of films that are watched, the music that is listened to, the environment chosen to live and spend time in, pornography, questionable pastimes and hobbies, and more. Christians need to constantly ask themselves questions such as: What would Christ do in this situation? How would He react? Would He approve? What would He say in a given situation? Galatians 5:21 tells us that the unclean person will not inherit the Kingdom of God (see also 1 Cor. 4:7). We must resist temptation and overcome our carnal human nature as we grow and build holy righteous character (Phil. 2:5). Anything short of promoting the glory of God lends itself to uncleanness. We must humbly strive to stir up the spirit of God and allow it to produce its fruits of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Christ's conduct is what we must emulate.

Lasciviousness

- refers to arrogance, insolence, indecent speech, coarse joke-telling, licentious dress etc. We must be careful to not attract undue attention to ourselves through our words and actions. It would be wise to question the motivation behind our words and actions. Lasciviousness has to do with saying and doing what is right *in our own eyes*; it has to do with feeling unrestrained to do whatsoever pleases self, while giving little or no thought to God's standards and laws! Lasciviousness refers to shameless conduct that tends to excite lustful desires, vulgar acts, filthy language and more.

Idolatry

- rebelling against the worship of the one true God. Idolatry refers to placing anything before God including money, material goods, work, sports etc. Idolatry leads to covetousness and vice versa. Pleasing and gratifying the flesh often allows God to slip into second place. Idolatry may be defined as anything that comes between us and God. Idolatry not only hinders, but destroys our relationship with God (Ex. 34:14).

Witchcraft

- this refers to sorcery, spiritism, tarrot card reading, astrology, psychics, and séances; God calls these "detestable practices" (Deut. 18:9-14; 2 Chron, 33:2, 6). We are also told that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft (1 Sam. 15:23). Furthermore, note the Greek word for 'witchcraft' is 'pharmakeia' which is where the English word 'pharmacy' is derived. Rev. 21:8 states:

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and *sorcerers*, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death".

"Sorcerers" is 5332 in the Greek and is translated from the word 'pharmakeus'. Strong's tells us that this word

is a “drug that is a spell giving potion”. Clearly, this is referring to the use and misuse of drugs. An individual who uses drugs is placed on a perverted “high” and allows the mind to be opened up to all kinds of wrong practices that allow demon influence and insanity. Certain strong medication also falls into this category. ‘Pharmakeus’ refers to mind-altering drugs/substances which open the mind to demonic influence. God warns us to keep away from witchcraft, drugs and anything else that opens up the mind to demonic manipulation!

Hatred

- when resentment or contempt overtake us, which lead to hatred. Disputes must be solved by forgiving those who wrong us. Hatred stirs up strife and discord (Pro. 10:12), and is also the root cause of murder (1 Jn. 3:15). Vengeance is God’s (Ps. 94:1).

Variance

- refers to discord, strife, fighting, quarrelling, arguing, reproach, use of scandalous vocabulary which brings about division and disunity between individuals, and between us and God (Pro. 6:16-19). God and His Son are one; they represent total and perfect unity (Jn. 10:30). As Christians, we must strive for unity and harmony in our relationships and exchanges with others.

Emulations

- refers to jealousy, suspicion, envy, excessive ambition. We must be thankful for the talents we possess and for the blessings which God has abundantly showered upon us. If we find ourselves pushing and promoting ourselves to be noticed, or seeking attention above recognizing the talents of others, it is often because there is deep rooted jealousy which we must overcome. Emulations or jealousy leads to vanity which destroys self and personal relationships (Prov. 6:34).

Wrath

- refers to bad temper, anger, violent emotions, revenge, passionate outbursts. These often lay dormant within us, sometimes waiting for the slightest opportunity to be expressed. This desire of the flesh, or human nature, tends to strike out at anything that threatens self interests. Outbursts of anger give place to the devil and his vices. (See Eph 4:26). Prov. 16:32 tells us to rule the spirit and keep our emotions in check. The Christian must not be involved in bursts of anger or wrath, but must instead be gentle to all (2 Tim. 2:24). We must set the proper example to the world!

