

Genesis 3:11

¹¹God said, “Who told you **that** you were naked? Did you eat from that tree I told you not to eat from?”

Genesis 7:2-4

²⁻⁴“Take on board with you seven pairs of every clean animal, a male and a female; one pair of every unclean animal, a male and a female; and seven pairs of every kind of bird, a male and a female, to insure their survival on Earth. In just seven days I will ~~pour~~^{dump} rain on Earth for forty days and forty nights. I’ll make a clean sweep of everything that I’ve made.”

Genesis 8:15-17

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ God spoke to Noah: “Leave the ship, you and your wife and your sons and your sons’ wives. And take all the animals with you, the whole menagerie of birds and mammals and crawling creatures, all that ~~brimming prodigality~~ **swarming extravagance** of life, so they can reproduce and flourish on the Earth.”

Genesis 19:4-5

⁴⁻⁵Before they went to bed, men from all over the city of Sodom, young and old, descended on the house from all sides and boxed them in. They yelled to Lot, “Where are the men who are staying with you for the night? Bring them out so we can have our sport with them!”

Genesis 24:50-51

⁵⁰⁻⁵¹ Laban and Bethuel answered, “This is **undeniably**~~totally~~ from God. We have no say in the matter, either yes or no. Rebekah is yours: Take her and go; let her be the wife of your master’s son, as God has made plain.”

Genesis 30:15

¹⁵Leah said, “Wasn’t it enough that you got my husband away from me? And now you also want my son’s mandrakes?”

Rachel said, “All right. I’ll let him sleep with you tonight in exchange for your son’s mandrakes~~love-apples~~.”

Genesis 34:30

³⁰Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You’ve made my name **repulsive to**~~stink to high heaven~~ **among** the people here, these Canaanites and Perizzites. If they decided to gang up on us and attack, as few as we are we wouldn’t stand a chance; they’d wipe me and my people right off the map.”

Genesis 38:1-5

¹⁻⁵ About that time, Judah separated from his brothers and **went to stay**~~hooked up~~ with a man in Adullam named Hirah. While there, Judah met the daughter of a Canaanite named Shua. He married her, they went to bed, she became pregnant and had a son named Er. She got pregnant again and had a son named Onan. She had still another son; she named this one Shelah. They were living at Kezib when she had him.

Exodus 1:8-10

⁸⁻¹⁰A new king came to power in Egypt who didn't know Joseph. He spoke to his people **with** alarm, "There are way too many of these Israelites for us to handle. We've got to do something: Let's devise a plan to contain them, lest if there's a war they should join our enemies, or just walk off and leave us."

Exodus 5:4-5

⁴⁻⁵But the king of Egypt said, “Why on earth, Moses and Aaron, would you suggest the people be given a holiday? Back to work!” Pharaoh went on, “Look, I’ve got all these people ~~freeloading~~ ~~bumming around~~, and now you want to reward them with time off?”

Exodus 5:10-12

¹⁰⁻¹²The slave-drivers and their underlings went out to the people with their new instructions. “Pharaoh’s orders: No more straw provided. Get your own straw wherever you can find it. And not one brick less in your daily work quota!” The people scattered all over Egypt ~~scrambling~~scrabbling for straw.

Exodus 7:11-12

¹¹⁻¹²Pharaoh called in his wise men and sorcerers. The magicians of Egypt did the same thing by their **spells**~~incantations~~: each man threw down his staff and they all turned into snakes. But then Aaron's staff swallowed their staffs.

Exodus 7:22-25

²²⁻²⁵ But the magicians of Egypt did the same thing with their incantations. Still Pharaoh remained stubborn. He wouldn't listen to them as God had said. He spun around~~turned on his heel~~ and went home, never giving it a second thought. But all the Egyptians had to dig inland from the river for water because they couldn't drink the Nile water.

Seven days went by after God had struck the Nile.

Exodus 8:18

¹⁸The magicians tried to produce gnats with their ~~spells~~^{incantations} but this time they couldn't do it. There were gnats everywhere, all over people and animals.

Exodus 9:23-26

²³⁻²⁶Moses lifted his staff to the skies and GOD sent crackspeals of thunder and hail shot through with lightning strikes. GOD rained hail down on the land of Egypt. The hail came, hail and lightning—a fierce hailstorm. There had been nothing like it in Egypt in its entire history. The hail hit hard all over Egypt. Everything exposed out in the fields, people and animals and crops, was smashed. Even the trees in the fields were shattered. Except for Goshen where the Israelites lived; there was no hail in Goshen.

Exodus 10:10-11

¹⁰⁻¹¹He said, “I’d sooner send you off with God’s blessings than let you go with your children. Look, you’re up to no good—it’s written all over your faces. **No way**~~Nothing doing~~. Just the men are going—go ahead and worship God. That’s what you want so badly.” And they were thrown out of Pharaoh’s presence.

Exodus 11:8

⁸“Then all these servants of yours will **grovel before me** ~~go to their knees~~, begging me to leave, ‘Leave! You and all the people who follow you!’ And I will most certainly leave.”

Moses, seething with anger, left Pharaoh.

Exodus 12:37-39

³⁷⁻³⁹The Israelites moved on from Rameses to Succoth, about 600,000 on foot, besides their dependents. Hebrews and non-Hebrews alike set out. ~~There was also a crowd of riffraff tagging along,~~ not to mention the large flocks and herds of livestock. They baked unraised cakes with the bread dough they had brought out of Egypt; it hadn't raised—they'd been rushed out of Egypt and hadn't time to fix food for the journey.

Exodus 13:1-2

¹⁻²God spoke to Moses, saying, “**Set apart** **Consecrate** every firstborn to me—the first one to come from the womb among the Israelites, whether person or animal, is mine.”

Exodus 19:18-20

¹⁸⁻²⁰ Mount Sinai was all smoke because GOD had come down on it as fire. Smoke poured from it like smoke from a furnace. The whole mountain shuddered and heaved in huge spasms. The trumpet blasts grew louder and louder. Moses spoke and God answered in thunder. God descended to the peak of Mount Sinai. GOD called Moses up to the peak and Moses climbed up.

Exodus 23:1-3

¹⁻³“Don’t pass on malicious gossip.

“Don’t link up with a wicked person and give corrupt testimony. Don’t go along with the crowd in doing evil and don’t **mess up** **fudge** your testimony in a case just to please the crowd. And just because someone is poor, don’t show favoritism in a dispute.

Exodus 24:15-17

¹⁵⁻¹⁷Then Moses climbed the mountain. The Cloud covered the mountain. The Glory of God settled over Mount Sinai. The Cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day he called out of the Cloud to Moses. In the view of the Israelites below, the Glory of ~~God~~ ~~God~~ looked like a raging fire at the top of the mountain.

Exodus 28:36-38

³⁶⁻³⁸“Make a plate of pure gold. Engrave on it as on a seal: ‘Holy to God.’ Tie it with a blue cord to the front of the turban. It is to rest there on Aaron’s forehead. He’ll take on any guilt involved in the sacred offerings that the Israelites ~~dedicate~~^{consecrate}, no matter what they bring. It will always be on Aaron’s forehead so that the offerings will be acceptable before God.

Exodus 28:39-41

³⁹⁻⁴¹“Weave the tunic of fine linen. Make the turban of fine linen. The sash will be the work of an embroiderer. Make tunics, sashes, and hats for Aaron’s sons to express glory and beauty. Dress your brother Aaron and his sons in them. Anoint, ordain, and ~~dedicate~~^{consecrate} them to serve me as priests.

Exodus 29:1-4

¹⁻⁴“This is the ceremony for ~~dedicating~~ ~~consecrating~~ them as priests. Take a young bull and two rams, healthy and without defects. Using fine wheat flour but no yeast make bread and cakes mixed with oil and wafers spread with oil. Place them in a basket and carry them along with the bull and the two rams. Bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water.

Exodus 29:27-28

²⁷⁻²⁸“**Bless** **Consecrate** the Wave-Offering breast and the thigh that was held up. These are the parts of the ordination ram that are for Aaron and his sons. Aaron and his sons are always to get this offering from the Israelites; the Israelites are to make this offering regularly from their Peace-Offerings.

Exodus 29:31-34

³¹⁻³⁴“Take the ordination ram and boil the meat in the Holy Place. At the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, Aaron and his sons will eat the boiled ram and the bread that is in the basket. Atoned by these offerings, ordained and **hallowed**~~consecrated~~ by them, they are the only ones who are to eat them. No outsiders are to eat them; they’re holy. Anything from the ordination ram or from the bread that is left over until morning you are to burn up. Don’t eat it; it’s holy.

Exodus 29:35-37

³⁵⁻³⁷“Do everything for the ordination of Aaron and his sons exactly as I’ve commanded you throughout the seven days. Offer a bull as an Absolution-Offering for atonement each day. Offer it on the Altar when you make atonement for it: Anoint and **hallowconsecrate** it. Make atonement for the Altar and **hallowconsecrate** it for seven days; the Altar will become soaked in holiness—anyone who so much as touches the Altar will become holy.

Exodus 30:26-29

²⁶⁻²⁹“Use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the Chest of The Testimony, the Table and all its utensils, the Lampstand and its utensils, the Altar of Incense, the Altar of Whole-Burnt-Offerings and all its utensils, and the Washbasin and its base. ~~Dedicate~~ ~~Consecrate~~ them so they’ll be soaked in holiness, so that anyone who so much as touches them will become holy.

Exodus 30:30-33

³⁰⁻³³“Then anoint Aaron and his sons. Consecrate them as priests to me. Tell the Israelites, ‘This will be my holy anointing oil throughout your generations.’ Don’t pour it on ordinary men. Don’t copy this mixture to use for yourselves. It’s holy; keep it holy. Whoever mixes up anything like it, or puts it on an ordinary person, will be ~~exiled~~ ~~expelled~~.”

Exodus 32:1

“Make ~~Gods~~ Gods for Us”

¹When the people realized that Moses was taking forever in coming down off the mountain, they rallied around Aaron and said, “Do something. Make gods for us who will lead us. That Moses, the man who got us out of Egypt—who knows what’s happened to him?”

Exodus 40:12-15

¹²⁻¹⁵“Finally, bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water. Dress Aaron in the sacred vestments. Anoint him. **Set him apart** **Consecrate** ~~him~~ to serve me as priest. Bring his sons and put tunics on them. Anoint them, just as you anointed their father, to serve me as priests. Their anointing will bring them into a perpetual priesthood, down through the generations.”

Leviticus 12:1-5

¹⁻⁵God spoke to Moses: “Tell the People of Israel, A woman who conceives and gives birth to a boy is ritually unclean for seven days, the same as during her menstruation. On the eighth day circumcise the boy. The mother must stay home another thirty-three days for purification from her bleeding. She may not touch anything **holysanctified** or enter the Sanctuary until the days of her purification are complete. If she gives birth to a girl, she is unclean for fourteen days, the same as during her menstruation. She must stay home for sixty-six days for purification from her bleeding.

Leviticus 20:18

¹⁸“If a man sleeps with a woman during her period and has sex with her, he has uncovered her flow ~~‘fountain’~~ and she has ~~uncovered her flow of blood~~ ~~revealed her ‘fountain’~~—both of them must be cut off from their people.

Numbers 11:4-6

⁴⁻⁶The **misfitsriffraff** among the people had a craving and soon they had the People of Israel whining, “Why can’t we have meat? We ate fish in Egypt—and got it free!—to say nothing of the cucumbers and melons, the leeks and onions and garlic. But nothing tastes good out here; all we get is manna, manna, manna.”

Numbers 25:6-9

⁶⁻⁹Just then, while everyone was weeping in penitence at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, an Israelite man, flaunting his behavior in front of Moses and the whole assembly, paraded a Midianite woman into his family tent. Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw what he was doing, grabbed his spear, and followed them into the tent. With one thrust he drove the spear through the two of them, the man of Israel and the woman, right through their ~~midsections~~~~private parts~~. That stopped the plague from continuing among the People of Israel. But 24,000 had already died.

Numbers 31:7-12

⁷⁻¹²They attacked Midian, just as God had commanded Moses, and killed every last man. Among the fallen were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba—the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword. The People of Israel took the Midianite women and children captive and took all their animals and herds and goods as plunder. They burned to the ground all the towns in which Midianites lived and also their tent camps. They looted and plundered everything and everyone—**belongings****stuff** and people and animals. They took it all—**spoils****booty** and plunder—back to Moses and Eleazar the priest and the company of Israel where they were camped on the Plains of Moab, at Jordan-Jericho.

Numbers 31:28-30

²⁸⁻³⁰“Then tax the spoils that go ~~booty that goes~~ to the soldiers at the rate of one life out of five hundred, whether humans, cattle, donkeys, or sheep. It’s a GOD-tax taken from their half-share to be turned over to Eleazar the priest on behalf of GOD. Tax the congregation’s half-share at the rate of one life out of fifty, whether persons, cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats, or other animals. Give this to the Levites who are in charge of the care of God’s Dwelling.”

Numbers 31:51-54

⁵¹⁻⁵⁴ Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from them, all that fine-crafted jewelry. In total, the gold from the commanders of thousands and hundreds that Moses and Eleazar offered as a gift to God weighed about six hundred pounds, all donated by the soldiers who had taken the ~~spoils~~ ~~booty~~. Moses and Eleazar took the gold from the commanders of thousands and hundreds and brought it to the Tent of Meeting, to serve as a reminder for the People of Israel before God.

Deuteronomy 7:21-24

²¹⁻²⁴So don't be intimidated by them. GOD, your God, is among you—**majestic GOD, awesome GOD**~~GOD majestic, GOD awesome~~. GOD, your God, will get rid of these nations, bit by bit. You won't be permitted to wipe them out all at once lest the wild animals take over and overwhelm you. But GOD, your God, will move them out of your way—he'll throw them into a huge panic until there's nothing left of them. He'll turn their kings over to you and you'll remove all trace of them under Heaven. Not one person will be able to stand up to you; you'll put an end to them all.

Deuteronomy 9:1-2

¹⁻²Attention, Israel!

This very day you are crossing the Jordan to enter the land and **oust**~~dispossess~~ nations that are much bigger and stronger than you are. You're going to find huge cities with sky-high fortress-walls and gigantic people, descendants of the Anakites—you've heard all about them; you've heard the saying, "No one can stand up to an Anakite."

Deuteronomy 9:3

³Today know this: GOD, your God, is crossing the river ahead of you—he's a consuming fire. He will destroy the nations, he will put them under your power. You will ~~oust~~^{dispossess} them and very quickly wipe them out, just as GOD promised you would.

Deuteronomy 9:18-20

¹⁸⁻²⁰Then I flung myself down ~~prostrated myself~~ before God, just as I had at the beginning of the forty days and nights. I ate no food; I drank no water. I did this because of you, all your sins, sinning against God, doing what is evil in God's eyes and making him angry. I was terrified of God's furious anger, his blazing anger. I was sure he would destroy you. But once again God listened to me. And Aaron! How furious he was with Aaron—ready to destroy him. But I prayed also for Aaron at that same time.

Deuteronomy 9:25-26

²⁵⁻²⁶When I was on my face, stretched out ~~prostrate~~ before GOD those forty days and nights after GOD said he would destroy you, I prayed to GOD for you, “My Master, GOD, don’t destroy your people, your inheritance whom, in your immense generosity, you redeemed, using your enormous strength to get them out of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 15:19-23

¹⁹⁻²³ **Set apart** **Consecrate** to God, your God, all the firstborn males in your herds and flocks.

Don't use the firstborn from your herds as work animals; don't shear the firstborn from your flocks. These are for you to eat every year, you and your family, in the Presence of God, your God, at the place that God designates for worship. If the animal is defective, lame, say, or blind—anything wrong with it—don't slaughter it as a sacrifice to God, your God. Stay at home and eat it there. Both the ritually clean and unclean may eat it, the same as with a gazelle or a deer. Only you must not eat its blood. Pour the blood out on the ground like water.

Deuteronomy 19:8-10

⁸⁻¹⁰When God, your God, enlarges your land, extending its borders as he solemnly promised your ancestors, by giving you the whole land he promised them because you are diligently living the way I'm commanding you today, namely, to love God, your God, and do what he tells you all your life; and when that happens, then add three more to these three cities so that there is no chance of innocent blood being spilled in your land. God, your God, is giving you this land as an inheritance—you don't want to pollute it with innocent blood and bring **guiltbloodguilt** upon yourselves.

Deuteronomy 22:13-19

¹³⁻¹⁹If a man marries a woman, sleeps with her, and then turns on her, calling her ~~loose~~ ~~slut~~, giving her a bad name, saying, "I married this woman, but when I slept with her I discovered she wasn't a virgin," then the father and mother of the girl are to take her with the proof of her virginity to the town leaders at the gate. The father is to tell the leaders, "I gave my daughter to this man as wife and he turned on her, rejecting her. And now he has slanderously accused her, claiming that she wasn't a virgin. But look at this, here is the proof of my daughter's virginity." And then he is to spread out her bloodstained wedding garment before the leaders for their examination. The town leaders then are to take the husband, whip him, fine him a hundred pieces of silver, and give it to the father of the girl. The man gave a virgin girl of Israel a bad name. He has to keep her as his wife and can never divorce her.

