

Does the Lord's Presence Remain with Christians That Persist in Sinful Lifestyles?

The title of this article is a provocative question. It was meant to be confrontational and challenge long-held ideas, but it will end on a positive note. Sometimes you must dismantle some things to build them up correctly. Old rundown buildings will have to be gutted to fix them up. Have you ever seen the shows on TV where they renovate old homes and buildings? They start by using sledgehammers and other implements to gut the house or building, and sometimes they tear the place apart until you wonder how they are going to renovate it!

Construction often begins with destruction of the old before something new and beautiful can be built. Spiritually, that is sometimes required. (See Jeremiah 1:10.)

Plowing always comes before planting, watering, and harvest. Consider this article plowing, so that the seed of God's words can be sown, and a mighty harvest can be produced! (See Isaiah 28:24-29, Mark 4:14-20.)

You may have quoted the words from the book of Hebrews, "*I will never leave you or forsake you*" (Hebrews 13:5). I have quoted it. Jesus said at His ascension, "*I am with you always*" (Matthew 28:20). He also taught us in John 14:16 that the Helper or Advocate (the Holy Spirit) would be with us forever (John 14:16). These are glorious and powerful truths, and I treasure them.

As blessed as those promises are, they do not stand-alone or exist without context, accountability, or zero responsibility.

Christian misuse of these promises leaves a very wrong impression.

Most Christians believe that the presence of the Lord will continue with a person regardless of their *persistently wrong lifestyle of sin*. I am not referring to you if you sin as a believer and repent of your sin according to Luke 13:3, 5 and 1 John 1:9. On those occasions, we have the grace or provision of God in the blood of Jesus available to us. I am not referring to the follower of Jesus that may sin, but sin is not their lifestyle. I am specifically referring to those that have made sin a lifestyle even though they call themselves Christians. That is my question. Will the Lord abide with Christians forever even if they are practicing lawlessness?

Let's study this with Scripture. Our opinions are useless here. We need to see Scripture in context, and with more than one isolated text on the subject. That is the beginning of seeing the truth. Get many Scriptures on the same subject, and trust in the Spirit of the Lord for revelation and understanding.

According to Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus will command those that practice lawlessness to depart from Him because He never knew them.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:21-23 NET)

What does that mean? Don't let the words of Jesus "I never knew you" confuse you into thinking that the Lord meant *the person* didn't ever know Him. Jesus did not say THEY never knew Him. He said that He never knew them. They rejected the Lord with their mouth and actions through lawlessness and now it was the Lord's turn to reject them for eternity. "I never knew you" are words of denial and rejection in line with the following Scripture from the words of Jesus:

But the one who denies and rejects Me before men, that one I will also deny and reject before My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:33 Amplified)

The Lord will say those terrible words of rejection, ***“I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”*** That will happen, even though at one time they were used miraculously. How did the Lord use them miraculously? Obviously, these were at one time followers of the Lord Jesus, but later in life, they followed a path of breaking God's moral laws and they rejected or denied the Lord. I know that this does not fit in with much of modern theology in evangelical Christianity, but Jesus taught it in the verses in Matthew 7:21-23. Are we going to believe His words or man-made religious ideas?

According to Jesus, *believers* that die being practitioners of lawlessness will be told to depart from the Lord. Why do I say *believers*? Do you think the Lord would authorize *unbelievers* to prophecy in His Name, cast out demons in His Name, and do wonders in His Name? No, He would not.

The ones Jesus was speaking about in Matthew 7:21-23 were NOT like the sons of Sceva that tried casting out demons in the Name of the Jesus that Paul preached and got run out of town naked and battered! (Acts 19:13-16) Those men were not authorized to do anything for them Lord Jesus. They were not followers of Jesus. The things that Jesus was referring to that were done in His Name were things reserved for true believers or followers of Jesus. They were the kind of believers referred to in Mark 16: 17, 18.

¹⁷These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak in new languages. ¹⁸They will be able to handle snakes with safety, and if they drink anything poisonous, it won't hurt them. They will be able

to place their hands on the sick, and they will be healed.” (Mark 16:17, 18 NLT) ¹

Signs will follow *believers in the Name of Jesus*, and not unbelievers. Notice how the Lord added “in your Name” after each miraculous sign. Why? Jesus was referring to those authorized to do these things on behalf of the Lord.