Strife

- trying to set aside others who might 'threaten' us in any way, including constant and continuous contradictions and controversy. This is talking about doing what it takes to 'succeed' no matter who, or how many people, we wound in the process. Competition often ends up in strife and division. (See Phil 2:3).

Seditions

- disunity, division, troublemaking, rebellion: we must aggressively resist anything that identifies with, or supports, these selfish interests.

Heresies

- having sets of principles which are a result of man's inventions and are at variance with God's established principles (see 2 Tim. 2:23). Controversy over 'grey areas' must be absolutely avoided as this type of disputing may result in sliding down some very slippery slopes. This normally brings about dissention and rebellion within the Body of Christ. Do not be at variance with God's established principles.

Envyings

- looking at another individual's success with a desire to be in his/her place. (See Gen 4:4-5; Acts 7:9; 1 Sam 18:8-9; Acts 13:45; Matt 27:18). Envy is the opposite of love!

Murders

- the destruction of human life. He who hates his brother is a murderer (1 Jn. 3:15). We must learn to replace hate with love (1 Jn. 4:8). For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (2 Cor. 10:3). Of course, abortion constitutes the violation of God's sixth commandment.

Drunkenness

- the use of alcohol as an artificial means of escape, or as an escape from facing responsibilities. The moment too much alcohol is consumed (i.e. more than is necessary for health), it quickly turns into an intoxication of the mind (or mind altering substance). We need to be in full control of our faculties. Read the following scriptures to see the moral and spiritual effect of drunkenness: Prov 31:5; Isa 5:22-23; Prov 20:1; Prov 23:29; Eph 5:1; Joel 3:3; Gen 9:21; Isa 5:12.

Revelings

- excess: the breaking of God's moral laws through lascivious, rebellious feasting.

The works of the flesh do not come from God, but from Satan. Notice Galatians 5:21 again:

*“I have also told you in time past, that *they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*”.*

Is it not so very obvious why we should keep the flesh under strict control? Left to its own devices, the flesh does not honor or respect God or His ways. Human nature rejects God's

right to direct and discipline our lives according to His laws and ways. If we give in to any of these sins of the flesh which are listed in Galatians 5, we are to one degree or another, giving in to Satan and allowing him to use us to promote his cause! Giving in to the sins or works of the flesh allows us to become controlled by Satan the devil. We are servants to those whom we obey (Rom. 6:16)!

Chapter 2

Enforce God's no-contact ruling now!

In the pages of the Bible, God clearly outlines a no contact ruling. This ruling has been misunderstood and misapplied by many, especially in this end-time. God's no-contact ruling is a subject which must be understood if we are to

correctly implement it, and get ourselves ready as the Bride of Jesus Christ!

Notice Rom. 6:16:

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”

The works of the flesh listed in Galatians 5:19-21 and discussed in chapter 1 of this booklet are works which are inspired by Satan the devil. Romans 6:16 confirms that we are servants to whom we obey, indicating that if we employ the works of the flesh to any degree (Gal. 5:19-21), we are in obedience to Satan the devil! Notice further:

“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart *that form of doctrine* which was delivered you” (Rom. 6:17).

To which doctrine is Rom. 6:17 referring? Verse 19 helps us understand:

“I speak after... *[editors' note: 'I am referring to']*...the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh *[editors' note: 'because of the weakness or works of your flesh' as outlined in Galatians 5:19-21]*: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness *[editors' note: another clear reference to Galatians 5]* and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness”.

Isn't it so very clear that the doctrine delivered to the Church refers to the works of the flesh and the fruit of the

Spirit outlined in the fifth chapter of Galatians? Are not these the foundational doctrines which were given to the Church by Christ and the original apostles? Galatians 5 outlines the ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ which were delivered to the Church!

When people manifest the works of the flesh that we read about in Galatians 5:19-21, what are we expected to do? Notice Romans 16:17-18:

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.* For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly [*their own flesh*]; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple”.