Deuteronomy 25:1-3

¹⁻³When men have a legal dispute, let them go to court; the judges will decide between them, declaring one innocent and the other guilty. If the guilty one deserves punishment, the judge will have him **lay himself down**~~prostrate himself~~ before him and lashed as many times as his crime deserves, but not more than forty. If you hit him more than forty times, you will degrade him to something less than human.

Deuteronomy 26:10-11

¹⁰⁻¹¹ Then place it in the Presence of God, your God. **Bow low** ~~Prostrate yourselves~~ in the Presence of God, your God. And rejoice! Celebrate all the good things that God, your God, has given you and your family; you and the Levite and the foreigner who lives with you.

Deuteronomy 28:11-14

¹¹⁻¹⁴ God will lavish you with good things: children from your womb, offspring from your animals, and crops from your land, the land that God promised your ancestors that he would give you. God will throw open the doors of his sky vaults and pour rain on your land on schedule and bless the work you take in hand. You will lend to many nations but you yourself won't have to take out a loan. God will make you the head, not the tail; you'll always be the top dog, never the ~~underdog~~~~bottom-dog~~, as you obediently listen to and diligently keep the commands of God, your God, that I am commanding you today. Don't swerve an inch to the right or left from the words that I command you today by going off following and worshiping other gods.

Deuteronomy 31:3-5

³⁻⁵“GOD, your God, will cross the river ahead of you and destroy the nations in your path so that you may **oust**~~dispossess~~ them. (And Joshua will cross the river before you, as GOD said he would.) GOD will give the nations the same treatment he gave the kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, and their land; he’ll destroy them. GOD will hand the nations over to you, and you’ll treat them exactly as I have commanded you.

Deuteronomy 31:16-18

¹⁶⁻¹⁸God spoke to Moses: “You’re about to die and be buried with your ancestors. You’ll no sooner be in the grave than this people will be up and **lustingwhoring** after the foreign gods of this country that they are entering. They will abandon me and violate my Covenant that I’ve made with them. I’ll get angry, oh so angry! I’ll walk off and leave them on their own, won’t so much as look back at them. Then many calamities and disasters will devastate them because they are defenseless. They’ll say, ‘Isn’t it because our God wasn’t here that all this evil has come upon us?’ But I’ll stay out of their lives, keep looking the other way because of all their evil: they took up with other gods!

Deuteronomy 32:15-18

15-18 Jeshurun put on weight and bucked;
you got fat, became obese, a tub of lard.
He abandoned the God who made him,
he mocked the Rock of his salvation.
They made him jealous with their foreign ~~trendy~~ ~~newfangled~~ gods,
and with obscenities they vexed him no end.
They sacrificed to no-god demons,
gods they knew nothing about,
The latest in gods, fresh from the market,
gods your ancestors would never call "gods."
You walked out on the Rock who gave you your life,
forgot the birth-God who brought you into the world.

Deuteronomy 32:19-25

19-25 GOD saw it and spun around ~~turned on his heel~~,
 angered and hurt by his sons and daughters.
He said, "From now on I'm looking the other way.
 Wait and see what happens to them.
Oh, they're a turned-around, upside-down generation!
 Who knows what they'll do from one moment to the next?
They've goaded me with their no-gods,
 infuriated me with their hot-air gods;
I'm going to goad them with a no-people,
 with a hollow nation incense them.
My anger started a fire,
 a wildfire burning deep down in Sheol,
Then shooting up and devouring the Earth and its crops,
 setting all the mountains, from bottom to top, on fire.
I'll pile catastrophes on them,
 I'll shoot my arrows at them:
Starvation, blistering heat, killing disease;
 I'll send snarling wild animals to attack from the forest
 and venomous creatures to strike from the dust.
Killing in the streets,
 terror in the houses,
Young men and virgins alike struck down,
 and yes, breast-feeding babies and gray-haired old men."

Deuteronomy 32:28-33

28-33 They are a nation of **idiots** **ninnies**,
they don't know enough to come in out of the rain.
If they had any sense at all, they'd know this;
they would see what's coming down the road.
How could one soldier chase a thousand enemies off,
or two men run off two thousand,
Unless their Rock had sold them,
unless God had given them away?
For their rock is nothing compared to our Rock;
even our enemies say that.
They're a vine that comes right out of Sodom,
who they are is rooted in Gomorrah;
Their grapes are poison grapes,
their grape-clusters bitter.
Their wine is rattlesnake venom,
mixed with lethal cobra poison.

Deuteronomy 33:13-17

¹³⁻¹⁷Joseph:

“Blessed by GOD be his land:

The best fresh dew from high heaven,
and fountains springing from the depths;
The best radiance streaming from the sun
and the best the moon has to offer;
Beauty pouring off the tops of the mountains
and the best from the everlasting hills;
The best of Earth’s exuberant gifts,
the smile of the Burning-Bush Dweller.

All this on the head of Joseph,
on the brow of the ~~set-apart~~ ~~consecrated~~ one among his brothers.

In splendor he’s like a firstborn bull,
his horns the horns of a wild ox;
He’ll gore the nations with those horns,
push them all to the ends of the Earth.
Ephraim by the ten thousands will do this,
Manasseh by the thousands will do this.”

Joshua 2:4-7

⁴⁻⁷The woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, “Yes, two men did come to me, but I didn’t know where they’d come from. At dark, when the gate was about to be shut, the men left. But I have no idea where they went. Hurry up! Chase them—you can still catch them!” (She had actually taken them up on the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax that were spread out for her on the roof.) So the men ~~gave~~ set chase down the Jordan road toward the fords. As soon as they were gone, the gate was shut.

Joshua 6:2-5

²⁻⁵God spoke to Joshua, “Look sharp now. I’ve already given Jericho to you, along with its king and its elite forces ~~crack troops~~. Here’s what you are to do: March around the city, all your soldiers. Circle the city once. Repeat this for six days. Have seven priests carry seven ram’s horn trumpets in front of the Chest. On the seventh day march around the city seven times, the priests blowing away on the trumpets. And then, a long blast on the ram’s horn—when you hear that, all the people are to shout at the top of their lungs. The city wall will collapse at once. All the people are to enter, every man straight on in.”

Joshua 7:10-12

¹⁰⁻¹² God said to Joshua, “Get up. Why are you groveling? Israel has sinned: They’ve broken the covenant I commanded them; they’ve taken forbidden plunder—stolen and then covered up the theft, **hoarding it up**~~squirreling it away~~ with their own stuff. The People of Israel can no longer look their enemies in the eye—they themselves are plunder. I can’t continue with you if you don’t rid yourselves of the cursed things.

Joshua 8:3-8

³⁻⁸Joshua and all his soldiers got ready to march on Ai. Joshua chose thirty thousand men, tough, seasoned fighters, and sent them off at night with these orders: “Pay me all of your attention ~~Look sharp~~ now. Lie in ambush behind the city. Get as close as you can. Stay alert. I and the troops with me will approach the city head-on. When they come out to meet us just as before, we’ll turn and run. They’ll come after us, leaving the city. As we are off and running, they’ll say, ‘They’re running away just like the first time.’ That’s your signal to spring from your ambush and take the city. God, your God, will hand it to you on a platter. Once you have the city, burn it down. God says it, you do it. Go to it. I’ve given you your orders.”

Judges 7:15

¹⁵When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he ~~dropped~~~~went~~ to his knees before God in prayer. Then he went back to the Israelite camp and said, “Get up and get going! God has just given us the Midianite army!”

Judges 11:1-3

¹⁻³Jephthah the Gileadite was one tough warrior. He was the son of a prostitute~~where~~, but Gilead was his father. Meanwhile Gilead's legal wife had given him other sons, and when they grew up, his wife's sons threw Jephthah out. They told him: "You're not getting any of our family inheritance—you're the son of another woman." So Jephthah fled from his brothers and went to live in the land of Tob. Some riffraff joined him and went around with him.

Judges 15:14-16

¹⁴⁻¹⁶As he approached Lehi, the Philistines came to meet him, shouting in triumph. And then the Spirit of God came on him with great power. The ropes on his arms fell apart like flax on fire; the strips of leather ~~thongs~~ slipped off his hands. He spotted a fresh donkey jawbone, reached down and grabbed it, and with it killed the whole company. And Samson said,

With a donkey's jawbone
I made heaps of donkeys of them.
With a donkey's jawbone
I killed an entire company.

Ruth 3:8

⁸In the middle of the night the man was suddenly startled and sat up. **What in the world? Surprise!** This woman asleep at his feet!

Ruth 3:18

¹⁸Naomi said, “Sit back and relax, my dear daughter, until we find out how things turn out; **this man isn't going to waste any time**~~that man isn't going to fool around~~. Mark my words, he's going to get everything wrapped up today.”

1 Samuel 1:15-16

¹⁵⁻¹⁶Hannah said, “Oh no, sir—please! I’m a woman **brokenhearted**~~hard-used~~. I haven’t been drinking. Not a drop of wine or beer. The only thing I’ve been pouring out is my heart, pouring it out to God. Don’t for a minute think I’m a bad woman. It’s because I’m so desperately unhappy and in such pain that I’ve stayed here so long.”

1 Samuel 2:12-17

¹²⁻¹⁷ Eli's own sons were **nothing but trouble**~~a bad lot~~. They didn't know God and could not have cared less about the customs of priests among the people. Ordinarily, when someone offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant was supposed to come up and, while the meat was boiling, stab a three-pronged fork into the cooking pot. The priest then got whatever came up on the fork. But this is how Eli's sons treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh to offer sacrifices to God. Before they had even burned the fat to God, the priest's servant would interrupt whoever was sacrificing and say, "Hand over some of that meat for the priest to roast. He doesn't like boiled meat; he likes his rare." If the man objected, "First let the fat be burned—God's portion!—then take all you want," the servant would demand, "No, I want it now. If you won't give it, I'll take it." It was a horrible sin these young servants were committing—and right in the presence of God!—desecrating the holy offerings to God.

1 Samuel 2:22-25

²²⁻²⁵By this time Eli was very old. He kept getting reports on how his sons were ripping off the people and sleeping with the women who helped out at the sanctuary. Eli **called them out**~~took them to task~~: “What’s going on here? Why are you doing these things? I hear story after story of your corrupt and evil carrying on. Oh, my sons, this is not right! These are terrible reports I’m getting, stories spreading right and left among God’s people! If you sin against another person, there’s help—God’s help. But if you sin against God, who is around to help?”

1 Samuel 4:19-20

¹⁹⁻²⁰ His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant and ready to deliver. When she heard that the Chest of God had been taken and that both her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she ~~dropped~~ ~~went~~ to her knees to give birth, going into hard labor. As she was about to die, her midwife said, "Don't be afraid. You've given birth to a son!" But she gave no sign that she had heard.

1 Samuel 6:13-15

¹³⁻¹⁵The people of Beth Shemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley. They looked up and saw the Chest. ~~Elated~~**Jubilant**, they ran to meet it. The cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth Shemeshite, and stopped there beside a huge boulder. The harvesters tore the cart to pieces, then chopped up the wood and sacrificed the cows as a burnt offering to God. The Levites took charge of the Chest of God and the sack containing the gold offerings, placing them on the boulder. Offering the sacrifices, everyone in Beth Shemesh worshiped God most heartily that day.

1 Samuel 7:10-12

¹⁰⁻¹² While Samuel was offering the sacrifice, the Philistines came within range to fight Israel. Just then GOD thundered, a huge thunderclap exploding among the Philistines. They panicked—mass confusion!—and scattered before ~~ran helter-skelter from~~ Israel. Israel poured out of Mizpah and gave chase, killing Philistines right and left, to a point just beyond Beth Car. Samuel took a single rock and set it upright between Mizpah and Shen. He named it “Ebenezer” (Rock of Help), saying, “This marks the place where GOD helped us.”

1 Samuel 8:1-3

Rejecting ~~God~~ as the King

¹⁻³When Samuel got to be an old man, he set his sons up as judges in Israel. His firstborn son was named Joel, the name of the second, Abijah. They were assigned duty in Beersheba. But his sons didn't take after him; they were out for what they could get for themselves, taking bribes, corrupting justice.

1 Samuel 15:31

³¹Samuel did. He went back with him. And Saul ~~dropped~~^{went} to his knees before God and worshiped.

1 Samuel 17:41-42

⁴¹⁻⁴²As the Philistine paced back and forth, his shield bearer in front of him, he noticed David. He took one look down on him and sneered—a mere **boy**youngster, apple-cheeked and peach-fuzzed.

2 Samuel 6:8-11

⁸⁻¹¹Then David got angry because of God's deadly outburst against Uzzah. That place is still called Perez Uzzah (The-Explosion-Against-Uzzah). David became fearful of God that day and said, "This Chest is too ~~dangerous~~^{hot} to handle. How can I ever get it back to the City of David?" He refused to take the Chest of God a step farther. Instead, David removed it off the road and to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The Chest of God stayed at the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months. And God prospered Obed-Edom and his entire household.

2 Samuel 7:1-2

GOD'S~~God's~~ *Covenant with David*

¹⁻²Before long, the king made himself at home and GOD gave him peace from all his enemies. Then one day King David said to Nathan the prophet, "Look at this: Here I am, comfortable in a luxurious house of cedar, and the Chest of God sits in a plain tent."

2 Samuel 10:8-12

⁸⁻¹²The Ammonites marched out and arranged themselves in battle formation at the city gate. The Arameans of Zobah and Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah took up a position out in the open fields. When Joab saw that he had two fronts to fight, before and behind, he took his pick of the best of Israel and deployed them to confront the Arameans. The rest of the army he put under the command of Abishai, his brother, and deployed them to confront the Ammonites. Then he said, "If the Arameans are too much for me, you help me. And if the Ammonites prove too much for you, I'll come and help you. Courage! We'll fight **tooth and nail**~~with might and main~~ for our people and for the cities of our God. And God will do whatever he sees needs doing!"

2 Samuel 11:18-21

¹⁸⁻²¹Joab sent David a full report on the battle. He instructed the messenger, “After you have given to the king a detailed report on the battle, if he flares in anger, say, ‘And by the way, your servant Uriah **the** Hittite is dead.’”

2 Samuel 18:6-8

⁶⁻⁸The army took the field to meet Israel. It turned out that the battle was joined in the Forest of Ephraim. The army of Israel was beaten badly there that day by David's men, a terrific slaughter—twenty thousand men! There was **dazed and confused fighting**~~fighting helter-skelter~~ all over the place—the forest claimed more lives that day than the sword!

2 Samuel 21:15-17

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ War broke out again between the Philistines and Israel. David and his men went down to fight. David became exhausted. Ishbi-Benob, a warrior descended from Rapha, with a spear weighing nearly eight pounds and outfitted in brand-new armor, announced that he'd kill David. But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to the rescue, struck the Philistine, and killed him.

Then David's men swore to him, "No more fighting on the ~~front lines~~ front lines for you! Don't snuff out the lamp of Israel!"

1 Kings 1:43-48

⁴³⁻⁴⁸But Jonathan answered, “Hardly! Our master King David has just made Solomon king! And the king has surrounded him with Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, with the Kerethites and Pelethites; and they’ve mounted Solomon on the royal mule. Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king at Gihon and the parade is headed up this way singing—a great fanfare! The city is **beside itself**rocking! That’s what you’re hearing. Here’s the crowning touch—Solomon is seated on the throne of the kingdom! And that’s not all: The king’s servants have come to give their blessing to our master King David saying, ‘God make Solomon’s name even more honored than yours, and make his rule greater than yours!’ On his deathbed the king worshiped God and prayed, ‘Blessed be GOD, Israel’s God, who has provided a successor to my throne, and I’ve lived to see it!’”

2 Kings 5:11-12

¹¹⁻¹² Naaman lost his temper. He spun around ~~turned on his heel~~ saying, "I thought he'd personally come out and meet me, call on the name of GOD, wave his hand over the diseased spot, and get rid of the disease. The Damascus rivers, Abana and Pharpar, are cleaner by far than any of the rivers in Israel. Why not bathe in them? I'd at least get clean." He stomped off, mad as a hornet.

2 Kings 18:19-22

¹⁹⁻²²The third officer, the Rabshakeh, was spokesman. He said, “Tell Hezekiah: A message from ~~the~~^{The} Great King, the king of Assyria: You’re living in a world of make-believe, of pious fantasy. Do you think that mere words are any substitute for military strategy and troops? Now that you’ve revolted against me, who can you expect to help you? You thought Egypt would, but Egypt’s nothing but a paper tiger—one puff of wind and she collapses; Pharaoh king of Egypt is nothing but bluff and bluster. Or are you going to tell me, ‘We rely on God’? But Hezekiah has just eliminated most of the people’s access to God by getting rid of all the local God-shrines, ordering everyone in Judah and Jerusalem, ‘You must worship at the Jerusalem altar only.’