Do you know that we have numerous biblical examples of those that started out with God, but began practicing lawlessness, and finally wound up in the “dung heap?”

Judas Iscariot is a case in point.

Judas Is. began as an anointed disciple of Jesus sent to heal the sick and to cast out demons. (See Matthew 10:1-8.) Do you remember that Judas Iscariot was one of the original twelve apostles anointed to do a supernatural work on behalf of the Lord? Judas Is. walked in supernatural power for a time, but something changed in him. In the process of time, Judas Is. turned to covetousness and theft, and betrayed the Lord Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Judas Is. finished his life by committing suicide. He died in his sin. (See Acts 1:15-19; Matthew 27:3-10.) Judas Iscariot will be one of those mentioned by Jesus in the passage quoted above. Judas Is. will one day stand before the Lord and attempt to use his past supernatural ministry as an excuse to be accepted, but the Lord will reject him with those terrible words, “*I never knew you; depart from me.*” He died as a practitioner of lawlessness, and for eternity he will perish away from the presence of the Lord. (See 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9.)

I had the gut-wrenching experience of personally knowing full-gospel, anointed, devil-casting-out, healing ministering, soul-winning preachers that departed this life in the state of living immoral lives. One even denied the Lord. Where do you think they are in eternity if they did not repent before they died? In one case, the person died right in the middle of their immorality. I mean, they literally dropped dead without any warning. One moment that person was alive, and in the next breath they were dead. How tragic is that? There was no time to repent in that

¹ Don't argue over the legitimacy of these verses. If I said nothing else, the proof that these things are actual signs that are to accompany true believers is found in the book of Acts. There is MUCH more proof. The majority of ancient manuscripts include the verses, and the verses are referred to in patristic literature before any of the few manuscripts that excluded the verses were made. Paul, without question, believed in the words of Jesus in Mark 16:15-18. There are clearly stated proofs in his epistles. Take for example 1 Corinthians chapter 12 through 14, and Romans 15:18, 19. Also read the entire 19th chapter of Acts and get over any religious excuses! Paul believed in the miraculous, and so should we. To deny the reality of Mark 16:17, 18 is a religious cop-out that many have used to deny the miraculous and its availability today. Look at this shorter study from www.youcanstudythebible.com/the-argument-for-mark-169-20/. For a more detailed study see: “*The Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20*” by James E. Snapp Jr. - www.bibletranslation.ws/download/snappmark.pdf.

awful case. Yes, I hope that in that last moment of life they somehow had a moment of time to repent, but I would not bet my life on it.

And just as people are appointed to die once, and then to face judgment
(Hebrews 9:27 NET)

Human beings will either die in righteousness and be judged to be with the Lord for eternity, or they will be judged in lawlessness and be separated for eternity from the presence of the Lord in the lake of fire. There is NO middle ground, and there will be no redoes. Reincarnation is a demonic and pagan idea, and the Bible rejects the notion in the above verse. It is clear enough to refute any hope of getting to do it all over again. No, we won't come back as a bug, animal, or another new-born human. Once a person dies, their eternity is set.

"I will never leave you or forsake you" in Hebrews 13:5 is a quotation from Deuteronomy 31:6 and 8. What was the context? God was speaking to Joshua and the people of Israel about being fearless and courageous to obey God's commandment to go into the land of Canaan and to possess it. God was going to help them win in every encounter. He was not going to abandon them in the middle of their going in to possess the land. Compare that to Joshua chapter one and God's instructions to this man of God.

Joshua led the Israelites into the land, and they settled in it. As long as Joshua was alive, they served the Lord and followed the commandments written in the Law of God. Please read that statement found in Joshua 24:31 and Judges 2:7.

Something changed in Israel, and it was for the worst. A new generation grew up that did not personally experience the great miracles of deliverance from Egypt or Presence of God at Sinai. They did not experience the glory of how God gave them the land (Judges 2:10).