We must understand what God is telling us! We are here commanded to keep away from those that manifest the works of the flesh in their lives. Individuals who manifest the works of the flesh do not serve God – but serve their own bellies or their own flesh! Individuals who serve their own flesh, (or who manifest the works of the flesh in their lives), serve Satan the devil. Romans 16:17-18 commands us to be separate from that way of life. God *commands* us to do this! ***God tells us not to keep company with those who are unrepentant fornicators, adulterers, drug addicts, drunkards, wrathful, unclean, heretical etc.*** We are told not to keep company with these individuals because the works of the flesh will rub off on us and will damage our spiritual well-being; especially in areas we might be overcoming or where we are weak! Romans 16:18 states, ‘good words and fair speech’ do deceive! God wants us to make a clean and complete break from evil (Gal. 5:19-21), so that we can successfully stir up the Spirit of God and allow It to produce Its fruits in our lives (Gal. 5:22-24).

Notice the point is further stressed in 1 Cor. 5:9-11, where the works of the flesh are once again listed:

“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; *with such an one no not to eat*”.

Here is another scripture commanding us not to eat (or not to keep company with) those who manifest the sins of the flesh outlined in Galatians 5! **God wants us to strictly apply the no-contact ruling on those who unrepentantly manifest the sins of the flesh!** If we allow ourselves to get too close to the ways of the world, Satan will lull us into a false sense of security and will overtake us through the lusts of the flesh.

1 Cor. 5:13 is yet another scripture which we must refer to in the context of rejecting evil:

“Therefore put away [*remove*] from among yourselves that wicked person”.

1 Cor 5:13 again clearly tells us to remove ourselves from the one who manifests the works of the flesh! Galatians 5:19-21 lists these works of the flesh, while Galatians 5:22-23 point us to keep company with those who will help foster the correct environment for the manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit in our lives! This is what character building is all about: resisting evil and stirring up the spirit of God.

Galatians 5 lists the doctrines which were given to the Church. Our goal is to build holy, righteous character so that we could be accounted worthy to be born as sons into the Family of God; and the way we are to do this is by resisting the

works of the flesh and fleeing those who manifest those works. We must replace the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit! If we don't *remove ourselves* from the lifestyle that promotes the works of the flesh, *we will become a product of that environment*. That is why God tells us to remove ourselves from it! There are no grey areas - if we, in any way, compromise with the sins/works of the flesh, we give in to Satan's ways and allow him to dig a foothold into our lives... whether it is placing another god before Him, using the wrong language, excess drinking and so on. God tells us to shun that lifestyle so we may develop the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5) and enter the Kingdom of God. There is no room for compromise; it is time to do whatever it takes to get ourselves ready as the Bride of Christ! Don't give in to grey areas, or sit on the fence! The moment we allow this to happen is when the line between righteousness and unrighteousness becomes blurry - and that's exactly what Satan wants! Do not give in to his deceptive vices!

Notice Ephesians 5:1-11:

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But *fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*” [editors' note: Is this not referring to the works of the flesh as listed in Gal. 5? These are the doctrines given to the Church!] “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the

wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them”.

What are the works of darkness? They are the works of the flesh! God is here listing the same principles and doctrines which are outlined in Galatians 5, and these scriptures make it crystal clear that we are to ‘not have fellowship’ with those who manifest or promote the works of the flesh! In no uncertain terms, we are to keep away from unrepentant fornicators, adulterers, drunkards, those given in to strife, seditions, drugs. Scripture commands that we don’t have any part with those who take part in idolatry, witchcraft, emulations, wrath, revelry and so on. Eph. 5:6 tells us not to allow anyone to deceive us or talk us into situations which can ruin a lifetime of character building. Satan is very sly, manipulative and deceitful, and he will do his utmost to entertain us into situations which will subtly lead us to compromise God’s values. God tells us to shun those who promote the works of the flesh and to instead work at replacing evil with good. We have a responsibility to teach these doctrines to our children so that they will grow up in the way that they should go (Prov. 22:6)! Notice verses 15 to 20:

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart

to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

We are living in a time when we should be found aggressively working to rescue ourselves from the evil works of the flesh, and from those who promote these works! Zech. 3:8 clearly states that God’s people must ‘walk in His ways’ and we must do this by, first of all, shunning the evil works of the flesh! Eph. 5:18 admonishes us to **replace evil with good!** *We must understand this biblical ruling and urgently live by it.*

There is one final section of scripture which we must discuss to conclude this section of the study on the works of the flesh. Notice 1 Cor. 6:9-20:

“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.* And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God ... Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body... Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. 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*^{G5343} 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".