1 Chronicles 19:2-3

²⁻³But when David's servants arrived in Ammonite country and came to Hanun to bring condolences, the Ammonite leaders warned Hanun, "Do you for a minute suppose that David is honoring your father by sending you comforters? Don't you know that he's sent these men to scout out ~~snoop around~~ the city and size it up so that he can capture it?"

1 Chronicles 27:32

³²Jonathan, David's uncle, a wise and literate counselor, and Jehiel son of Hacmoni, were responsible for ~~raising~~rearing the king's sons.

2 Chronicles 7:11

GOD'S ~~God's~~ Confirmation

¹¹Solomon completed building The Temple of God and the royal palace—the projects he had set his heart on doing. Everything was done—success! Satisfaction!

2 Chronicles 30:6-9

⁶⁻⁹The king gave the orders, and the couriers delivered the invitations from the king and his leaders throughout Israel and Judah. The invitation read: “O Israelites! Come back to God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so that he can return to you who have survived the ~~preying~~~~predations of the~~ kings of Assyria. Don’t repeat the sins of your ancestors who turned their backs on God, the God of their ancestors who then brought them to ruin—you can see the ruins all around you. Don’t be ~~bullheaded~~~~pigheaded~~ as your ancestors were. Clasp God’s outstretched hand. Come to his Temple of holy worship, consecrated for all time. Serve God, *your* God. You’ll no longer be in danger of his hot anger. If you come back to God, your captive relatives and children will be treated compassionately and allowed to come home. Your God is gracious and kind and won’t snub you—come back and he’ll welcome you with open arms.”

2 Chronicles 31:11-18

¹¹⁻¹⁸Hezekiah then ordered storerooms to be prepared in The Temple of God. When they were ready, they brought in all the offerings of tithes and sacred gifts. They put Conaniah the Levite in charge with his brother Shimei as assistant. Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismakiah, Mahath, and Benaiah were project managers under the direction of Conaniah and Shimei, carrying out the orders of King Hezekiah and Azariah the chief priest of The Temple of God. Kore son of Imnah the Levite, security guard of the East Gate, was in charge of the Freewill-Offerings of God and responsible for distributing the offerings and sacred gifts. Faithful support out in the priestly cities was provided by Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah. They were even-handed in their distributions to their coworkers (all males thirty years and older) in each of their respective divisions as they entered The Temple of God each day to do their assigned work (their work was all organized by divisions). The divisions comprised officially registered priests by family and Levites twenty years and older by job description. The official family tree included everyone in the entire congregation—their small children, wives, sons, and daughters. The ~~ardent~~ **passionate** dedication they showed in bringing themselves and their gifts to worship was total—no one was left out.

2 Chronicles 33:11-13

¹¹⁻¹³Then GOD directed the leaders of the troops of the king of Assyria to come after Manasseh. They put a hook in his nose, shackles on his feet, and took him off to Babylon. Now that he was in trouble, he ~~dropped~~ ~~went~~ to his knees in prayer asking for help—total repentance before the God of his ancestors. As he prayed, GOD was touched; GOD listened and brought him back to Jerusalem as king. That convinced Manasseh that GOD was in control.

Nehemiah 2:20

²⁰I shot back, “The God-of-Heaven will make sure we succeed. We’re his servants and we’re going to work, rebuilding. You can **stick to your own business**~~keep your nose out of it~~. You get no say in this—Jerusalem’s none of your business!”

Nehemiah 9:20-23

20-23 You gave them your good Spirit
to teach them to live wisely.
You ~~were never miserly~~ ~~never stinted~~ with your manna,
gave them plenty of water to drink.
You supported them forty years in that desert;
they had everything they needed;
Their clothes didn't wear out
and their feet never blistered.
You gave them kingdoms and peoples,
establishing generous boundaries.
They took over the country of Sihon king of Heshbon
and the country of Og king of Bashan.
You multiplied children for them,
rivaling the stars in the night skies,
And you brought them into the land
that you promised their ancestors
they would get and own.

Nehemiah 9:26-31

26-31 But then they mutinied, rebelled against you,
threw out your laws and killed your prophets,
The very prophets who tried to get them back on your side—
and then things went from bad to worse.
You turned them over to their enemies,
who made life rough for them.
But when they called out for help in their troubles
you listened from heaven;
And in keeping with your bottomless compassion
you gave them saviors:
Saviors who saved them
from the cruel abuse of their enemies.
But as soon as they had it easy again
they were right back at it—more evil.
So you turned away and left them again to their fate,
to the enemies who came right back.
They cried out to you again; in your great compassion
you heard and helped them again.
This went on over and over and over.
You warned them to return to your Revelation,
they responded with haughty arrogance:
They brushed off flouted your commands, spurned your rules
—the very words by which men and women live!
They set their jaws in defiance,
they turned their backs on you and didn't listen.
You put up with them year after year
and warned them by your spirit through your prophets;
But when they refused to listen
you abandoned them to foreigners.
Still, because of your great compassion,
you didn't make a total end to them.
You didn't walk out and leave them for good;
yes, you *are* a God of grace and compassion.

Nehemiah 12:27-29

²⁷⁻²⁹ When it came time for the dedication of the wall, they tracked down and brought in the Levites from all their homes in Jerusalem to carry out the dedication **with exuberance** ~~exuberantly~~: thanksgiving hymns, songs, cymbals, harps, and lutes. The singers assembled from all around Jerusalem, from the villages of the Netophathites, from Beth Gilgal, from the farms at Geba and Azmaveth—the singers had built villages for themselves all around Jerusalem.

Esther 1:16-18

¹⁶⁻¹⁸Memucan spoke up in the council of the king and princes: “It’s not only the king Queen Vashti has insulted, it’s all of us, leaders and people alike in every last one of King Xerxes’ provinces. The word’s going to get out: ‘Did you hear the latest about Queen Vashti? King Xerxes ordered her to be brought before him and she wouldn’t do it!’ When the women hear it, they’ll start treating their husbands with contempt. The day the wives of the Persian and Mede officials get wind of the queen’s **brazennessinsolence**, they’ll be out of control. Is that what we want, a country of angry women who don’t know their place?”

Esther 2:5-7

⁵⁻⁷Now there was a Jew who lived in the palace complex in Susa. His name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish—a Benjaminite. His ancestors had been taken from Jerusalem with the exiles and carried off with King Jehoiachin of Judah by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon into exile. Mordecai had ~~reared~~ raised his cousin Hadassah, otherwise known as Esther, since she had no father or mother. The girl had a good figure and a beautiful face. After her parents died, Mordecai had adopted her.

Esther 7:7-8

⁷⁻⁸The king, raging, left his wine and ~~stomped~~ stalked out into the palace garden.

Haman stood there pleading with Queen Esther for his life—he could see that the king was finished with him and that he was doomed. As the king came back from the palace garden into the banquet hall, Haman was groveling at the couch on which Esther reclined. The king roared out, “Will he even molest the queen while I’m just around the corner?”

When that word left the king’s mouth, all the blood drained from Haman’s face.

Esther 8:15-17

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ Mordecai walked out of the king's presence wearing a royal robe of violet and white, a huge gold crown, and a purple cape of fine linen. The city of Susa exploded with joy. For Jews it was all **good times** ~~sunshine~~ and laughter: they celebrated, they were honored. It was that way all over the country, in every province, every city when the king's bulletin was posted: the Jews took to the streets in celebration, cheering, and feasting. Not only that, but many non-Jews became Jews—now it was dangerous *not* to be a Jew!

Job 5:1-7

¹⁻⁷ “Call for help, Job, if you think anyone will answer!

To which of the holy angels will you turn?

The hot temper of a fool eventually kills him,
the jealous anger of ~~an idiot~~^{a simpleton} does her in.

I’ve seen it myself—seen fools putting down roots,
and then, suddenly, their houses are cursed.

Their children out in the cold, abused and exploited,
with no one to stick up for them.

Hungry people off the street plunder their harvests,
cleaning them out completely, taking thorns and all,
insatiable for everything they have.

Don’t blame fate when things go wrong—
trouble doesn’t come from nowhere.

It’s human! Mortals are born and bred for trouble,
as certainly as sparks fly upward.

Job 5:20-26

20-26 “In famine, he’ll keep you from starving,
 in war, from being gutted by the sword.
You’ll be protected from vicious gossip
 and live fearless through any catastrophe.
You’ll shrug off disaster and famine,
 and stroll fearlessly among wild animals.
You’ll be on good terms with rocks and mountains;
 wild animals will become your good friends.
You’ll know that your place on earth is safe,
 you’ll look over your goods and find nothing amiss.
You’ll see your children grow up,
 your family lovely and graceful~~isome~~ as orchard grass.
You’ll arrive at your grave ripe with many good years,
 like sheaves of golden grain at harvest.

Job 6:1-7

¹⁻⁷Job answered:

“If my misery could be weighed,
if you could pile the whole bitter load on the scales,
It would be heavier than all the sand of the sea!
Is it any wonder that I’m ~~howling~~ ~~screaming~~ like a caged cat?
The arrows of God Almighty are in me,
poison arrows—and I’m poisoned all through!
God has dumped the whole works on me.
Donkeys bray and cows moo when they run out of pasture—
so don’t expect me to keep quiet in this.
Do you see what God has dished out for me?
It’s enough to turn anyone’s stomach!
Everything in me is repulsed by it—
it makes me sick.

Job 7:7-10

⁷⁻¹⁰ “God, don’t forget that I’m only a wisppuff of air!

These eyes have had their last look at goodness.

And your eyes have seen the last of me;

even while you’re looking, there’ll be nothing left to look at.

When a cloud evaporates, it’s gone for good;

those who go to the grave never come back.

They don’t return to visit their families;

never again will friends drop in for coffee.

Job 7:11-16

11-16 “And so I’m not keeping one bit of this quiet,
 I’m laying it all out on the table;
 my complaining to high heaven is bitter, but honest.
Are you going to put a muzzle on me,
 the way you quiet the sea and still the storm?
If I say, ‘I’m going to bed, then I’ll feel better.
 A little nap will lift my spirits,’
You come and so scare me with nightmares
 and frighten me with ghosts
That I’d rather strangle in the ~~bedclothes~~ sheets
 than face this kind of life any longer.
I hate this life! Who needs any more of this?
 Let me alone! There’s nothing to my life—it’s nothing
 but smoke.

Job 8:8-19

8-19 “Put the question to our ancestors,
study what they learned from their ancestors.
For we’re newcomers at this, with a lot to learn,
and not too long to learn it.
So why not let the ancients teach you, tell you what’s what,
instruct you in what they knew from experience?
Can mighty pine trees grow tall without soil?
Can luscious tomatoes flourish without water?
Blossoming flowers look beautiful~~great~~ before they’re cut or picked,
but without soil or water they wither more quickly than grass.
That’s what happens to all who forget God—
all their hopes come to nothing.
They hang their life from one thin thread,
they hitch their fate to a spider web.
One jiggle and the thread breaks,
one jab and the web collapses.
Or they’re like weeds springing up in the sunshine,
invading the garden,
Spreading everywhere, overtaking the flowers,
getting a foothold even in the rocks.
But when the gardener rips them out by the roots,
the garden doesn’t miss them one bit.
The sooner the godless are gone, the better;
then good plants can grow in their place.

Job 11:13-20

13-20 “Still, if you set your heart on God
 and reach out to him,
If you scrub your hands of sin
 and refuse to entertain evil in your home,
You’ll be able to face the world unashamed
 and keep a firm grip on life, guiltless and fearless.
You’ll forget your troubles;
 they’ll be like old, faded photographs.
Your world will be washed in sunshine,
 every shadow dispersed by ~~dawn~~dayspring.
Full of hope, you’ll relax, confident again;
 you’ll look around, sit back, and take it easy.
Expansive, without a care in the world,
 you’ll be hunted out by many for your blessing.
But the wicked will see none of this.
 They’re headed down a dead-end road
 with nothing to look forward to—nothing.”

Job 13:6-12

⁶⁻¹² “Listen now while I make my case,
consider my side of things for a change.
Or are you going to keep on lying ‘to do God a service’?
to make up stories ‘to get him off the hook’?
Why do you always take his side?
Do you think he needs a lawyer to defend himself?
How would you fare if you were in the witness stand ~~deck~~?
Your lies might convince a jury—but would they
convince *God*?
He’d reprimand you on the spot
if he detected a bias in your witness.
Doesn’t his splendor put you in awe?
Aren’t you afraid to speak cheap lies before him?
Your wise sayings are knickknack wisdom,
good for nothing but gathering dust.

Job 15:27-35

27-35 “Even if they’re the picture of health,
trim and fit and youthful,
They’ll end up living in a ghost town
sleeping in a hovel not fit for a dog,
a ramshackle shack.
They’ll never get ahead,
never amount to ~~much of anything~~ ~~a hill of beans~~.
And then death—don’t think they’ll escape that!
They’ll end up shriveled weeds,
brought down by a puff of God’s breath.
There’s a lesson here: Whoever invests in lies,
gets lies for interest,
Paid in full before the due date.
Some investment!
They’ll be like fruit frost-killed before it ripens,
like buds sheared off before they bloom.
The godless are fruitless—a barren crew;
a life built on bribes goes up in smoke.
They have sex with sin and give birth to evil.
Their lives are wombs for breeding deceit.”

Job 16:1-5

¹⁻⁵Then Job defended himself:

“I’ve had all I can take of your talk.

What a bunch of miserable comforters!

Is there no end to your windbag speeches?

What’s your problem that you go on and on like this?

If you were in my shoes,

I could talk just like you.

I could put together a terrific ~~tirade~~harangue

and really let you have it.

But I’d never do that. I’d console and comfort,
make things better, not worse!

Job 17:10-16

10-16 “Maybe you’d all like to start over,
 to try it again, the bunch of you.
So far I haven’t come across one scrap
 of wisdom in anything you’ve said.
My life’s about over. All my plans are ~~shattered~~~~smashed~~,
 all my hopes are snuffed out—
My hope that night would turn into day,
 my hope that dawn was about to break.
If all I have to look forward to is a home in the graveyard,
 if my only hope for comfort is a well-built coffin,
If a family reunion means going six feet under,
 and the only family that shows up is worms,
Do you call that hope?
 Who on earth could find any hope in that?
No. If hope and I are to be buried together,
 I suppose you’ll all come to the double funeral!”

Job 18:5-21

⁵⁻²¹ “Here’s the rule: The light of the wicked is put out.

Their flame dies down and is extinguished.

Their house goes dark—

every lamp in the place goes out.

Their strong strides weaken, falter;

they stumble into their own traps.

They get all tangled up

in their own red tape,

Their feet are grabbed and caught,

their necks in a noose.

They trip on ropes they’ve hidden,

and fall into pits they’ve dug themselves.

Terrors come at them from all sides.

They run dazed and confused ~~helter-skelter~~.

The hungry grave is ready

to gobble them up for supper,

To lay them out for a gourmet meal,

a treat for ravenous Death.

They are snatched from their home sweet home

and marched straight to the death house.

Their lives go up in smoke;

acid rain soaks their ruins.

Their roots rot

and their branches wither.

They’ll never again be remembered—

nameless in unmarked graves.

They are plunged from light into darkness,

banished from the world.

And they leave empty-handed—not one single child—

nothing to show for their life on this earth.

Westerners are aghast at their fate,

easterners are horrified:

‘Oh no! So this is what happens to perverse people.

This is how the God-ignorant end up!’”

Job 19:13-20

13-20 “God alienated my family from me;
 everyone who knows me avoids me.
My relatives and friends have all left;
 houseguests forget I ever existed.
The servant girls treat me like a ~~deadbeat~~ bum off the street,
 look at me like they’ve never seen me before.
I call my attendant and he ignores me,
 ignores me even though I plead with him.
My wife can’t stand to be around me anymore.
 I’m repulsive to my family.
Even street urchins despise me;
 when I come out, they taunt and jeer.
Everyone I’ve ever been close to abhors me;
 my dearest loved ones reject me.
I’m nothing but a bag of bones;
 my life hangs by a thread.

Job 27:13-23

13-23 "I'll quote your own words back to you:

"This is how God treats the wicked,
this is what evil people can expect from God Almighty:
Their children—all of them—will die violent deaths;
they'll never have enough bread to put on the table.
They'll be wiped out by the plague,
and none of the widows will shed a tear when they're gone.
Even if they make a lot of money
and are resplendent in the latest fashions,
It's the good who will end up wearing the clothes
and the decent who will divide up the money.
They build elaborate houses
that won't survive a single winter.
They go to bed wealthy
and wake up poor.
Terrors pour in on them like flash floods—
a tornado snatches them away in the middle of the night,
A cyclone sweeps them up—gone!
Not a trace of them left, not even a footprint.
Catastrophes relentlessly pursue them;
they run this way and that, but there's no place to hide—
Pummeled by the weather,
blown to smithereens ~~kingdom come~~ by the storm."