The Israelites did evil before the Lord by worshiping the Baals. ... They worshiped them and made the Lord angry. They abandoned the Lord and worshiped Baal and the Ashtars. The Lord was furious with Israel and handed them over to robbers... He turned them over to their enemies... They could not withstand their enemies' attacks. Whenever they went out to fight, the Lord did them harm... They suffered greatly. The Lord raised up leaders who delivered them... But they did not obey their leaders. Instead, they prostituted themselves... They quickly turned aside from the path their ancestors had walked. Their ancestors had obeyed the Lord's commands, but they did not. When the Lord raised up leaders for them, the Lord was with each leader and delivered the people from their enemies while the leader remained alive. The Lord felt sorry for them when they cried out in agony because of what their harsh oppressors did to them. When a leader died, the next generation would again act more wickedly than the previous one. They would

follow after other gods, worshiping them and bowing down to them. They did not give up their practices or their stubborn ways. The Lord was furious with Israel. He said, “This nation has violated the terms of the agreement I made with their ancestors by disobeying me. So I will no longer remove before them any of the nations... I wanted to see whether or not the people would carefully walk in the path marked out by the Lord, as their ancestors were careful to do” ... (Judges 2:11-23 NET- shortened to save space).

What a disaster! Notice that God did not forsake and abandon them. *Their sin and unrighteousness lifestyles caused Israel to abandon God!* Get that truth! God is always faithful to do His part. He will always keep His Word or covenant, but when people abandon and forsake Him by disobeying His commandments, then He abandons them to their enemies. Ouch! Read it repeatedly from Judges 2:11-23 and allow the Holy Spirit to correct any wrong theology.

The good news is that if people repent and turn from their wicked ways, He is always there to take them back into His presence and blessing. That my brother and sister is God’s wonderful and abundant GRACE!

The book of Judges shows us this consistent pattern in Israel. Israel would sin and abandon the Lord. Then the Lord would abandon or turn them over to their enemies. Their enemies would oppress them severely. They would cry unto the Lord for deliverance. They would repent of their wicked ways, and the Lord would send them a deliverer (judge) to rescue them from their enemies. Then, they would have peace from their enemies. Then, they would go back to wickedness, and the cycle would start again. That repeatedly happened in Israel.

Those things were written so that we as Christians would learn from their example.

These things happened as examples for us, so that we will not crave evil things as they did. So do not be idolaters, as some of them were. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play” (1 Corinthians 10:6-7).

If we draw near to Him, then He will in turn draw near to us, according to James 4:8. What happens when a believer withdraws from the Lord? If this principle is true, and it is, then the opposite is true. Those that withdraw from the Lord through a lifestyle of sin, the Lord will withdraw from them. He has no choice. *Whatever you join up with will join up with you.* If someone joins himself or herself sexually with a prostitute or anyone practicing a sexual sin, they become one body with that sinner (1 Corinthians 6:15-20).

If you join yourself to the Lord, you become one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). What if you go back and rejoin yourself to the world AFTER you are a believer?

Will you remain joined with the Lord? Be extremely cautious with your response. Read the following, and then you tell me.

For if, after escaping the world's corruptions through a full knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Messiah, they are again entangled and conquered by those corruptions, then their last condition is worse than their former one. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to know it and turn their backs on the holy commandment that was committed to them. The proverb is true that describes what has happened to them: "A dog returns to its vomit," and "A pig that is washed goes back to wallow in the mud." (2 Peter 2:20-22 ISV)

When you first came to the Lord Jesus, you began your new life with all your past sins washed away by the blood of Jesus, and you came into His glorious new creation. (Romans 3:25, 26; 2 Corinthians 5:17) Then you started on a journey of holiness and progressively escaped from the world's corruption. That was the renewing of the mind according to Romans 12:1-2. You began to understand that IF you sin as a believer, you can still run to our advocate in Heaven (Jesus Christ the righteous), confess your sins to Him, and receive forgiveness and cleansing from all unrighteousness. (See 1 John 1:7-10, 2:1, 2) What happens if after they come to Jesus ***"they are again entangled and conquered by those corruptions?"*** What happens to the Christian that quits abiding by God's moral guidelines for living a holy lifestyle? ***"Then their last condition is worse than their former one."*** That should be plain enough, and note that I didn't write those verses, and that they are in your Bible as well as in mine.