Scripture tells us to flee^{G5343} the works of the flesh! This means we must 'shun' or 'run away' from the works of the flesh. This is the attitude God wants us to have when it comes to resisting temptation. He wants us to have no part of it! This is how we can ensure it doesn't have a negative effect on us. We must take this seriously and not allow room for compromise.

It must be pointed out that there are some in this end-time who misrepresent and misapply God's no-contact ruling and use it to further their own selfish, unbiblical agenda. They state that they must 'mark' and 'avoid' ALL those who leave their organization irrespective of the reason why they choose to do so. They claim that shunning those who leave their organization will help them to see their 'error', 'repent' and return to the organization. This is a gross misrepresentation of God's ruling and constitutes a form of unbiblical blackmail. It must be understood that God's no-contact ruling was not instituted to help those who are shunned, *but to help those who are doing the shunning*. God instituted the no-contact ruling to protect His people from being lured (in any way) *by the works of the flesh*. The misuse of God's no-contact ruling has brought about much ungodly division and shameful destruction among God's people – something that God does not condone (Eph. 4:3).

On the 14th of February, 1941, Mr. Armstrong wrote ten daily questions in the Co-Workers bulletin. They are simple, basic questions which he encouraged the brethren to review

every day in their effort to stamp out Satan and the pulls of the flesh from their lives. Even though they were written decades ago, they are very much applicable to us today:

- 1) Did I awake spiritual, in a happy, prayerful attitude, and was I watchful to keep my mind from wandering this morning?
- 2) Have I, this day, kept my mind clean, my thoughts and contemplations on “the things above”, in continuous happy, positive, prayerful attitude?
- 3) Have I, partaken three times today of spiritual food, by submissive Bible study and earnest prayer ALONE with GOD? Have I grown closer to GOD? Have I GROWN today in grace and knowledge?
- 4) Have I walked by FAITH, asking GOD for wisdom and guidance in all things, committing every little problem to HIM, trusting HIM with it?
- 5) Have I exercised self-discipline, denying impulse [DENYING PULLS OF THE FLESH], doing what GOD’s Word shows I ought to do instead of what I WANTED to do?
- 6) Was my speech and conversation today kind, cheerful, soft?
- 7) Have I exercised patience today? Have I been charitable toward others, showing tolerance and LOVE, or resentment, jealousy and anger?

8) Have I, while putting spiritual interests FIRST, been diligent in performing my regular material duties today, doing my VERY BEST?

9) Have I made the most of my time, or been weakened by unwatchfulness?

10) What have I done today for GOD's Work and for others? Have I spent most of my time today to please myself that could have been saved for GOD's cause?

We must take Mr. Armstrong's admonition and review these questions daily. They will help place us on a good footing to better resist the pulls of the flesh and conquer Satan the devil. We must become better soldiers for Christ by using His help and doing all we can to fight and have victory over the works of the flesh.

Chapter 3

Study yourself

As God's begotten children, we have a serious responsibility to carefully ensure that our words and actions are in accordance with His will. 2 Tim. 2:15 tells us to "Study to show yourself approved unto God". This scripture emphatically tells us that we are to *study* if we are to be acceptable before God. The question is: what *exactly* is this section of scripture admonishing us to study? The word "study" is a translation from the Greek word "Spoudazo". Strong's Concordance defines this word as, 'to use *speed*, that is, to make *effort*, be *prompt* or *earnest*, do diligence, be *diligent*, endeavor, *labor*, *study*'. Whatever it is that we are to

study, we are encouraged to do it diligently and with a sense of urgency. Back to the scripture: What is it that we are to study if we are to show ourselves approved unto God? Of course, the study of our Bible is of utmost importance. However, only studying the Bible will not make us ‘approved unto God’! We can study all we like but without applying what we learn, our study is largely in vain. Notice the Amplified Bible translation of 2 Tim. 2:15:

“Study *and be eager and do your utmost* to present *yourself* to God approved, *tested by trial...*”.