Job 29:7-20

7-20 "When I walked downtown
and sat with my friends in the public square,
Young and old greeted me with respect;
I was honored by everyone in town.
When I spoke, everyone listened;
they hung on my every word.
People who knew me spoke well of me;
my reputation went ahead of me.
I was known for helping people in trouble
and standing up for those who were down on their luck.
The dying blessed me,
and the bereaved were cheered by my visits.
All my dealings with people were good.
I was known for being fair to everyone I met.
I was eyes to the blind
and feet to the lame,
Father to the needy,
and champion of abused aliens.
I grabbed street thieves by the scruff of the neck
and made them give back what they'd stolen.
I thought, 'I'll die peacefully in my own bed,
grateful for a long and full life,
A life deep-rooted and well-watered,
a life limber and dew-fresh,
My soul soaked through ~~suffused~~ with glory
and my body robust until the day I die.'

Job 30:1-8

1-8 “But no longer. Now I’m the butt of their jokes—
young thugs~~ruffians~~! whippersnappers!
Why, I considered their fathers
mere inexperienced pups.
But they are worse than dogs—good for nothing,
stray, mangy animals,
Half-starved, scavenging the back alleys,
howling at the moon;
Homeless ragamuffins~~guttersnipes~~
chewing on old bones and licking old tin cans;
Outcasts from the community,
cursed as dangerous delinquents.
Nobody would put up with them;
they were driven from the neighborhood.
You could hear them out there at the edge of town,
yelping and barking, huddled in junkyards,
A gang of beggars and no-names,
thrown out on their ears.

Job 31:29-30

29-30 “Did I ever ~~gloat~~~~erow~~ over my enemy’s ruin?
Or ~~get excited~~~~gloat~~ over my rival’s bad luck?
No, I never said a word of detraction,
never cursed them, even under my breath.

Psalm 1:1

¹ How well God must like you—

you don't walk in the ruts of those blind-as-bats~~hang out at Sin Saloon,~~

you don't stand with the good-for-nothings~~slink along Dead End Road,~~

you don't take your seat among the know-it-alls~~go to Smart Mouth College.~~

Psalm 1:6

- ⁶ GOD charts the road you take.
The road *they* take leads to nowhere ~~is Skid Row~~.

Psalm 6:2-3

²⁻³ Can't you see I'm black-and-blue,
 beaten~~beat~~ up badly in bones and soul?
GOD, how long will it take
 for you to let up?

Psalm 8:5-8

⁵⁻⁸ Yet we've so narrowly missed being gods,
bright with Eden's dawn light.
You put us in charge of your handcrafted world,
repeated to us your Genesis-charge,
Made us ~~stewards~~ ~~lords~~ of sheep and cattle,
even animals out in the wild,
Birds flying and fish swimming,
whales singing in the ocean deeps.

Psalm 9:15-16

15-16 They're trapped, those godless countries,
 in the very snares they set,
Their feet all tangled
 in the net they spread.
They have no excuse;
 the way God works is well-known.
The ~~shrewd~~~~cunning~~ machinery made by the wicked
 has maimed their own hands.

Psalm 10:7-8

⁷⁻⁸ They carry a mouthful of ~~spells~~hexes,
their tongues spit venom like adders.
They hide behind ordinary people,
then pounce on their victims.

Psalm 11:4-6

⁴⁻⁶ But God hasn't moved to the mountains;
his holy address hasn't changed.
He's in charge, as always, his eyes
taking everything in, his eyelids
Unblinking, examining Adam's ~~unruly brood~~ **flesh and blood**
inside and out, not missing a thing.
He tests the good and the bad alike;
if anyone cheats, God's outraged.
Fail the test and you're out,
out in a hail of firestones,
Drinking from a canteen
filled with hot desert wind.

Psalm 14:4

⁴ Don't they know anything,
all these predators impostors?
Don't they know
they can't get away with this—
Treating people like a fast-food meal
over which they're too busy to pray?

Psalm 18:1-2

A David Song, Which He Sang to ~~God~~ After Being Saved from All His Enemies and from Saul

¹⁻² I love you, GOD—
 you make me strong.
GOD is bedrock under my feet,
 the castle in which I live,
 my rescuing knight

Psalm 18:25-27

25-27 The good people taste your goodness,
The whole people taste your health,
The true people taste your truth,
The bad ones can't figure you out.
You take the side of the down-and-out,
But the stuck-up you take down a notch~~peg~~.

Psalm 25:17

¹⁷ My heart and ~~mind~~kidneys are fighting each other;
Call a truce to this civil war.

Psalm 28:2

² I'm letting you know what I need,
calling out for help
And lifting my arms
toward your inner ~~sanctuary~~sanctum.

Psalm 31:1-2

¹⁻² I run to you, God; I run for dear life.

Don't let me down!

Take me seriously this time!

Get down on my level and listen,
and please—no procrastination!

Your granite cave a hiding place,
your high cliff ~~nest~~^{erie} a place of safety.

Psalm 32:5

⁵ Then I let it all out;

I said, "I'll ~~come clean about~~ ~~make a clean breast of~~ my failures to God."

Suddenly the pressure was gone—

my guilt dissolved,

my sin disappeared.

Psalm 33:1-3

¹⁻³ Good people, cheer God!

Right-living people sound best when praising.

Use guitars to reinforce your Hallelujahs!

Play his praise on a grand piano!

Compose~~invent~~ your own new song to him;

give him a trumpet fanfare.

Psalm 35:15-16

15-16 But when I was down
 they threw a party!
All the nameless ~~misfits~~ ~~riffraff~~ of the town came
 chanting insults about me.
Like barbarians desecrating a shrine,
 they destroyed my reputation.

Psalm 38:1-2

¹⁻² Take a deep breath, GOD; calm down—
don't be so hasty with your punishing rod.
Your sharp-pointed arrows of rebuke draw blood;
my backside ~~stings~~smarts from your ~~discipline~~caning.

Psalm 38:3-4

³⁻⁴ I've lost twenty pounds in two months
because of your accusation.
My bones are brittle as dry sticks
because of my sin.
I'm swamped by my bad behavior,
collapsed under ~~an avalanche~~^{gunnysacks} of guilt.

Psalm 39:7-11

⁷⁻¹¹ “What am I doing in the meantime, Lord?
 Hoping, that’s what I’m doing—hoping
You’ll save me from a rebel life,
 save me from the contempt of **idiots**~~dunces~~.
I’ll say no more, I’ll shut my mouth,
 since you, Lord, are behind all this.
 But I can’t take it much longer.
When you put us through the fire
 to purge us from our sin,
 our dearest idols go up in smoke.
Are we also nothing but smoke?

Psalm 40:4-5

4-5 Blessed are you who give yourselves over to God,
turn your backs on the world's "sure thing,"
ignore what the world worships;
The world's a huge stockpile
of GOD-wonders and God-thoughts.
Nothing and no one
~~compares~~~~comes close~~ to you!
I start talking about you, telling what I know,
and quickly run out of words.
Neither numbers nor words
account for you.

Psalm 42:1-3

1-3 A white-tailed deer drinks
from the creek;
I want to drink God,
deep ~~drafts~~~~draughts~~ of God.
I'm thirsty for God-alive.
I wonder, "Will I ever make it—
arrive and drink in God's presence?"
I'm on a diet of tears—
tears for breakfast, tears for supper.
All day long
people knock at my door,
Pestering,
"Where is this God of yours?"

Psalm 44:13-16

13-16 You made people on the street,
 people we know urchins, poke fun and call us names.
You made us a joke among the godless,
 a cheap joke among the rabble.
Every day I'm up against it,
 my nose rubbed in my shame—
Gossip and ridicule fill the air,
 people out to get me crowd the street.

Psalm 45:8-9

8-9 “Your ~~forest~~~~ozone~~-drenched garments
are fragrant with mountain breeze.
Chamber music—from the throne room—
makes you want to dance.
Kings’ daughters are maids in your court,
the Bride glittering with golden jewelry.

Psalm 48:1-3

¹⁻³ GOD majestic,
praise abounds in our God-city!
His sacred mountain,
breathtaking in its heights—earth's joy.
Zion Mountain looms in the North,
city of the world-King.
God in his citadel peaks
undefeatableimpregnable.

Psalm 49:10-11

10-11 Anyone can see that the brightest and best die,
 wiped out right along with fools and ~~idiots~~dunces.
They leave all their prowess behind,
 move into their new home, The Coffin,
The cemetery their permanent address.
 And to think they named counties after themselves!

Psalm 50:7-15

⁷⁻¹⁵ “Are you listening, dear people? I’m getting ready to speak;
Israel, I’m about ready to bring you to trial.
This is God, your God,
speaking to you.
I don’t find fault with your acts of worship,
the frequent burnt sacrifices you offer.
But why should I want your blue-ribbon bull,
or more and more goats from your herds?
Every creature in the forest is mine,
the wild animals on all the mountains.
I know every mountain bird by name;
the scampering field mice are my friends.
If I get hungry, do you think I’d tell you?
All creation and its bounty are mine.
Do you think I feast on venison?
or drink ~~drafts~~^{draughts} of goats’ blood?
Spread for me a banquet of praise,
serve High God a feast of kept promises,
And call for help when you’re in trouble—
I’ll help you, and you’ll honor me.”

Psalm 53:4

⁴ Don't they know anything,
all these predators impostors?
Don't they know
they can't get away with this,
Treating people like a fast-food meal
over which they're too busy to pray?

Psalm 58:1-2

¹⁻² Is this any way to run a country?

Is there an honest politician in the house?

Behind the scenes you **weave webs of deceit**, ~~brew cauldrons of evil,~~
behind closed doors you make deals with demons.

Psalm 59:16-17

16-17 And me? I'm singing your prowess,
 shouting at dawn ~~o~~kerow your largesse,
For you've been a safe place for me,
 a good place to hide.
Strong God, I'm watching you do it,
 I can always count on you—
 God, my dependable love.

Psalm 60:1-2

¹⁻² God! you walked off and left us,
kicked our defenses to bits
And ~~stalked~~ stomped off angry.
Come back. Oh please, come back!

You shook earth to the foundations,
ripped open huge crevasses.
Heal the breaks! Everything's
coming apart at the seams.

Psalm 68:17-18

17-18 The chariots of God, twice ten thousand,
 and thousands more besides,
The Lord in the lead, riding down Sinai—
 straight to the Holy Place!
You climbed to the High Place, captives in tow,
 your arms full of plunder~~booty~~ from rebels,
And now you sit there in state,
 God, sovereign God!

Psalm 69:4

⁴ I've got more enemies than hairs on my head;
Liars and cheats Sneaks and liars are out to knife me in the back.

What I never stole
Must I now give back?

Psalm 71:12-16

12-16 God, don't just watch from the sidelines.
Come on! Run to my side!
My accusers—make them lose face.
Those out to get me—make them look
Like idiots, while I stretch out, reaching for you,
and daily add praise to praise.
I'll write the book on your righteousness,
talk up your salvation ~~all the day long~~ ~~the livelong day~~,
never run out of good things to write or say.
I come in the power of the Lord God,
I post signs marking his right-of-way.

Psalm 77:7-10

⁷⁻¹⁰ Will the Lord walk off and leave us for good?

Will he never smile again?

Is his love worn threadbare?

Has his salvation promise burned out?

Has God forgotten his manners?

Has he angrily ~~stomped~~ stalked off and left us?

“Just my luck,” I said. “The High God ~~retires~~ goes out of business just the moment I need him.”

Psalm 78:32-37

32-37 And—can you believe it?—they kept right on sinning;
all those wonders and they still wouldn't believe!
So their lives ~~wasted away~~ ~~dribbled off~~ to nothing—
nothing to show for their lives but a ghost town.
When he cut them down, they came running for help;
they turned and pled for mercy.
They gave witness that God was their rock,
that High God was their redeemer,
But they didn't mean a word of it;
they lied through their teeth the whole time.
They could not have cared less about him,
wanted nothing to do with his Covenant.

Psalm 78:38-55

38-55

And God? Compassionate!
Forgave the sin! Didn't destroy!
Over and over he reined in his anger,
restrained his considerable wrath.
He knew what they were made of;
he knew there wasn't much to them,
How often in the desert they had spurned him,
tried his patience in those wilderness years.
Time and again they pushed him to the limit,
provoked Israel's Holy God.
How quickly they forgot what he'd done,
forgot their day of rescue from the enemy,
When he did miracles in Egypt,
wonders on the plain of Zoan.
He turned the River and its streams to blood—
not a drop of water fit to drink.
He sent flies, which ate them alive,
and frogs, which ~~bedeviled them.~~ **drove them crazy**.
He turned their harvest over to caterpillars,
everything they had worked for to the locusts.
He flattened their grapevines with hail;
a killing frost ruined their orchards.
He pounded their cattle with hail,
let thunderbolts loose on their herds.
His anger flared,
a wild firestorm of havoc,
An advance guard of disease-carrying angels
to clear the ground, preparing the way before him.
He didn't spare those people,
he let the plague rage through their lives.
He killed all the Egyptian firstborns,
lusty infants, offspring of Ham's virility.
Then he led his people out like sheep,
took his flock safely through the wilderness.
He took good care of them; they had nothing to fear.
The Sea took care of their enemies for good.
He brought them into his holy land,
this mountain he claimed for his own.
He scattered everyone who got in their way;
he staked out an inheritance for them—
the tribes of Israel all had their own places.

Psalm 81:8-10

⁸⁻¹⁰ “Listen, dear ones—get this straight;
O Israel, don’t take this lightly.
Don’t take up with strange gods,
don’t worship the popular~~latest in~~ gods.
I’m God, your God, the very God
who rescued you from doom in Egypt,
Then fed you all you could eat,
filled your hungry stomachs.

Psalm 82:6-7

⁶⁻⁷ “I appointed ~~commissioned~~ you judges, each one of you,
deputies of the High God,
But you’ve betrayed your commission
and now you’re stripped of your rank, busted.”

Psalm 82:8

- ⁸ O God, give them **what they've got coming**~~their just deserts!~~
You've got the whole world in your hands!

Psalm 89:5-18

⁵⁻¹⁸ GOD! Let the cosmos praise your wonderful ways,
the choir of holy angels sing anthems to your faithful ways!
Search high and low, scan skies and land,
you'll find nothing and no one quite like GOD.
The holy angels are in awe before him;
he looms immense and august over everyone around him.
GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies, who is like you,
powerful and faithful from every angle?
You put the arrogant ocean in its place
and calm its waves when they turn unruly.
You gave that old hag Egypt the back of your hand,
you brushed off your enemies with a flick of your wrist.
You own the cosmos—you made everything in it,
everything from atom to archangel.
You positioned the North and South Poles;
the mountains Tabor and Hermon sing duets to you.
With your well-muscled arm and your grip of steel—
nobody **messes** **trifles** with you!
The Right and Justice are the roots of your rule;
Love and Truth are its fruits.
Blessed are the people who know the passwords of praise,
who shout on parade in the bright presence of GOD.
Delighted, they dance all day long; they know
who you are, what you do—they can't keep it quiet!
Your vibrant beauty has gotten inside us—
you've been so good to us! We're walking on air!
All we are and have we owe to GOD,
Holy God of Israel, our King!

Psalm 96:4-5

⁴⁻⁵ For GOD is great, and worth a thousand Hallelujahs.

His ~~terrible~~ **furios beauty puts the other gods to shame** ~~beauty makes the gods look cheap~~;

Pagan gods are mere tatters and rags.

Psalm 102:1-2

A Prayer of One Whose Life Is Falling to Pieces, and Who Lets ~~God~~ Know Just How Bad It Is

¹⁻² GOD, listen! Listen to my prayer,
listen to the pain in my cries.
Don't turn your back on me
just when I need you so desperately.
Pay attention! This is a cry for *help*!
And hurry—this can't wait!

Psalm 104:1-14

¹⁻¹⁴ O my soul, bless GOD!

GOD, my God, how great you are!
 beautifully, gloriously robed,
Dressed up in sunshine,
 and all heaven stretched out for your tent.
You built your palace on the ocean deeps,
 made a chariot out of clouds and took off on wind-wings.
You commandeered winds as messengers,
 appointed fire and flame as ambassadors.
You set earth on a firm foundation
 so that nothing can shake it, ever.
You blanketed earth with ocean,
 covered the mountains with deep waters;
Then you roared and the water ran away—
 your thunder crash put it to flight.
Mountains pushed up, valleys spread out
 in the places you assigned them.
You set boundaries between earth and sea;
 never again will earth be flooded.
You started the springs and rivers,
 sent them flowing among the hills.
All the wild animals now drink their fill,
 wild donkeys quench their thirst.
Along the riverbanks the birds build nests,
 ravens make their voices heard.
You water the mountains from your heavenly reservoirs; cisterns;
 earth is supplied with plenty of water.
You make grass grow for the livestock,
 hay for the animals that plow the ground.

Psalm 106:23-27

23-27 Fed up, God decided to get rid of them—
and except for Moses, his chosen, he would have.
But Moses stood in the gap and deflected God's anger,
prevented it from destroying them utterly.
They went on to reject the Blessed Land,
didn't believe a word of what God promised.
They found fault with the life they had
and turned a deaf ear to God's voice.
Exasperated, God swore
that he'd lay them low in the desert,
Scattering their children ~~here and there~~ ~~hither and yon~~,
strewing them all over the earth.