Stop becoming unevenly yoked with unbelievers. What partnership can righteousness have with lawlessness? What fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony exists between the Messiah and Beliar, or what do a believer and an unbeliever have in common? What agreement can a temple of God make with idols? (2 Corinthians 6:14-16a ISV)

Honestly, and without preconceived ideas, look at these verses and ask the question, "Will the Lord remain yoked, in partnership, fellowship, and in harmony with an unbeliever?"

"Oh, but that verse is speaking to people and not about the Lord's actions," someone said to me on one occasion. The ignorance of that statement should be obvious. Do you mean to tell me that we must reject being unequally yoked, but that the Lord allows Himself to be yoked unequally? Do you mean that we are forbidden to partner with unrighteousness, but that the Lord partners with lawlessness? Be incredibly careful with your answer. No, He does not partner with anything evil! The EVIL one is the devil, and he is the original lawless one that is a murderer, and the father of lies! (1 John 3:10, John 8:4) There is NO darkness in the Lord, and He hates sin and lawlessness (1 John 1:5; Hebrews 1:9).

There is absolutely NO harmony between the Messiah (Jesus) and Beliar (the devil, Satan)! Everywhere Jesus went, he cast out demons, rebuked the devil, and healed all that were oppressed by the devil (Matthew 4:24, 8:16; Acts 10:38). Evil can't touch the Lord, and He is separate from sinners.

For it is indeed fitting for us to have such a high priest (Jesus): holy, innocent, undefiled, separate from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. (Hebrews 7:26 NET)

He is separate from sinners. He is undefiled. He is holy. Do you think He would remain joined to a believer that is practicing a lifestyle of sin? No way! It would defile Him, and He cannot be defiled! If He ever got defiled, then it is all over forever for all humanity. We would have NO representation in Heaven before the Father if He were defiled in any way. No, because He is righteous and impossible to defile is why if I sin, I can go to Him and receive cleansing from all unrighteous. (See 1 John 1:7-10, 2:1-2.) He is the righteous One forever!

My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you might not sin. Yet if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus, the Messiah, one who is righteous. (1 John 2:1 ISV)

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30 NET)

How do you grieve the Holy Spirit? To answer that, let's go to the only other specific reference to it.

But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them. (Isaiah 63:10 NASB)

Rebellion to His Word and commandments will grieve the Holy Spirit. This is not referring to the one that sinned and then repented. The ones that humble themselves and repent of sin get God's mercy and grace. (Proverbs 28:13; Psalms 51; 1 John 1:7-10; 1 Peter 5:5, 6) The one that grieves the Holy Spirit refers to the one that rebels against God as a lifestyle. It makes God fighting mad!

This next portion of Scripture is so rough and tough on religious thinking that it could shake many out of their wrong thinking.

7 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ² "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the LORD!' " ³ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. ⁴ Do not trust in these lying words, saying, "The

temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are these.” (Jeremiah 7:1-4 NKJV)

Many believe that in Christ they are the Temple of the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:20) but they refuse to amend their ways and doings. According to the truth that never changes if people do not amend their ways and doings according to God’s Word, then they are lying when they call themselves the Temple of the Lord. You cannot say your body is the Temple of the Lord and use your body for sin on a consistent basis.

Let us continue in Jeremiah 7.

5 “For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, 6 if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, 7 then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. (Jeremiah 7:5-7 NKJV)

The Lord causes His people to DWELL in the Temple of Lord IF they don’t practice the things He mentions. It is ONLY for those that amend their ways and their doings. Get it?

Let’s go on with Jeremiah 7.

8 “Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. 9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, 10 and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered to do all these abominations?’ 11 Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it,” says the LORD. (Jeremiah 7:1-11 NKJV)

So many think they can come and accept Jesus, and then steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, follow false gods, (etc.), and that the Lord will be alright with that abominable mess, and that they will still go to Heaven. Those that believe God will just overlook sinful lifestyles among His people are trusting in a huge, big, fat lie! They are deluded! “Oh, but we got delivered when we came to Jesus from all those abominations and now, we are free. Sound familiar? No, all your sins WERE forgiven, as in your PAST sins were forgiven when you came to Jesus.