The Amplified Bible translation includes the literal meaning of the Greek word ‘spoudazo’, thus giving us a clearer interpretation. We must certainly study God’s Word to know what to apply, and how we can apply it, if we are to take on His character. We must study Christ and His character so that we know what we must emulate, and how we have to become. Interestingly, many foreign language Bible translations state the following for 2 Timothy 2:15:

“Study *yourself* to present yourself before God as a man approved!”

There it is! This is possibly *the most* concise and literal translation of this section of scripture. Read that translation of this scripture again. It tells us that we are to study *ourselves*. We *must* do this to see how we measure up to Christ and the character of God! We must see if the works of the flesh manifest themselves in our lives – and if so, to what degree? To show ourselves approved before God we must study ourselves, eliminate wrongdoing and take on the character of Christ which we learn from the Word in print! 2 Timothy 2:15 is all about ‘self examination’: taking a *close* look at ourselves, seeing how we measure up with the character of Christ, acknowledging our error, and then doing the right which will prepare and make us “approved unto God”! We must study the

Bible to know what to apply but ***we must also study ourselves to know where our character needs changing, and then we need to change it to conform to Christ's character as directed through the Word of God!***

The Bible admonishes us to ‘examine’ ourselves before Passover (1 Cor. 11:28). It also tells us to prepare ourselves as the Bride of Christ (Lk. 12:40). This requires *deep* ‘self examination’ which includes testing, proving, discerning and trying ourselves. “Spoudazo” (study: 2 Tim. 2:15) tells us that this is to be a *laborious* process of self examination and therefore indicates that it is to be detailed and exhaustive. Importantly, the attitude and manner in which we examine ourselves reveals something vital about us to God: it shows how badly we want to be ruled by Him, and how deeply we desire to become like Him! It also reveals the depth of our conversion.

As we have seen, God emphasizes that we are to *examine* ourselves, *repent* and *overcome* (Rom 12:21). We are to ***exercise the mind of Christ and let His mind be in us*** (Phil 2:5)! How can we do this effectively if we continue in sin, or if we are complacent about changing our wrong habits? When we compromise with the tiniest of sins, we run the risk of it growing and getting out of control, making it much more difficult to overcome. (Remember the mustard seed parallel – it is the tiniest of seeds that grows into the largest of trees! The same is true with sin – it starts out small and always grows, unless there is repentance). If we are serious about repentance and overcoming, we must cut sin down and root it out of our lives.

As we prepare ourselves as the Bride of Christ, we must take the time to search every crevice of our being, “bringing into captivity *every thought* to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:5). No matter how well we know our Bibles, or how long we may have been in the Church, we are all still sinners (1

John 1:10). We are all carnal and subject to human nature, which is hostile toward God and His ways:

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7).

Judgment is now upon the House of God (1 Pet. 4:17). It is now time to make ourselves ready as the Bride of Christ. We must ensure that we laboriously and meticulously work to eradicate any trace of the works of the flesh that may have taken refuge in our lives.

We must never relent in our effort to eradicate sin out of our lives but continue to fight against the flesh: ***resist, fight, stand firm and shun the lifestyle Satan tries to impose on us.*** We must *apply God's no contact ruling now* and replace the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal. 5:22-23). As stated in Galatians 5:25, “if we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit” and prepare ourselves to inherit the Kingdom of God!

We are here to help! Please feel free to contact us should you have any questions. Our address is: Faithful Church of God in Laodicea, P.O. Box 311021, Capitol Heights, Maryland 20731, USA. Email: info@fcogl.org. Our web address is: www.fcogl.org

Please address all letters to “Faithful Church of God in Laodicea” and not to an individual so that the post office will not return your letter to you.