Psalm 106:34-39

34-39 They didn't wipe out those godless cultures
 as ordered by GOD;
Instead they intermarried with the heathen,
 and in time became just like them.
They worshiped their idols,
 were caught in the trap of idols.
They sacrificed their sons and daughters
 at the altars of demon gods.
They slit the throats of their babies,
 murdered their infant girls and boys.
They offered their babies to Canaan's gods;
 the blood of their babies stained the land.
Their way of life ~~reeked~~~~stank to high heaven~~;
 they lived like ~~prostitutes~~~~whores~~.

Psalm 107:4-9

4-9 Some of you wandered for years in the desert,
looking but not finding a good place to live,
Half-starved and parched with thirst,
staggering and stumbling, on the brink of exhaustion.
Then, in your desperate condition, you called out to God.
He got you out in the nick of time;
He put your feet on a wonderful road
that took you straight to a good place to live.
So thank God for his marvelous love,
for his miracle mercy to the children he loves.
He poured great ~~drafts~~~~draughts~~ of water down parched throats;
the starved and hungry got plenty to eat.

Psalm 109:6-20

6-20 Send the Evil One to accuse my accusing judge;
 dispatch Satan to prosecute him.
When he's judged, let the verdict be "Guilty,"
 and when he prays, let his prayer turn to sin.
Give him a short life,
 and give his job to somebody else.
Make orphans of his children,
 dress his wife in widow's blackweeds;
Turn his children into begging street urchins,
 evicted from their homes—homeless.
May the bank foreclose and wipe him out,
 and strangers, like vultures, pick him clean.
May there be no one around to help him out,
 no one willing to give his orphans a break.
Chop down his family tree
 so that nobody even remembers his name.
But erect a memorial to the sin of his father,
 and make sure his mother's name is there, too—
Their sins recorded forever before God,
 but they themselves sunk in oblivion.
That's all he deserves since he was never once kind,
 hounded the afflicted and heartbroken to their graves.
Since he loved cursing so much,
 let curses rain down;
Since he had no taste for blessing,
 let blessings flee far from him.
He dressed up in curses like a fine suit of clothes;
 he drank curses, took his baths in curses.
So give him a gift—a costume of curses;
 he can wear curses every day of the week!
That's what they'll get, those out to get me—
 an avalanche of just deserts from God.

Psalm 113:4-9

4-9 God is higher than anything and anyone,
outshining everything you can see in the skies.
Who can compare with God, our God,
so majestically enthroned,
Surveying his magnificent
heavens and earth?
He picks up the poor from out of the dirt,
rescues the forgotten wretched who've been thrown out with the trash,
Seats them among the honored guests,
a place of honor among the brightest and best.
He gives childless couples a family,
gives them joy as the parents of children.
Hallelujah!

Psalm 116:9-11

⁹⁻¹¹ I'm striding in the presence of God,
alive in the land of the living!
I stayed faithful, though ~~overwhelmed~~ ~~bedeviled~~,
and despite a ton of bad luck,
Despite giving up on the human race,
saying, "They're all liars and cheats."

Psalm 118:26-29

26-29 Blessed are you who enter in GOD's name—
from GOD's house we bless you!
GOD is God,
he has bathed us in light.
Adorn ~~Festoon~~ the shrine with garlands,
hang colored banners above the altar!
You're my God, and I thank you.
O my God, I lift high your praise.
Thank GOD—he's so good.
His love never quits!

Psalm 119:33-40

33-40

God, teach me lessons for living
so I can stay the course.
Give me insight so I can do what you tell me—
my whole life one long, obedient response.
Guide me down the road of your commandments;
I love traveling this freeway!
Give me an appetite ~~a bent~~ for your words of wisdom,
and not for piling up loot.
Divert my eyes from toys and trinkets,
invigorate me on the pilgrim way.
Affirm your promises to me—
promises made to all who fear you.
Deflect the harsh words of my critics—
but what you say is always so good.
See how hungry I am for your counsel;
preserve my life through your righteous ways!

Psalm 119:49-56

49-56 Remember what you said to me, your servant—
 I hang on to these words for dear life!
These words hold me up in bad times;
 yes, your promises rejuvenate me.
The ~~haters hate~~ ~~insolent~~ ~~ridicule~~ me without mercy,
 but I don't budge from your revelation.
I watch for your ancient landmark words,
 and know I'm on the right track.
But when I see the wicked ignore your directions,
 I'm beside myself with anger.
I set your instructions to music
 and sing them as I walk this pilgrim way.
I meditate on your name all night, GOD,
 treasuring your revelation, O GOD.
Still, I walk through a rain of derision
 because I live by your Word and counsel.

Psalm 119:89-96

89-96

What you say goes, God,
and *stays*, as permanent as the heavens.
Your truth never goes out of fashion;
it's as ~~relevant~~~~up-to-date~~ as the earth when the sun comes up.
Your Word and truth are dependable as ever;
that's what you ordered—you set the earth going.
If your revelation hadn't delighted me so,
I would have given up when the hard times came.
But I'll never forget the advice you gave me;
you saved my life with those wise words.
Save me! I'm all yours.
I look high and low for your words of wisdom.
The wicked lie in ambush to destroy me,
but I'm only concerned with your plans for me.
I see the limits to everything human,
but the horizons can't contain your commands!

Psalm 119:105-112

105-112 By your words I can see where I'm going;
 they throw a beam of light on my dark path.
I've committed myself and I'll never turn back
 from living by your righteous order.
Everything's falling apart on me, GOD;
 put me together again with your Word.
Adorn ~~Festoon~~ me with your finest sayings, GOD;
 teach me your holy rules.
My life is as close as my own hands,
 but I don't forget what you have revealed.
The wicked do their best to throw me off track,
 but I don't swerve an inch from your course.
I inherited your book on living; it's mine forever—
 what a gift! And how happy it makes me!
I concentrate on doing exactly what you say—
 I always have and always will.

Psalm 120:3-4

³⁻⁴ Do you know what's next, can you see what's coming,
all you **bold-faced**~~**barefaced**~~ liars?
Pointed arrows and burning coals
will be your reward.

Psalm 126:4-6

⁴⁻⁶ And now, God, do it again—
bring rains to our drought-stricken lives
So those who planted their crops in despair
will shout “Yes!” hurrahs at the harvest,
So those who went off with heavy hearts
will come home laughing, with armloads of blessing.

Psalm 128:1-2

¹⁻² All you who fear GOD, how blessed you are!
how happily you walk on his smooth straight road!
You worked hard and deserve all you've got coming.
Enjoy the blessing! SoakRevel in the goodness!

Psalm 130:1-2

¹⁻² Help, GOD—I've hit rock bottom ~~the bottom has fallen out of my life!~~
Master, hear my cry for help!
Listen hard! Open your ears!
Listen to my cries for mercy.

Psalm 140:1-5

¹⁻⁵ GOD, get me out of here, away from this evil;
protect me from these vicious people.
All they do is think up new ways to be bad;
they spend their days plotting war games.
They practice the sharp rhetoric of hate and hurt,
speak venomous words that maim and kill.
GOD, keep me out of the clutch of these wicked ones,
protect me from these vicious people;
All boast and swagger ~~Stuffed with self-importance~~, they plot ways to trip me up,
determined to bring me down.
These crooks invent traps to catch me
and do their best to incriminate me.

Psalm 142:3-7

3-7 “As I sink in despair, my spirit ebbing away,
you know how I’m feeling,
Know the danger I’m in,
the traps hidden in my path.
Look right, look left—
there’s not a soul who cares what happens!
I’m up against ~~the wall~~, with no exit—
~~it’s just me, all bereft, left~~ alone.
I cry out, GOD, call out:
‘You’re my last chance, my only hope for life!’
Oh listen, please listen;
I’ve never been this low.
Rescue me from those who are hunting me down;
I’m no match for them.
Get me out of this dungeon
so I can thank you in public.
Your people will form a circle around me
and you’ll bring me showers of blessing!”

Psalm 145:9

- ⁹ GOD is good to one and all;
everything he does is soaked through suffused with grace.

Psalm 149:1-4

¹⁻⁴ Hallelujah!

Sing to GOD a brand-new song,
praise him in the company of all who love him.
Let all Israel celebrate their Sovereign Creator,
Zion's children exult in their King.
Let them praise his name in dance;
strike up the band and make great music!
And why? Because God delights in his people,
~~adorns~~~~festoons~~ plain folk with salvation garlands!

Proverbs 1:8-19

⁸⁻¹⁹ Pay close attention, friend, to what your father tells you;
never forget what you learned at your mother's knee.
Wear their counsel like a winning crown ~~flowers in your hair,~~
like rings on your fingers.
Dear friend, if bad companions tempt you,
don't go along with them.
If they say—"Let's go out and raise some hell.
Let's beat up some old man, mug some old woman.
Let's pick them clean
and get them ready for their funerals.
We'll load up on top-quality loot.
We'll haul it home by the truckload.
Join us for the time of your life!
With us, it's share and share alike!"—
Oh, friend, don't give them a second look;
don't listen to them for a minute.
They're racing to a very bad end,
hurrying to ruin everything they lay hands on.
Nobody robs a bank
with everyone watching,
Yet that's what these people are doing—
they're doing themselves in.
When you grab all you can get, that's what happens:
the more you get, the less you are.

Proverbs 5:3-6

³⁻⁶ The lips of a seductive woman are oh so sweet,
her soft words are oh so smooth.
But it won't be long before she's gravel in your mouth,
a pain in your gut, a wound in your heart.
She's dancing down the ~~perfumed~~~~primrose~~ path to Death;
she's headed straight for Hell and taking you with her.
She hasn't a clue about Real Life,
about who she is or where she's going.

Proverbs 5:17-20

17-20 Your spring water is for you and you only,
 not to be passed around among strangers.

Bless your fresh-flowing fountain!

Enjoy the wife you married as a young man!

Lovely as an angel, beautiful as a rose—

don't ever quit taking delight in her body.

Never take her love for granted!

Why would you trade enduring intimacies for cheap thrills with a prostitute where?
for dalliance with a promiscuous stranger?

Proverbs 6:12-15

12-15

Swindlers and scoundrels ~~Riffraff and rascals~~

talk out of both sides of their mouths.

They wink at each other, they shuffle their feet,
they cross their fingers behind their backs.

Their perverse minds are always cooking up something nasty,
always stirring up trouble.

Catastrophe is just around the corner for them,
a total ~~wreck~~ ~~smashup~~, their lives ruined beyond repair.

Proverbs 6:24-35

24-35 They'll protect you from **promiscuous**~~wanton~~ women,
from the seductive talk of some temptress.
Don't lustfully fantasize on her beauty,
nor be taken in by her bedroom eyes.
You can buy an hour with a **prostitute**~~whore~~ for a loaf of bread,
but a **promiscuous**~~wanton~~ woman may well eat *you* alive.
Can you build a fire in your lap
and not burn your pants?
Can you walk barefoot on hot coals
and not get blisters?
It's the same when you have sex with your neighbor's wife:
Touch her and you'll pay for it. No excuses.
Hunger is no excuse
for a thief to steal;
When he's caught he has to pay it back,
even if he has to put his whole house in hock.
Adultery is a brainless act,
soul-destroying, self-destructive;
Expect a bloody nose, a black eye,
and a reputation ruined for good.
For jealousy detonates rage in a cheated husband;
wild for revenge, he won't make allowances.
Nothing you say or pay will make it all right;
neither bribes nor reason will satisfy him.

Proverbs 9:13-18

Madame *Prostitute* ~~Where~~ Calls Out, Too

13-18 Then there's this other woman, Madame *Prostitute* ~~Where~~—
brazen, empty-headed, frivolous.
She sits on the front porch
of her house on Main Street,
And as people walk by minding
their own business, calls out,
“Are you confused about life, don't know what's going on?
Steal off with me, I'll show you a good time!
No one will ever know—I'll give you the time of your life.”
But they don't know about all the skeletons in her closet,
that all her guests end up in hell.

Proverbs 10:15

¹⁵ The wealth of the rich is their ~~security~~ ~~bastion~~;
the poverty of the indigent is their ruin.

Proverbs 14:11

¹¹ Lives of careless wrongdoing are ~~run-down~~~~tumbledown~~ shacks;
holy living builds soaring cathedrals.

Proverbs 16:5

- ⁵ GOD can't stomach arrogance or pretense;
believe me, he'll put those braggarts upstarts in their place.

Proverbs 17:3

³ As silver in a crucible and gold in a pan,
so our lives are refined~~assayed~~ by GOD.

Proverbs 19:13

¹³ A parent is worn to a frazzle by **an irresponsible**~~a stupid~~ child;
a nagging spouse is a leaky faucet.

Proverbs 22:14

¹⁴ The mouth of a prostitute~~where~~ is a bottomless pit;
you'll fall in that pit if you're on the outs with God.

Proverbs 22:26-27

26-27 Don't gamble on the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow,
pawning ~~he~~cking your house against a lucky chance.
The time will come when you have to pay up;
you'll be left with nothing but the shirt on your back.

Proverbs 23:27-28

27-28 A prostitute~~where~~ is a bottomless pit;
a loose woman can get you in deep trouble fast.
She'll take you for all you've got;
she's worse than a pack of thieves.

Proverbs 23:29-35

29-35

Who are the people who are always crying the blues?
Who do you know who reeks of self-pity?
Who keeps getting ~~beaten~~ ~~beat~~ up for no reason at all?
Whose eyes are bleary and bloodshot?
It's those who spend the night with a bottle,
for whom drinking is serious business.
Don't judge wine by its label,
or its bouquet, or its full-bodied flavor.
Judge it rather by the hangover it leaves you with—
the splitting headache, the queasy stomach.
Do you really prefer seeing double,
with your speech all slurred,
Reeling and seasick,
drunk as a sailor?
"They hit me," you'll say, "but it didn't hurt;
they beat on me, but I didn't feel a thing.
When I'm sober enough to manage it,
bring me another drink!"

Proverbs 24:17-18

17-18 Don't laugh when your enemy falls;
don't **gloat** over his collapse.
GOD might see, and become very provoked,
and then take pity on his plight.

Proverbs 24:30-34

30-34

One day I walked by the field of an old lazybones,
and then passed the vineyard of a slob~~out~~;
They were overgrown with weeds,
thick with thistles, all the fences broken down.
I took a long look and pondered what I saw;
the fields preached me a sermon and I listened:
“A nap here, a nap there, a day off here, a day off there,
sit back, take it easy—do you know what comes next?
Just this: You can look forward to a dirt-poor life,
with poverty as your permanent houseguest!”

Proverbs 26:24-26

24-26 Your enemy shakes hands and greets you like an old friend,
all the while ~~plotting~~~~conniving~~ against you.
When he speaks warmly to you, don't believe him for a minute;
he's just waiting for the chance to rip you off.
No matter how ~~shrewdly~~~~cunningly~~ he conceals his malice,
eventually his evil will be exposed in public.

Proverbs 29:3

- ³ If you love wisdom, you'll delight your parents,
but you'll destroy their trust if you run with prostitutes~~whores~~.

Proverbs 30:15-16

15-16 A freeloader~~leech~~ has twin daughters
named "Gimme" and "Gimme more."

Three things are never satisfied,
no, there are four that never say, "That's enough, thank you!"—

hell,
a barren womb,
a parched land,
a forest fire.

Proverbs 30:21-23

21-23 Three things are too much for even the earth to bear,
yes, four things shake its foundations—

when the janitor becomes the boss,
when a fool gets rich,
when a prostitute~~where~~ is voted “woman of the year,”
when a “girlfriend” replaces a faithful wife.

Proverbs 31:2-3

²⁻³ “Oh, son of mine, what can you be thinking of!
Child whom I bore! The son I dedicated to God!
Don’t dilute your strength ~~dissipate your virility~~ on fortune-hunting women,
promiscuous women who shipwreck leaders.

Proverbs 31:8-9

8-9 “Speak up for the people who have no voice,
for the rights of all the ~~misfits~~~~down-and-outers~~.
Speak out for justice!
Stand up for the poor and destitute!”

