

This letter is from Paul, John, and Peter. We are writing to the Church in Warsaw, to you who belong to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Dear brothers and sisters, we can't help but thank God for you, because your faith is flourishing and your love for one another is growing.¹ We have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better. We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. **He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.² So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call.** May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do. Then the name of the Lord Jesus will be honored because of the way you live, and you will be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ.³

Since this new way gives us such confidence, we can be very bold. We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away. But the people's minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ. Yes, even today when they read Moses' writings, their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand. But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. **And the Lord -- who is the Spirit -- makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.⁴**

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the Law of Moses. When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the

¹ 2 Thessalonians 1:3

² Colossians 1:9-14

³ 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.⁵

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God. Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes...these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. Don't participate in the things these people do.⁶ Don't be misled -- you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.⁷

There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don't seem to listen. You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong. So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding.⁸

Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I'm going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives.⁹ Everything we do, dear friends, is to strengthen you.¹⁰ Have I now become your enemy because I am telling you the truth?¹¹ I will gladly spend myself and all I have for you, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me.¹² Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think

⁵ Galatians 5:16-25

⁶ Ephesians 5:1-7

⁷ Galatians 6:7-9

⁸ Hebrews 5:11-6:3

⁹ Galatians 4:19

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 12:19

¹¹ Galatians 4:16

¹² 2 Corinthians 12:15

only about this life here on earth. But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.¹³ **As God's partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it.** For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation.¹⁴ Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith. As you test yourselves, I hope you will recognize that we have not failed the test of apostolic authority.¹⁵

I want you to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want you to have complete confidence that you understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments. For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong. And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. **For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. So you also are complete through your union with Christ,** who is the head over every ruler and authority. When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision -- the cutting away of your sinful nature. For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.¹⁶ **So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.** Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do.¹⁷ Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. **Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.**¹⁸

Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.¹⁹ Make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. **Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.**²⁰ **Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.** For God is working in you, giving you the desire

¹³ Philippians 3:17-20

¹⁴ 2 Corinthians 6:1-2

¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 13:5-6

¹⁶ Colossians 2:2-12

¹⁷ Ephesians 5:15-17

¹⁸ Colossians 3:10-11

¹⁹ Ephesians 4:1-3

²⁰ Philippians 2:2-5

and the power to do what pleases him. Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.²¹

You should know this, church, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. **They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!**²² They have depraved minds and a counterfeit faith.²³ But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. You have been taught the Holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.²⁴ So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News. For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time -- to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. **And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News.**²⁵

Hold on to the pattern of wholesome teaching you learned from me -- a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus. **Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you.**²⁶ Everything is pure to those whose hearts are pure. But nothing is pure to those who are corrupt and unbelieving, because their minds and consciences are corrupted. Such people claim they know God, but they deny him by the way they live. They are detestable and disobedient, worthless for doing anything good.²⁷ Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.²⁸ And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching. Teach the truth so that your teaching can't be criticized. Then those who oppose us will be ashamed and have nothing bad to say about us. Teach the people to be faithful employees in their workplace; this is a bonus to their employers. They should always be agreeable to do the work they are asked. They should not backtalk or steal from their workplace, but show

²¹ Philippians 2:12-15

²² 2 Timothy 3:1-5

²³ 2 Timothy 3:8

²⁴ 2 Timothy 3:14-17

²⁵ 2 Timothy 1:8-10

²⁶ 2 Timothy 1:13-14

²⁷ Titus 1:15-16

²⁸ 2 Timothy 2:22

themselves entirely trustworthy and good. Then they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive in every way. For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. **He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds. You must teach these things and encourage the believers to do them. You have the authority to correct them when necessary, so don't let anyone disregard what you say.**²⁹

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. **The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.** So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things and you will never fall away. Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore, I will always remind you about these things, even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught. And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live.³⁰

God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the Day of Judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.³¹ Those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. **Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.**³²

Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.³³

Brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.³⁴

²⁹ Titus 2:7-15

³⁰ 2 Peter 1:3-13

³¹ 1 John 4:13, 17

³² 1 John 2:5-6

³³ 1 John 5:21

³⁴ 2 Corinthians 13:11