25 Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed. (Romans 3:25 NKJV)

Though the Blood of Jesus is the eternal guarantee that the sin problem was settled forever, but we need further understanding. After you get your past or previously committed sin erased by the Blood, now the continued application of the Blood to any sin we commit must be applied. It is not automatically done for you without your participation in repentance and confession of sin. IF we sin after our initial forgiveness in Christ when we were born again, we have a righteous representative in Heaven. He is Jesus Christ the propitiation for our sins, and He is ready to forgive and cleanse from un-righteousness when we confess our sins before Him. (Read 1 John 1:7- 2:2.) That is God's eternal and great grace towards us, BELIEVERS.

Below is more from Jeremiah 7 that points out God's attitude against those among His people that persist in sin and refuse to repent. If this does not straighten the backslider out, then probably nothing will.

¹⁶ “Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you. ¹⁷ Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? ¹⁸ The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and *they* pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. ¹⁹ Do they provoke Me to anger?” says the LORD. “*Do they not provoke themselves, to the shame of their own faces?*” ²⁰ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, My anger and My fury will be poured out on this place—on man and on beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground. And it will burn and not be quenched.”²¹ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat meat. ²² For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. ²³ But this is what I commanded them, saying, ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.’ ²⁴ Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels *and* the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. ²⁵ Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending *them*. ²⁶ Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. ²⁷ “Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you. ²⁸ “So you shall say to them, ‘This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the LORD their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth. ²⁹ Cut off your hair and cast *it* away, and take up a lamentation on the desolate heights; for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath.’ ³⁰ For the children

of Judah have done evil in My sight,” says the LORD. “They have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it. (Jeremiah 7:16-30 NKJV)

In reference to all this, take a studious look at all of Jeremiah 7, even though I quoted a big part of it. Jeremiah 7:11 was the Scripture reference Jesus referred to when He called what the priests and people had made it “a den of thieves.” (See Matthew 21:13; Luke 19:46.) They were claiming it to be the Temple of the Lord but the priests and the people were stealing, murdering, committing adultery, swearing falsely, and even practicing idolatry! They were depending on a lie when they kept calling it the Temple of God! (Jer. 7:4-11) They needed, as Paul stated, to clean out the old leaven of wickedness and become a Temple clean for the presence of God by practicing sincerity and truth. (See 1 Corinthians 5:8, 6:18-20.)

What can we say about ***“I will never leave you or forsake you”*** so far? God is not the one that initiates the forsaking or abandonment. People abandon God by practicing evil. He then turns them over to their enemy until they repent and come back to Him wholeheartedly.

In effect, if you abandon God, then He withdraws His mercy, favor, and compassion and lets your enemies hurt you until you repent. I know this is not popular preaching, but it is the truth.

The parable of the unforgiving servant should have opened our eyes to this truth, but many seem to ignore it.

A man owed a large debt (worth millions of dollars today), and all he owned was to be sold to satisfy the debt. He begged for mercy and his debt was entirely forgiven. In turn, a fellow servant owed him (in today’s money) about 200 dollars. He would not forgive the debt, and he mistreated his fellow servant. Justice caught up with him. The master of the servant that refused to forgive his fellow servant found out about it.

So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” (Matthew 18:31-35 NKJV)

Notice that Jesus said, ***“So My heavenly Father also will do to you.”*** That means that the Father will do the same thing!

Jeremiah 16 reveals this truth poignantly.