Proverbs 31:10-31

¹⁰⁻³¹A good woman is hard to find,
and worth far more than diamonds.
Her husband trusts her without reserve,
and never has reason to regret it.
Never spiteful, she treats him generously
all her life long.
She shops around for the best yarns and cottons,
and enjoys knitting and sewing.
She's like a trading ship that sails to faraway places
and brings back exotic surprises.
She's up before dawn, preparing breakfast
for her family and organizing her day.
She looks over a field and buys it,
then, with money she's put aside, plants a garden.
First thing in the morning, she dresses for work,
rolls up her sleeves, eager to get started.
She senses the worth of her work,
is in no hurry to call it quits for the day.
She's skilled in the crafts of home and hearth,
diligent in homemaking.
She's quick to assist anyone in need,
reaches out to help the poor.
She doesn't worry about her family when it snows;
their winter clothes are all mended and ready to wear.
She makes her own clothing,
and dresses in colorful linens and silks.
Her husband is greatly respected
when he deliberates with the city fathers.
She designs gowns and sells them,
brings the sweaters she knits to the dress shops.
Her clothes are well-made and elegant,
and she always faces tomorrow with a smile.
When she speaks she has something worthwhile to say,
and she always says it kindly.
She keeps an eye on everyone in her household,
and keeps them all busy and productive.
Her children respect and bless her;
her husband joins in with words of praise:
"Many women have done wonderful things,
but you've outclassed them all!"
Charm can mislead and beauty soon fades.
The woman to be admired and praised
is the woman who lives in the Fear-of-God.
Give her everything she deserves!
Adorn ~~Festoon~~ her life with praises!

Ecclesiastes 4:13-16

¹³⁻¹⁶A poor ~~child~~ ~~youngster~~ with some wisdom is better off than an old but foolish king who doesn't know which end is up. I saw a youth just like this start with nothing and go from rags to riches, and I saw everyone rally to the rule of this young successor to the king. Even so, the excitement died quickly, the throngs of people soon lost interest. Can't you see it's only smoke? And spitting into the wind?

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5

4-5 When you tell God you'll do something, do it—now.
God takes no pleasure in foolish **drivelgabble**. Vow it, then do it.
Far better not to vow in the first place than to vow and not pay up.

Song of Songs 2:10-14

10-14 Get up, my dear friend,
 fair and beautiful lover—come to me!
Look around you: Winter is over;
 the winter rains are over, gone!
Spring flowers are in blossom all over.
 The whole world's a choir—and singing!
Spring warblers are filling the forest
 with sweet ~~strains~~ arpeggios.
Lilacs are exuberantly purple and perfumed,
 and cherry trees fragrant with blossoms.
Oh, get up, dear friend,
 my fair and beautiful lover—come to me!
Come, my shy and modest dove—
 leave your seclusion, come out in the open.
Let me see your face,
 let me hear your voice.
For your voice is soothing
 and your face is ravishing.

Song of Songs 4:8-15

8-15 Come with me from Lebanon, my bride.
Leave Lebanon behind, and come.
Leave your high mountain hideaway.
Abandon your wilderness seclusion,
Where you keep company with lions
and panthers guard your safety.
You've captured my heart, dear friend.
You looked at me, and I fell in love.
One look my way and I was hopelessly in love!
How beautiful your love, dear, dear friend—
far more pleasing than a fine, rare wine,
your fragrance more exotic than select spices.
The kisses of your lips are honey, my love,
every syllable you speak a delicacy to savor.
Your clothes smell like the wild outdoors,
the ~~fresh~~ ~~ozone~~ scent of high mountains.
Dear lover and friend, you're a secret garden,
a private and pure fountain.
Body and soul, you are paradise,
a whole orchard of succulent fruits—
Ripe apricots and peaches,
oranges and pears;
Nut trees and cinnamon,
and all scented woods;
Mint and lavender,
and all herbs aromatic;
A garden fountain, sparkling and splashing,
fed by spring waters from the Lebanon mountains.

Song of Songs 7:9-12

⁹⁻¹² Yes, and yours are, too—my love's kisses
flow from his lips to mine.

I am my lover's.

I'm all he wants. I'm all the world to him!

Come, dear lover—

let's tramp through the countryside.

Let's sleep at some wayside inn,
then rise early and listen to bird-song.

Let's look for wildflowers in bloom,
blackberry bushes blossoming white,

Fruit trees adorned festooned
with cascading flowers.

And there I'll give myself to you,
my love to your love!

Isaiah 1:2-4

²⁻⁴ Heaven and earth, you're the jury.

Listen to GOD's case:

"I had children and raised them well,
and they turned on me.

The ox knows who's boss,
the mule knows the hand that feeds him,
But not Israel.

My people don't know up from down.

Shame! Misguided GOD-dropouts,
staggering under their guilt-baggage,

Villainous gangGang of miscreants,
band of vandals—

My people have walked out on me, their GOD,
turned their backs on The Holy of Israel,
walked off and never looked back.

Isaiah 1:24-31

24-31 This Decree, therefore, of the Master, God-of-the-Angel-Armies,
the Strong One of Israel:
“This is it! I’ll get my oppressors off my back.
I’ll get back at my enemies.
I’ll give you the back of my hand,
purge the junk from your life, clean you up.
I’ll set honest judges and wise counselors among you
just like it was back in the beginning.
Then you’ll be renamed
City-That-Treats-People-Right, the True-Blue City.”
GOD’s right ways will put Zion right again.
GOD’s right actions will restore her prodigals penitents.
But it’s curtains for rebels and GOD-traitors,
a dead end for those who walk out on GOD.
“Your dalliances in those oak grove shrines
will leave you looking mighty foolish,
All that fooling around in god and goddess gardens
that you thought was the latest thing.
You’ll end up like an oak tree
with all its leaves falling off,
Like an unwatered garden,
withered and brown.
‘The StrongBig Man’ will turn out to be dead bark and twigs,
and his ‘work,’ the spark that starts the fire
That exposes man and work both
as nothing but cinders and smoke.”

Isaiah 5:1-2

¹⁻² I'll sing a ballad to the one I love,
a love ballad about his vineyard:
The one I love had a vineyard,
a fine, well-placed vineyard.
He hoed the soil and pulled the weeds,
and planted the very best vines.
He built a lookout, built a winepress,
a vineyard to be proud of.
He looked for a vintage yield of grapes,
but for all his pains he got ~~garbage~~~~junk~~ grapes.

Isaiah 5:11-17

11-17 Doom to those who get up early
 and start drinking booze before breakfast,
Who stay up all hours of the night
 drinking themselves into a stupor.
They make sure their banquets are well-furnished
 with harps and flutes and plenty of wine,
But they'll have nothing to do with the work of God,
 pay no mind to what he is doing.
Therefore my people will end up in exile
 because they don't know the score.
Their "honoredbig men" will starve to death
 and the common people die of thirst.
Sheol developed a huge appetite,
 swallowing people nonstop!
Big people and little people alike
 down that gullet, to say nothing of all the drunks.
The down-and-out on a par
 with the high-and-mighty,
Windbag boasters crumpled,
 flaccid as a punctured bladder.
But by working justice,
 God-of-the-Angel-Armies will be a mountain.
By working righteousness,
 Holy God will show what "holy" is.
And lambs will graze
 as if they owned the place,
Kids and calves
 right at home in the ruins.

Isaiah 9:2-7

2-7 The people who walked in darkness
 have seen a great light.
For those who lived in a land of deep shadows—
 light! sunbursts of light!
You repopulated the nation,
 you expanded its joy.
Oh, they're so glad in your presence!
 Festival joy!
The joy of a great celebration,
 sharing rich gifts and warm greetings.
The abuse of oppressors and cruelty of tyrants—
 all their whips and ~~clubs~~ ~~cudgels~~ and curses—
Is gone, done away with, a deliverance
 as surprising and sudden as Gideon's old victory over Midian.
The boots of all those invading troops,
 along with their shirts soaked with innocent blood,
Will be piled in a heap and burned,
 a fire that will burn for days!
For a child has been born—for us!
 the gift of a son—for us!
He'll take over
 the running of the world.
His names will be: Amazing Counselor,
 Strong God,
Eternal Father,
 Prince of Wholeness.
His ruling authority will grow,
 and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings.
He'll rule from the historic David throne
 over that promised kingdom.
He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing
 and keep it going
With fair dealing and right living,
 beginning now and lasting always.
The zeal of God-of-the-Angel-Armies
 will do all this.

Isaiah 9:13-17

13-17 But the people paid no mind to him who hit them,
 didn't seek GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies.
So GOD hacked off Israel's head and tail,
 palm branch and reed, both on the same day.
The bigheaded~~big-head~~ elders were the head,
 the lying prophets were the tail.
Those who were supposed to lead this people
 led them down blind alleys,
And those who followed the leaders
 ended up lost and confused.
That's why the Master lost interest in the young men,
 had no feeling for their orphans and widows.
All of them were godless and evil,
 talking filth and folly.
And even after that, he was still angry,
 his fist still raised, ready to hit them again.

Isaiah 9:18-21

18-21 Their wicked lives raged like an out-of-control fire,
 the kind that burns everything in its path—
Trees and bushes, weeds and grasses—
 filling the skies with smoke.
God-of-the-Angel-Armies answered fire with fire,
 set the whole country on fire,
Turned the people into consuming fires,
 consuming one another in their lusts—
Appetites insatiable, stuffing and gorging
 themselves left and right with people and things.
But still they starved. Not even their children
 were safe from their greedy rapacious hunger.
Manasseh ate Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh,
 and then the two ganged up against Judah.
And after that, he was still angry,
 his fist still raised, ready to hit them again.

Isaiah 10:5-11

⁵⁻¹¹ “Doom to Assyria, weapon of my anger.
My wrath is a ~~club~~ ~~edgel~~ in his hands!
I send him against a godless nation,
against the people I’m angry with.
I command him to strip them clean, rob them blind,
and then push their faces in the mud and leave them.
But Assyria has another agenda;
he has something else in mind.
He’s out to destroy utterly,
to stamp out as many nations as he can.
Assyria says, ‘Aren’t my commanders all kings?
Can’t they do whatever they like?
Didn’t I destroy Calno as well as Carchemish?
Hamath as well as Arpad? Level Samaria as I did Damascus?
I’ve eliminated kingdoms full of gods
far more impressive than anything in Jerusalem and Samaria.
So what’s to keep me from destroying Jerusalem
in the same way I destroyed Samaria and all her god-idols?’”

Isaiah 10:20-23

²⁰⁻²³ And on that Day also, what's left of Israel, the stragglings ragtag survivors of Jacob, will no longer be fascinated by abusive, battering Assyria. They'll lean on GOD, The Holy—yes, truly. The ragtag remnant—what's left of Jacob—will come back to the Strong God. Your people Israel were once like the sand on the seashore, but only a scattered few will return. Destruction is ordered, brimming over with righteousness. For the Master, God-of-the-Angel-Armies, will finish here what he started all over the globe.

Isaiah 16:13-14

¹³⁻¹⁴This is God's earlier Message on Moab. God's updated Message is, "In three years, no longer than the term of an enlisted soldier, Moab's impressive presence will be gone, that splendid hot-air balloon will be punctured, and instead of a vigorous population, just a few shuffling bums ~~panhandling~~ ~~cadging~~ handouts."

Isaiah 19:11-15

11-15 The princes of Zoan are fools,
 the advisors of Pharaoh stupid.
How could any of you dare tell Pharaoh,
 “Trust me: I’m wise. I know what’s going on.
 Why, I’m descended from the old wisdom of Egypt”?
There’s not a wise man or woman left in the country.
 If there were, one of them would tell you
 what GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies has in mind for Egypt.
As it is, the princes of Zoan are all fools
 and the princes of Memphis, ~~idiots~~ ~~dunces~~.
The honored pillars of your society
 have led Egypt into detours and dead ends.
GOD has scrambled their brains,
 Egypt’s become a falling-down-in-his-own-vomit drunk.
Egypt’s hopeless, past helping,
 a senile, doddering old fool.

Isaiah 25:10-12

10-12 As for the Moabites, they'll be treated like trash~~refuse~~,
waste shoveled into a cesspool.
Thrash away as they will,
like swimmers trying to stay afloat,
They'll sink in the sewage.
Their pride will pull them under.
Their famous fortifications will crumble to nothing,
those mighty walls reduced to dust.

Isaiah 27:7-11

⁷⁻¹¹ Has God knocked them to the ground
as he knocked down those who hit them? Oh, no.
Were they killed
as their killers were killed? Again, no.
He was hard on them all right. The exile was a harsh sentence.
He blew them away on a fierce blast of wind.
But the good news is that through this experience
Jacob's guilt was taken away.
The evidence that his sin is removed will be this:
He will tear down the alien altars,
take them apart stone by stone,
And then crush the stones into gravel
and clean out all the sex-and-religion shrines.
For there's nothing left of that pretentious grandeur.
Nobody lives there anymore. It's unlivable.
But animals do just fine,
browsing and bedding down.
And it's not a bad place to get firewood.
Dry twigs and dead branches are plentiful.
It's the **remains**~~leavings~~ of a people with no sense of God.
So, the God who made them
Will have nothing to do with them.
He who formed them will turn his back on them.

Isaiah 29:22-24

²²⁻²⁴And finally this, God's Message for the family of Jacob,
the same GOD who redeemed Abraham:

“No longer will Jacob hang his head in shame,
no longer grow gaunt and pale with waiting.

For he's gone to see his children,
my personal gift to him—lots of children.

And these children will honor me
by living holy lives.

In holy worship they'll honor the Holy One of Jacob
and stand in holy awe of the God of Israel.

Those who got off-track will get back on-track,
and complainers and whiners **will** learn gratitude.”

Isaiah 30:15-17

15-17

God, the Master, The Holy of Israel,
has this solemn counsel:
“Your salvation requires you to turn back to me
and stop your silly efforts to save yourselves.
Your strength will come from settling down
in complete dependence on me—
The very thing
you’ve been unwilling to do.
You’ve said, ‘No way ~~Nothing doing~~! We’ll rush off on horseback!’
You’ll rush off, all right! Just not far enough!
You’ve said, ‘We’ll ride off on fast horses!’
Do you think your pursuers ride old nags?
Think again: A thousand of you will scatter before one attacker.
Before a mere five you’ll all run off.
There’ll be nothing left of you—
a flagpole on a hill with no flag,
a signpost on a roadside with the sign torn off.”

Isaiah 32:9-14

⁹⁻¹⁴ Take your stand, ~~idle~~~~indolent~~ women!

Listen to me!

Indulgent, ~~idle~~~~indolent~~ women,

listen closely to what I have to say.

In just a little over a year from now,

you'll be shaken out of your lazy lives.

The grape harvest will fail,

and there'll be no fruit on the trees.

Oh tremble, you ~~idle~~~~indolent~~ women.

Get serious, you pampered dolls!

Strip down and discard your silk fineries.

Put on funeral clothes.

Shed honest tears for the lost harvest,

the failed vintage.

Weep for my people's gardens and farms

that grow nothing but thistles and thornbushes.

Cry tears, real tears, for the happy homes no longer happy,

the merry city no longer merry.

The royal palace is deserted,

the bustling city quiet as a morgue,

The emptied parks and playgrounds

taken over by wild animals,

delighted with their new home.

Isaiah 32:15-20

15-20

Yes, weep and grieve until the Spirit is poured
down on us from above
And the badlands desert grows crops
and the fertile fields become forests.
Justice will move into the badlands desert.
Right will build a home in the fertile field.
And where there's Right, there'll be Peace
and the progeny of Right: quiet lives and endless trust.
My people will live in a peaceful neighborhood—
in safe houses, in quiet gardens.
The forest of your pride will be clear-cut,
the city showing off your power leveled.
But you will enjoy a fortunate~~blessed~~ life,
planting well-watered fields and gardens,
with your farm animals grazing freely.

Isaiah 36:13-15

¹³⁻¹⁵Then the Rabshekah stood up and called out loudly in Hebrew, the common language, “Listen to the message of the **Great King**~~great king~~, the king of Assyria! Don’t listen to Hezekiah’s lies. He can’t save you. And don’t pay any attention to Hezekiah’s pious sermons telling you to lean on GOD, telling you ‘GOD will save us, depend on it. GOD won’t let this city fall to the king of Assyria.’

Isaiah 37:28-29

28-29 “I know all about your pretentious poses,
your self-important~~efficient~~ comings and goings,
and, yes, the tantrums you throw against me.
Because of all your wild raging against me,
your unbridled arrogance that I keep hearing of,
I’ll put my hook in your nose
and my bit in your mouth.
I’ll show you who’s boss. I’ll turn you around
and take you back to where you came from.

Isaiah 44:18-19

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Pretty stupid, wouldn't you say? Don't they have eyes in their heads? Are their brains working at all? Doesn't it occur to them to say, "Half of this tree I used for firewood: I baked bread, roasted meat, and enjoyed a good meal. And now I've used the rest to make a repulsive~~an abominable~~ no-god. Here I am praying to a stick of wood!"

Isaiah 47:1-3

1-3 “Get off your high horse and sit in the dirt,
virgin daughter of Babylon.
No more throne for you—sit on the ground,
daughter of the Chaldeans.
Nobody will be calling you ‘charming’
and ‘alluring’ anymore. Get used to it.
Get a job, any old job:
Clean gutters, scrub toilets.
Paw~~n~~Ho~~ck~~ your gowns and scarves,
put on your working pants~~overalls~~—the party’s over.
Your nude body will be on public display,
exposed to vulgar taunts.
It’s vengeance time, and I’m taking vengeance.
No one gets let off the hook.”

Isaiah 47:4-13

4-13 Our Redeemer speaks,
named GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies, The Holy of Israel:
“Shut up and get out of the way,
daughter of Chaldeans.
You’ll no longer be called
‘First Lady of the Kingdoms.’
I was fed up with my people,
thoroughly disgusted with my progeny.
I turned them over to you,
but you had no compassion.
You put old men and women
to cruel, hard labor.
You said, ‘I’m the First Lady.
I’ll always be the pampered darling.’
You took nothing seriously, took nothing to heart,
never gave tomorrow a thought.
Well, start thinking, ~~party girl~~ ~~playgirl~~.
You’re acting like the center of the universe,
Smugly saying to yourself, ‘I’m Number One. There’s nobody but me.
I’ll never be a widow, I’ll never lose my children.’
Those two things are going to hit you both at once,
suddenly, on the same day:
Spouse and children gone, a total loss,
despite your many enchantments and charms.
You were so confident and comfortable in your evil life,
saying, ‘No one sees me.’
You thought you knew so much, had everything figured out.
What delusion!
Smugly telling yourself, ‘I’m Number One. There’s nobody but me.’
Ruin descends—
you can’t charm it away.
Disaster strikes—
you can’t cast it off with spells.
Catastrophe, sudden and total—
and you’re totally at sea, totally bewildered!
But don’t give up. From your great repertoire
of enchantments there must be one you haven’t yet tried.
You’ve been at this a long time.
Surely *something* will work.
I know you’re exhausted trying out remedies,
but don’t give up.
Call in the astrologers and stargazers.
They’re good at this. Surely they can work up something!

Isaiah 47:14-15

14-15 “Fat chance. You’d be grasping at straws
 that are already in the fire,
A fire that is even now raging.
 Your ‘experts’ are in it and won’t get out.
It’s not a fire for cooking venison stew,
 not a fire to warm you on a winter night!
That’s the fate of your friends in sorcery, your magician cronies buddies
 you’ve been colluding in cahoots with all your life.
They reel, confused, bumping into one another.
 None of them bother to help you.”

Isaiah 56:1-3

¹⁻³God's Message:

"Guard my common good:

Do what's right and do it in the right way,
For salvation is just around the corner,
my setting-things-right is about to go into action.

How fortunate**blessed** are you who enter into these things,
you men and women who embrace them,

Who keep Sabbath and don't defile it,
who watch your step and don't do anything evil!

Make sure no outsider who now follows God
ever has occasion to say, 'God put me in second-class.

I don't really belong.'

And make sure no physically mutilated person
is ever made to think, 'I'm damaged goods.

I don't really belong.'"

Isaiah 57:11-13

11-13“Who talked you into the pursuit of this nonsense,
leaving me high and dry,
forgetting you ever knew me?
Because I don't yell and make a scene,
do you think I don't exist?
I'll go over, detail by detail, all your 'righteous' attempts at religion,
and expose the absurdity of it all.
Go ahead, cry for help to your collection of no-gods:
A good wind will blow them away.
They're smoke, nothing but smoke.
“But anyone who runs to me for help
will inherit the land,
will end up owning my holy mountain!”

Isaiah 59:12-15

12-15 Our wrongdoings pile up before you, God,
 our sins stand up and accuse us.
Our wrongdoings stare us down;
 we know in detail what we've done:
Mocking and denying God,
 not following our God,
Spreading false rumors, ~~whipping up revolt~~ ~~inciting sedition~~,
 pregnant with lies, muttering malice.
Justice is beaten back,
 Righteousness is banished to the sidelines,
Truth staggers down the street,
 Honesty is nowhere to be found,
Good is missing in action.
 Anyone renouncing evil is beaten and robbed.

Isaiah 65:1-7

*The People Who Bothered to Reach Out to **God***

1-7 “I’ve made myself available
to those who haven’t bothered to ask.
I’m here, ready to be found
by those who haven’t bothered to look.
I kept saying ‘I’m here, I’m right here’
to a nation that ignored me.
I reached out day after day
to a people who turned their backs on me,
People who make wrong turns,
who insist on doing things their own way.
They get on my nerves,
are rude to my face day after day,
Make up their own kitchen religion
a potluck religious stew.
They spend the night in tombs
to get messages from the dead,
Eat forbidden foods
and drink a witch’s brew of potions and charms.
They say, ‘Keep your distance.
Don’t touch me. I’m holier than thou.’
These people gag me.
I can’t stand their stench.
Look at this! Their sins are all written out—
I have the list before me.
I’m not putting up with this any longer.
I’ll pay them the wages
They have coming for their sins.
And for the sins of their parents lumped in,
a bonus.” GOD says so.
“Because they’ve practiced their blasphemous worship,
mocking me at their hillside shrines,
I’ll let loose the consequences
and pay them in full for their actions.”

Jeremiah 2:33-35

33-35

“What an impressive start you made
to get the most out of life.
You founded schools of sin,
taught graduate courses in evil!
And now you’re sending out graduates, resplendent in cap and gown—
except the gowns are stained with the blood of your victims!
All that blood convicts you.
You cut and hurt a lot of people to get where you are.
And yet you have the **nerve** ~~gall~~ to say, ‘I’ve done nothing wrong.
God doesn’t mind. He hasn’t punished me, has he?’
Don’t look now, but judgment’s on the way,
aimed at you who say, ‘I’ve done nothing wrong.’

Jeremiah 5:18-19

¹⁸⁻¹⁹“Even then, as bad as it will be”—God’s Decree!—“it will not be the end of the world for you. And when people ask, ‘Why did our God do all this to us?’ you must say to them, ‘**This is back on you** ~~it’s tit for tat~~. Just as you left me and served foreign gods in your own country, so now you must serve foreigners in their own country.’”

Jeremiah 10:23-25

23-25

I know, GOD, that mere mortals
can't run their own lives,
That men and women
don't have what it takes to take charge of life.
So correct us, GOD, as you see best.
Don't lose your temper. That would be the end of us.
Vent your anger on the godless nations,
who refuse to acknowledge you,
And on the people
who won't pray to you—
The very ones who've made a meal~~hash~~ out of Jacob,
yes, made a meal~~hash~~
And devoured him whole,
people and pastures alike.

Jeremiah 14:7-9

⁷⁻⁹ We know we're guilty. We've lived bad lives—
but do something, GOD. Do it for *your* sake!
Time and time again we've betrayed you.
No doubt about it—we've sinned against you.
Hope of Israel! Our only hope!
Israel's last chance in this trouble!
Why are you acting like a tourist,
taking in the sights, here today and gone tomorrow?
Why do you just stand there and stare,
like someone who doesn't know what to do in a crisis?
But GOD, you are, in fact, *here*, here *with us*!
You know who we are—you named us!
Don't leave us **without a leg to stand on**~~in the lurch~~.

Jeremiah 25:15-16

God~~God~~ *Puts the Human Race on Trial*

¹⁵⁻¹⁶This is a Message that the GOD of Israel gave me: “Take this cup filled with the wine of my wrath that I’m handing to you. Make all the nations where I send you drink it down. They’ll drink it and get drunk, staggering in delirium because of the killing that I’m going to unleash among them.”

Jeremiah 28:15-16

¹⁵⁻¹⁶So prophet Jeremiah told prophet Hananiah, “Hold it, Hananiah! GOD never sent you. You’ve talked the whole country into believing a pack of lies! And so GOD says, ‘You claim to be sent? I’ll send you all right—right off the face of the earth! Before the year is out, you’ll be dead because you **instigated**~~fomented~~ sedition against God.’”

Jeremiah 44:15-18

Making Goddess Cakes Cookies

¹⁵⁻¹⁸The men who knew that their wives had been burning sacrifices to the no-gods, joined by a large crowd of women, along with virtually everyone living in Pathros of Egypt, answered Jeremiah: “We’re having nothing to do with what you tell us is God’s Message. We’re going to go right on offering sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, keeping up the traditions set by our ancestors, our kings and government leaders in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem in the good old days. We had a good life then—lots of food, rising standard of living, and no bad luck. But the moment we quit sacrificing to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out offerings to her, everything fell apart. We’ve had nothing but massacres and starvation ever since.”

Jeremiah 44:19

¹⁹And then the women chimed in: “Yes! Absolutely! We’re going to keep at it, offering sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out offerings to her. Aren’t our husbands behind us? They like it that we make goddess ~~cookies~~ cakes and pour out our offerings to her.”

Jeremiah 48:1-10

¹⁻¹⁰The Message on Moab from GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies, the God of Israel:

“Doom to Nebo! Leveled to the ground!

Kiriathaim demeaned and defeated,

The mighty fortress reduced to a molehill,

Moab’s glory—dust and ashes.

Conspirators plot Heshbon’s doom:

‘Come, let’s wipe Moab off the map.’

The city of Madmen will be struck mute ~~Dungface Dimon will loudly lament,~~
as killing follows killing.

Listen! A cry out of Horonaim:

‘Disaster—doom and more doom!’

Moab will be shattered.

Her cries will be heard clear down in Zoar.

Up the ascent of Luhith

climbers weep,

And down the descent from Horonaim,

cries of loss and devastation.

Oh, run for your lives! Get out while you can!

Survive by your wits in the wild!

You trusted in thick walls and big money, yes?

But it won’t help you now.

Your big god Chemosh will be hauled off,

his priests and managers with him.

A wrecker will wreck every city.

Not a city will survive.

The valley fields will be ruined,

the plateau pastures destroyed, just as I told you.

Cover the land of Moab with salt.

Make sure nothing ever grows here again.

Her towns will all be ghost towns.

Nobody will ever live here again.

Sloppy work in God’s name is cursed,

and cursed all halfhearted use of the sword.

Jeremiah 48:26-27

²⁶⁻²⁷“Turn Moab into a drunken lush~~set~~, drunk on the wine of my wrath, a dung-faced drunk, filling the country with vomit—Moab a falling-down drunk, a joke in bad taste. Wasn't it you, Moab, who made crude jokes over Israel? And when they were caught in bad company, didn't you cluck and gossip and snicker?”

Jeremiah 51:29-33

29-33 “The very land trembles in terror, writhes in pain,
 terrorized by my plans against Babylon,
Plans to turn the country of Babylon
 into a lifeless moonscape—a wasteland.
Babylon’s soldiers have quit fighting.
 They hide out in ruins and caves—
Cowards who’ve given up without a fight,
 exposed as cowering crybabies milksofs.
Babylon’s houses are going up in flames,
 the city gates torn off their hinges.
Runner after runner comes racing in,
 each on the heels of the last,
Bringing reports to the king of Babylon
 that his city is a lost cause.
The fords of the rivers are all taken.
 Wildfire rages through the swamp grass.
Soldiers desert left and right.
 I, GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies, said it would happen:
‘Daughter Babylon is a threshing floor
 at threshing time.
Soon, oh very soon, her harvest will come
 and then the chaff will fly!’

Lamentations 2:2

- ² The Master, without a second thought, took Israel in one gulp.
Raging, he smashed Judah's defenses,
ground her king and princes to a pulp ~~made hash of her king and princes.~~

Lamentations 3:1-3

God~~God~~ *Locked Me Up in Deep Darkness*

¹⁻³ I'm the man who has seen trouble,
trouble coming from the lash of God's anger.
He took me by the hand and walked me
into pitch-black darkness.
Yes, he's given me the back of his hand
over and over and over again.

Lamentations 3:4-6

⁴⁻⁶ He turned me into a ~~skeleton~~^{scarecrow}
of skin and bones, then broke the bones.
He hemmed me in, ganged up on me,
poured on the trouble and hard times.
He locked me up in deep darkness,
like a corpse nailed inside a coffin.

Lamentations 3:7-9

⁷⁻⁹ He shuts me in so I'll never get out,
handcuffs my wrists ~~manacles my hands~~, shackles my feet.
Even when I cry out and plead for help,
he locks up my prayers and throws away the key.
He sets up blockades with quarried limestone.
He's got me cornered.

Lamentations 3:61-63

61-63 “You heard, GOD, their vicious gossip,
 their behind-my-back plots to ruin me.
They never quit, these enemies of mine, dreaming up mischief,
 hatching ~~out~~-malice, day after day after day.
Sitting down or standing up—just look at them!—
 they mock me with vulgar doggerel.

Ezekiel 7:10-13

10-13

“Judgment Day!

Fate has caught up with you.

The scepter outsized and pretentious,
pride bursting all bounds,

Violence strutting,
brandishing the evil scepter.

But there’s nothing to them,
and nothing will be left of them.

Time’s up.

Countdown: five, four, three, two . . . ~~one~~

Buyer, don’t ~~boasterow~~; seller, don’t worry:

Judgment wrath has turned the world topsy-turvy.

The bottom has dropped out of buying and selling.

It will never be the same again.

But don’t fantasize an upturn in the market.

The country is bankrupt because of its sins,
and it’s not going to get any better.

Daniel 2:8-9

⁸⁻⁹But the king said, “I know what you’re up to—you’re just playing for time. You know you’re **cornered**~~up a tree~~. You know that if you can’t tell me my dream, you’re **out and out** doomed. I see right through you—you’re going to **slap together**~~cook up~~ some fancy stories and confuse the issue until I change my mind. **No way**~~Nothing doing~~! First tell me the dream, then I’ll know that you’re on the up and up with the interpretation and not just blowing smoke in my eyes.”

Daniel 6:4-5

⁴⁻⁵The vice-regents and governors got together to find some old scandal or skeleton in Daniel's life that they could use against him, but they couldn't dig up anything. He was totally exemplary and trustworthy. They could find no evidence of negligence or misconduct. So they finally gave up and said, "We're never going to find anything against this Daniel unless we can **schemecook** up something religious."

Amos 4:1

You Never Got Hungry for ~~God~~God

- ¹ “Listen to this, you cows of Bashan
grazing on the slopes of Samaria.
You women! Mean to the poor,
cruel to the down-and-out!
Indolent and pampered, you demand of your husbands,
‘Bring us a tall, cool drink!’

Jonah 1:1-2

Running ~~Away~~away from God

¹⁻²One day long ago, GOD's Word came to Jonah, Amittai's son: "Up on your feet and on your way to the big city of Nineveh! Preach to them. They're in a bad way and I can't ignore it any longer."

Habakkuk 1:14-16

14-16 You're treating men and women
 as so many fish in the ocean,
Swimming without direction,
 swimming but not getting anywhere.
Then this evil Babylonian arrives and goes fishing.
 He pulls in a good catch.
He catches his limit and fills his ~~bucket~~reel—
 a good day of fishing! He's happy!
He praises his rod and reel,
 piles his fishing gear on an altar and worships it!
It's made his day,
 and he's going to eat well tonight!

Zephaniah 3:14-15

14-15 So sing, Daughter Zion!
 Raise ~~your voices~~~~the rafters~~, Israel!
Daughter Jerusalem,
 be happy! celebrate!
God has reversed his judgments against you
 and sent your enemies off chasing their tails.
From now on, GOD is Israel's king,
 in charge at the center.
There's nothing to fear from evil
 ever again!

Haggai 1:9-11

⁹⁻¹¹“And why?” (This is a Message from God-of-the-Angel-Armies, remember.) “Because while you’ve run around, caught up with taking care of your own houses, my Home is in ruins. That’s why. Because of your stinginess. And so I’ve given you a dry summer and a meager~~skimpy~~ crop. I’ve matched your tight-fisted stinginess by decreeing a season of drought, drying up fields and hills, withering gardens and orchards, stunting vegetables and fruit. Nothing—not man or woman, not animal or crop—is going to thrive.”

Zechariah 5:8

⁸He said, "This is Miss **Wickedness**~~**Wicked**~~." He pushed her back down into the basket and clamped the lead lid over her.

Zechariah 9:6-8

6-8 “I’ll take proud Philistia down a peg:

I’ll make him spit out his bloody spoilsbooty
and abandon his vile ways.”

What’s left will be all God’s—a core of survivors,
a family brought together in Judah—

But enemies like Ekron will go the way of the Jebusites,
into the dustbin of history.

“I will set up camp in my home country
and defend it against invaders.

Nobody is going to hurt my people ever again.

I’m keeping my eye on them.

Zechariah 9:9-10

⁹⁻¹⁰ “Shout and cheer, Daughter Zion!

Raise **your voice**~~the roof~~, Daughter Jerusalem!

Your king is coming!

a good king who makes all things right,

a humble king riding a donkey,

a mere colt of a donkey.

I’ve had it with war—no more chariots in Ephraim,

no more war horses in Jerusalem,

no more swords and spears, bows and arrows.

He will offer peace to the nations,

a peaceful rule worldwide,

from the four winds to the seven seas.

Zechariah 11:6

⁶God's Decree: "I'm washing my hands of the people of this land. From now on they're all on their own. It's dog-eat-dog, survival of the fittest, and every person for themselves ~~the devil~~ ~~take the hindmost~~. Don't look for help from me."

Zechariah 11:14

¹⁴Then I broke the other staff, Harmony, across my knee, breaking the family ties ~~concord~~ between Judah and Israel.