“Moreover I, the Lord, tell you: ... Do not go there to mourn and express your sorrow for them. For I have stopped showing them my good favor, my love, and my compassion. I, the Lord, so affirm it! ... No one will take any food to those who mourn for the dead to comfort them. No one will give them any wine to drink to console them for the loss of their father or mother. “Do not go to a house where people are feasting and sit down to eat and drink with them either. ... “When you tell these people about all this, they will undoubtedly ask you, ‘Why has the Lord threatened us with such great disaster? What wrong have we done? What sin have we done to offend the Lord our God?’ Then tell them that the Lord says, ‘It is because your ancestors rejected me and paid allegiance to other gods. They have served them and worshiped them. But they have rejected me and not obeyed my law. And you have acted even more wickedly than your ancestors! Each one of you has followed the stubborn inclinations of your own wicked heart and not obeyed me. So I will throw you out of this land into land that neither you nor your ancestors have ever known. ... for I will show you no mercy”
(Jeremiah 16:5-13 NET; shortened to save space).

Note that the Lord said He stopped showing favor, love, compassion, and even mercy! Why? They rejected the Lord by persisting in sin and rebellion. The generation of Jeremiah’s day had done even more wickedly than their ancestors, and they refused to obey the Lord. God said that He would show people like that no mercy. That’s harsh and hard to our ears because we have been taught wrong in most Christian circles. We better get this right. God withdraws mercy, compassion, favor (grace), and peace from the person that is stubborn and refuses to repent. OUCH! (See also Jer. 52:3.)

What happens when we allow false teachers and preachers among us that are leading many to unrighteous lifestyles? Revelation chapter 2 tells us what happens. Jesus speaks against the false prophetess Jezebel and her followers at the church in Thyatira. They followed the doctrines and teachings of the Nicolaitans and Balaam. Read the whole chapter, but especially 2:14-16, 20-23 (NET).

According to Revelation 2:16, Jesus will go to war with the sword of His mouth against those in His church that lead people to immorality, fornication, and idolatry of any kind. The people mentioned by the Lord were all members of these churches, but they were teaching others to lead immoral lives through their doctrines. Concerning Jezebel and her followers, time was given for them to repent but they would not. The Lord threw them or gave them over to distress, violent illness, and death via deadly pestilence or disease. (See Rev. 2:21-23.) Yep, they grieved the Holy Spirit by refusing to repent for their sinful ways, they were judged, and the Lord was going to fight (war) with them with the sword of His mouth!

Little is taught about these truths because they are so contrary to all the “God does not see your sin” and “no one can separate you from His love” doctrines that pervert the message of God’s Word.

When Paul said that “nothing will separate from the love of God,” or the “love of Christ,” he was not referring to sin, wickedness, iniquity, lawlessness, or rebellion. People often assume (wrongly) that Paul’s statement included sin, BUT it did not! Paul referred to the creation of God and the things of life that come against God’s people. He mentioned trouble, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword.” (See Romans 8:35, 39 NET.) He was not referring to sin. Sin will separate us from God and His love (and grace) unless we repent!

Paul reveals the same truth when writing to the church at Corinth when a Christian man developed a sexual relationship with his stepmother (1Corinthians 5:1-5). Instead of “having a conversation” with the man, or consoling him, they were to turn such a one over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh until the man repented. Fortunately, for this man, he repented and turned back to God so that his spirit was saved on the day of the Lord. The church was to reaffirm their love for him, forgive, and comfort him only after his repentance, and not before it happened. (See 2 Corinthians 2: 6-9, 7:9-12.)

Many in the church today want to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm their love for brothers or sisters practicing unrepented sin in their churches. That is in violation of the clear instructions of the apostle Paul!

In the same way, God and His Spirit will only forgive, manifest love, and comfort people after they humble themselves and repent. If we do not confess our sins before God, and sometimes before the elders of our church, we cannot receive the grace of the forgiveness of our sins and cleansing from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9, 10, James 5:16).

Those that humble themselves get God’s MEGA (Gr. *megas*- great, abundant) grace. The proud that refuse to repent will only get God’s resistance or opposition! (See 1 Peter 5:5, James 4:6.) The proud that continue in disobedience and rebellion get no grace, mercy, or compassion from the Lord, even though these are readily available. The Lord will not continue to demonstrate or manifest mercy, love, and compassion to those that rebel against Him by persisting in wickedness.

What was the context in which the writer of the Hebrews quoted, “*I will never leave you or forsake you?*” Most people don’t know because they heard the promise out of context!

Hebrews 13:1-3 speaks of demonstrating brotherly love and hospitality that extends to the brethren that were persecuted and imprisoned for their faith.

Verse 4 speaks about maintaining the marriage bed in honor and undefiled. He explains: *“God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers.”* The sexually immoral are those practicing illicit sexual behaviors such as incest, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, and sexually loose and perverted lifestyles. Adulterers are those sexually involved with someone of the opposite sex that is married. God will judge all these together with those that refuse to keep their conduct free of covetousness (love of money- v. 5)

If God judges you, the enemy is free to do some damage. That is what happened to Job (chapters 1, 3, 33-37), the man caught in incest and adultery (1 Cor. 5:1-5), and others. God’s mercy, compassion, and grace (favor) are withdrawn during judgment, and the devil and his cronies can do whatever they want against you! It is much better to judge yourself of wrongdoing so that you are not judged. (See 1 Corinthians 11:28-32.)

Notice that before the writer of the Hebrews quotes, *“I will never leave you and I will never abandon you,”* he states that we must keep our conduct free of those things, including the love of money. In other words, to participate in this great promise of God’s continued presence, we must not allow our conduct to persist in any of the sins he mentions.

If I drew this conclusion only from the verses in Hebrews, then my interpretation could be a private interpretation that is not valid as sound teaching. The truth is that the Old and New Testaments contain abundant references to these truths. Erroneous teachings have come up with the idea that you can have Jesus (or God) and practice ungodliness at the same time. Don’t believe that fallacy!

Here is the key. Stay hooked with Jesus! Run to the Blood of Jesus when you sin and receive cleansing! The power of the Blood to remove sin is what assures that you that you will continue to have the manifestation of the presence of the Lord. His Blood cleanses us from sin so that we can have fellowship with one another! (See 1 John 1:7-10.)

To finish this article, let’s look at John 14:15 and verse 16. Usually, verse 16 is pulled out of its setting and context. Few people know what verse 15 says. They only know that Jesus said in John 14:16 that the Holy Spirit (the Advocate- Gr. *parakletos*) would be with us forever. Look at the context closely.

“If you love me, you will obey my commandments. Then I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever” (John 14:15, 16 NET).

Notice that Jesus first said that IF we love Him, we must obey His commandments. That is similar to John 14:21-23 just a few verses later. If we love Him, we will obey His Word- commandments. (See also 1 John 2:3-5.) THEN, and may I add ONLY then (He made the exception), He will ask the Father, and He will give you the Holy Spirit to be with you forever. The rebellious

and violators of His holy moral commandments do not have a right to this promise. It is reserved for the obedient believer! That was the very direct message of the Lord here. To twist this into, “all Christians have the presence of the Lord always with them regardless of a persistently sinful lifestyle” is a huge lie!

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. (Acts 3:19 NKJV)

The presence of the Lord is assured to you as a follower of Jesus, and you will have fellowship with the Father and the Lord Jesus, but it is based on the simple criteria that we have discussed. Here is a little more for your consideration and study. Nine points can sum up how we, as believers, can maintain our fellowship with the presence of the Lord on a daily basis:

1. Receive forgiveness and cleansing from unrighteousness through the Blood of Jesus if we sin. (1 John 1:7-9; Acts 3:19)
2. Consistently obey God’s moral commandments. (1 Cor. 7:19; Rev. 12:17, 14:12)
3. Trust in the Lord that His presence is with you, and be aware of His presence. (1 Thes. 2:19)
4. Talk to the Lord every day (prayer). (Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2)
5. Be thankful. (Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:15, 16)
6. Be worshipful and reverential. (John 4:23, 24; Rom. 12:1 NASB)
7. Be led by Him. (Romans 8:14, 16; John 10:27)
8. Study the Word every day. (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:15-17)
9. Minister to others as He leads you. (1 Peter 4:7-11; Mark 16:15-18)

What does all this mean? His holy presence will be with you according to your devotion and dedication to Him. The more time you take daily to acknowledge Him and live for Him, the more of His presence you will enjoy. Don’t get cocky though because the opposite is true. Stay humble and obey the Lord.

Be blessed in your study and ACTING on His Word! (James 1:22)