Malachi 1:11

Offering ~~God~~ ~~God~~ Something Hand-Me-Down, Broken, or Useless

¹¹“I am honored all over the world. And there are people who know how to worship me all over the world, who honor me by bringing their best to me. They’re saying it everywhere: ‘God is greater, this GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies.’”

Matthew 1:18-19

¹⁸⁻¹⁹The birth of Jesus took place like this. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. Before they enjoyed their wedding night ~~came to the marriage bed~~, Joseph discovered she was pregnant. (It was by the Holy Spirit, but he didn't know that.) Joseph, chagrined but noble, determined to take care of things quietly so Mary would not be disgraced.

Matthew 1:20-23

²⁰⁻²³ While he was trying to figure a way out, he had a dream. God's angel spoke in the dream: "Joseph, son of David, don't hesitate to get married. Mary's pregnancy is Spirit-conceived. God's Holy Spirit has made her pregnant. She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus—'God saves'—because he will save his people from their sins." This would bring the prophet's embryonic ~~revelation~~ ~~sermon~~ to full term:

Watch for this—a virgin will get pregnant and bear a son;
They will name him Immanuel (Hebrew for "God is with us").

Matthew 2:16-18

¹⁶⁻¹⁸ Herod, when he realized that the scholars had tricked him, flew into a rage. He commanded the murder of every little boy two years old and under who lived in Bethlehem and its surrounding hills. (He determined that age from information he'd gotten from the scholars.) That's when Jeremiah's ~~revelation~~ ~~sermon~~ was fulfilled:

A sound was heard in Ramah,
weeping and much lament.
Rachel weeping for her children,
Rachel refusing all solace,
Her children gone,
dead and buried.

Matthew 3:7-10

⁷⁻¹⁰When John realized that a lot of Pharisees and Sadducees were showing up for a baptismal experience because it was becoming the popular thing to do, he exploded: “Brood of snakes! What do you think you’re doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to make any difference? It’s your life that must change, not your skin! And don’t think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as father. Being a descendant of Abraham is neither here nor there. Descendants of Abraham are a dime a dozen. What counts is your life. Is it green and flourishing blossoming? Because if it’s deadwood, it goes on the fire.

Matthew 4:12-17

¹²⁻¹⁷ When Jesus got word that John had been arrested, he returned to Galilee. He moved from his hometown, Nazareth, to the lakeside village Capernaum, nestled at the base of the Zebulun and Naphtali hills. This move completed Isaiah's **revelationsermon**:

Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
road to the sea, over Jordan,
Galilee, crossroads for the nations.
People sitting out their lives in the dark
saw a huge light;
Sitting in that dark, dark country of death,
they watched the sun come up.

This Isaiah-prophesied **revelationsermon** came to life in Galilee the moment Jesus started preaching. He picked up where John left off: "Change your life. God's kingdom is here."

Matthew 4:23-25

²³⁻²⁵ From there he went all over Galilee. He used synagogues for meeting places and taught people the truth of God. God's kingdom was his theme—that beginning right now they were under God's government, a good government! He also healed people of their diseases and of the bad effects of their bad lives. Word got around the entire Roman province of Syria. People brought anybody with a sickness~~an ailment~~, whether mental, emotional, or physical. Jesus healed them, one and all. More and more people came, the momentum gathering. Besides those from Galilee, crowds came from the "Ten Towns" across the lake, others up from Jerusalem and Judea, still others from across the Jordan.

Matthew 5:27-28

²⁷⁻²⁸“You know the next commandment pretty well, too: ‘Don’t go to bed with another’s spouse.’ But don’t think you’ve preserved your virtue simply by staying out of bed. Your *heart* can be corrupted by lust even quicker than your *body*. Those **ogling**~~leering~~ looks you think nobody notices—they also corrupt.

Matthew 5:43-47

⁴³⁻⁴⁷“You’re familiar with the old written law, ‘Love your friend,’ and its unwritten companion, ‘Hate your enemy.’ I’m challenging that. I’m telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the **supple moves** **energies** of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.

Matthew 6:5

⁵“And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for fifteen minutes of fame stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat?”

Matthew 6:22-23

²²⁻²³“Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a ~~musty~~ ~~dark~~ cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have!

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹⁻²³“Knowing the correct password—saying ‘Master, Master,’ for instance— isn’t going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—*doing* what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, ‘Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our **super-spiritual**~~God-sponsored~~ projects had everyone talking.’ And do you know what I am going to say? ‘You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don’t impress me one bit. You’re out of here.’

Matthew 8:1-2

¹⁻²Jesus came down the mountain with the cheers of the crowd still ringing in his ears. Then a leper appeared and **dropped**~~went~~ to his knees before Jesus, praying, “Master, if you want to, you can heal my body.”

Matthew 8:16-17

¹⁶⁻¹⁷That evening a lot of demon-afflicted people were brought to him. He relieved the inwardly tormented. He cured the bodily ill. He fulfilled Isaiah's well-known **revelationsermon**:

He took our illnesses,
He carried our diseases.

Matthew 8:27

²⁷The men rubbed their eyes, astonished. “What’s going on here? Wind and sea **stand up and take notice**~~come to heel~~ at his command!”

Matthew 8:28-31

²⁸⁻³¹They landed in the country of the Gadarenes and were met by two madmen, victims of demons, coming out of the cemetery. The men had terrorized the region for so long that no one considered it safe to walk down that stretch of road anymore. Seeing Jesus, the madmen screamed out, "What business do you have giving us a hard time? You're the Son of God! You weren't supposed to show up here yet!" Off in the distance a herd of pigs was ~~grazing~~ ~~browsing~~ and rooting. The evil spirits begged Jesus, "If you kick us out of these men, let us live in the pigs."

Matthew 9:10-11

¹⁰⁻¹¹ Later when Jesus was eating supper at Matthew's house with his close followers, a lot of disreputable characters came and joined them. When the Pharisees saw him keeping this kind of company, they had a fit, and lit into Jesus' followers. "What kind of example is this from your Teacher, acting cozy with crooks and ~~misfits~~ riffraff?"

Matthew 9:15

¹⁵Jesus told them, “When you’re celebrating a wedding, you don’t skimp on the cake and wine. You feast. Later you may need to **exercise moderation**~~pull in your belt~~, but not now. No one throws cold water on a friendly bonfire. This is Kingdom Come!”

Matthew 9:34

³⁴The Pharisees were left sputtering, “Smoke and mirrors ~~Hocus-pocus~~. It’s nothing but smoke and mirrors ~~hocus-pocus~~. He’s probably made a pact with the Devil.”

Matthew 10:16

¹⁶“Stay alert. This is hazardous work I’m assigning you. You’re going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack, so don’t call attention to yourselves. Be as **shrewdunning** as a snake, inoffensive as a dove.

Matthew 10:17-20

¹⁷⁻²⁰“Don’t be naive. Some people will **question**~~impugn~~ your motives, others will smear your reputation—just because you believe in me. Don’t be upset when they haul you before the civil authorities. Without knowing it, they’ve done you—and me—a favor, given you a platform for preaching the kingdom news! And don’t worry about what you’ll say or how you’ll say it. The right words will be there; the Spirit of your Father will supply the words.

Matthew 11:16-19

¹⁶⁻¹⁹“How can I account for this generation? The people have been like spoiled children whining to their parents, ‘We wanted to skip rope, and you were always too tired; we wanted to talk, but you were always too busy.’ John came fasting and they called him crazy. I came feasting and they called me a boozelush, a friend of the misfitsriffraff. Opinion polls don’t count for much, do they? The proof of the pudding is in the eating.”

Matthew 11:20

²⁰Next Jesus ~~unleashed~~ ~~let fly~~ on the cities where he had worked the hardest but whose people had responded the least, shrugging their shoulders and going their own way.

Matthew 12:6-8

⁶⁻⁸“There is far more at stake here than religion. If you had any idea what this Scripture meant—‘I prefer a flexible heart to an inflexible ritual’—you wouldn’t be nitpicking like this. The Son of Man is no **yes-man** ~~lackey~~ to the Sabbath; he’s in charge.”

Matthew 12:38

³⁸ Later a few religion scholars and Pharisees **cornered** ~~got on~~ him. “Teacher, we want to see your credentials. Give us some hard evidence that God is in this. How about a miracle?”

Matthew 13:11-15

¹¹⁻¹⁵He replied, “You’ve been given insight into God’s kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn’t been given to them. Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That’s why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward a welcome awakening ~~receptive insight~~. In their present state they can stare till doomsday and not see it, listen till they’re blue in the face and not get it. I don’t want Isaiah’s forecast repeated all over again:

Your ears are open but you don’t hear a thing.

Your eyes are awake but you don’t see a thing.

The people are ~~stupid~~ ~~blockheads~~!

They stick their fingers in their ears

so they won’t have to listen;

They screw their eyes shut

so they won’t have to look,

so they won’t have to deal with me face-to-face

and let me heal them.

Matthew 13:31-32

³¹⁻³² Another story. "God's kingdom is like an ~~acorn~~^{acorn}-~~pine~~^{nut} that a farmer plants. It is quite small as seeds go, but in the course of years it grows into a huge ~~oak~~^{oak}-~~pine~~^{pine} tree, and eagles build nests in it."

Matthew 13:45-46

⁴⁵⁻⁴⁶“Or, God’s kingdom is like a jewel merchant on the hunt for exquisite~~excellent~~ pearls. Finding one that is flawless, he immediately sells everything and buys it.

Matthew 13:53-57

⁵³⁻⁵⁷ When Jesus finished telling these stories, he left there, returned to his hometown, and gave a lecture in the meetinghouse. He ~~stole the show~~ ~~made a real hit~~, impressing everyone. “We had no idea he was this good!” they said. “How did he get so wise, get such ability?” But in the next breath they were cutting him down: “We’ve known him since he was a kid; he’s the carpenter’s son. We know his mother, Mary. We know his brothers James and Joseph, Simon and Judas. All his sisters live here. Who does he think he is?” They got ~~all bent out of shape~~ ~~their noses all out of joint~~.

Matthew 14:24-26

²⁴⁻²⁶ Meanwhile, the boat was far out to sea when the wind came up against them and they were battered by the waves. At about four o'clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them walking on the water. They were scared ~~to death~~ ~~out of their wits~~. "A ghost!" they said, crying out in terror.

Matthew 15:25

²⁵Then the woman came back to Jesus, ~~dropped~~ ~~went~~ to her knees, and begged. “Master, help me.”

Matthew 16:1-4

¹⁻⁴Some Pharisees and Sadducees **badgered**~~were on~~ him again, pressing him to prove himself to them. He told them, “You have a saying that goes, ‘Red sky at night, sailor’s delight; red sky at morning, sailors take warning.’ You find it easy enough to forecast the weather—why can’t you read the signs of the times? An evil and wanton generation is always wanting signs and wonders. The only sign you’ll get is the Jonah sign.” Then he **spun around**~~turned on his heel~~ and walked away.

Matthew 16:7-12

⁷⁻¹²Thinking he was scolding them for forgetting bread, they discussed in whispers what to do. Jesus knew what they were doing and said, “Why all these worried whispers about forgetting the bread? ~~BabyRunt~~ believers! Haven’t you caught on yet? Don’t you remember the five loaves of bread and the five thousand people, and how many baskets of fragments you picked up? Or the seven loaves that fed four thousand, and how many baskets of leftovers you collected? Haven’t you realized yet that bread isn’t the problem? The problem is yeast, Pharisee-Sadducee yeast.” Then they got it: that he wasn’t concerned about eating, but teaching—the Pharisee-Sadducee kind of teaching.

Matthew 17:22-23

²²⁻²³As they were regrouping in Galilee, Jesus told them, “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed to some people who want nothing to do with God. They will murder him—and three days later he will be raised alive.” The disciples felt **scared to death** ~~terrible~~.

Matthew 19:10

¹⁰Jesus' disciples objected, "If those are the terms of marriage, we haven't got a chance ~~we're stuck~~. Why get married?"

Matthew 21:17

¹⁷Fed up, Jesus spun around ~~turned on his heel~~ and left the city for Bethany, where he spent the night.

Matthew 22:23-28

²³⁻²⁸That same day, Sadducees approached him. This is the party that denies any possibility of resurrection. They asked, “Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies childless, his brother is obligated to marry his widow and **father a child with her**~~get her with child~~. Here’s a case where there were seven brothers. The first brother married and died, leaving no child, and his wife passed to his brother. The second brother also left her childless, then the third—and on and on, all seven. Eventually the wife died. Now here’s our question: At the resurrection, whose wife is she? She was a wife to each of them.”

Matthew 22:29-33

²⁹⁻³³ Jesus answered, “You’re off base on two counts: You don’t know **what God said**~~your~~ **Bibles**, and you don’t know how God works. At the resurrection we’re beyond marriage. As with the angels, all our ecstasies and intimacies then will be with God. And regarding your speculation on whether the dead are raised or not, don’t you read your Bibles? The grammar is clear: God says, ‘I am—not *was*—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.’ The living God defines himself not as the God of dead men, but of the *living*.” Hearing this exchange the crowd was much impressed.

Matthew 23:25-26

²⁵⁻²⁶“You’re hopeless, you religion scholars and Pharisees! Frauds! You buffburnish the surface of your cups and bowls so they sparkle in the sun, while the insides are maggots with your greed and gluttony. Stupid Pharisee! Scour the insides, and then the gleaming surface will mean something.

Matthew 23:33-34

³³⁻³⁴“Snakes! **Cold-blooded Reptilian** sneaks! Do you think you can worm your way out of this? Never have to pay the piper? It’s on account of people like you that I send prophets and wise guides and scholars generation after generation—and generation after generation you treat them like dirt, greeting them with lynch mobs, hounding them with abuse.

Matthew 24:23-25

²³⁻²⁵“If anyone tries to flag you down, calling out, ‘Here’s the Messiah!’ or points, ‘There he is!’ don’t fall for it. Fake Messiahs and lying preachers are going to pop up everywhere. Their impressive credentials and **bewitchingdazzling** performances will pull the wool over the eyes of even those who ought to know better. But I’ve given you fair warning.

Matthew 24:48-51

⁴⁸⁻⁵¹“But if that person only looks out for himself, and the minute the Master is away does what he pleases—abusing the help and throwing drunken parties for his friends—the Master is going to show up when he least expects it, and **it won't be pretty**~~make hash of him~~. He'll end up in the dump with the hypocrites, out in the cold shivering, teeth chattering.”

Matthew 26:31-32

³¹⁻³²Then Jesus told them, “Before the night’s over, you’re going to fall to pieces because of what happens to me. There is a Scripture that says,

I’ll strike the shepherd;
dazed and confused, ~~helter-skelter~~ the sheep will be scattered.

But after I am raised up, I, your Shepherd, will go ahead of you, leading the way to Galilee.”

Matthew 26:67-68

⁶⁷⁻⁶⁸ Then they were spitting in his face and ~~knocking~~ ~~hitting~~ him around. They jeered as they slapped him: "Prophesy, Messiah: Who hit you that time?"

Matthew 27:27-31

²⁷⁻³¹The soldiers assigned to the governor took Jesus into the governor's palace and got the entire brigade together for some fun. They stripped him and dressed him in a red ~~robeta~~oga. They plaited a crown from branches of a thornbush and set it on his head. They put a stick in his right hand for a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mocking reverence: "Bravo, King of the Jews!" they said. "Bravo!" Then they spit on him and hit him on the head with the stick. When they had had their fun, they took off the ~~robeta~~oga and put his own clothes back on him. Then they proceeded out to the crucifixion.

Matthew 27:35-40

³⁵⁻⁴⁰ After they had finished nailing him to the cross and were waiting for him to die, they killed ~~while~~ ~~away~~ ~~the~~ time by throwing dice for his clothes. Above his head they had posted the criminal charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Along with him, they also crucified two criminals, one to his right, the other to his left. People passing along the road jeered, shaking their heads in mock lament: “You bragged that you could tear down the Temple and then rebuild it in three days—so show us your stuff! Save yourself! If you’re really God’s Son, come down from that cross!”

Mark 1:27-28

²⁷⁻²⁸ Everyone there was ~~spellbound~~~~incredulous~~, buzzing with curiosity. “What’s going on here? A new teaching that does what it says? He shuts up defiling, demonic spirits and ~~tells them to get lost~~~~sends them packing!~~” News of this traveled fast and was soon all over Galilee.

Mark 2:8-12

⁸⁻¹²Jesus knew right away what they were thinking, and said, “Why are you so skeptical? Which is simpler: to say to the paralytic, ‘I forgive your sins,’ or say, ‘Get up, take your stretcher, and start walking’? Well, just so it’s clear that I’m the Son of Man and authorized to do either, or both . . .” (he looked now at the paralytic), “Get up. Pick up your stretcher and go home.” And the man did it—got up, grabbed his stretcher, and walked out, with everyone there watching him. They rubbed their eyes, **stunned****incredulous**—and then praised God, saying, “We’ve never seen anything like this!”

Mark 2:15-16

¹⁵⁻¹⁶ Later Jesus and his disciples were at home having supper with a collection of disreputable guests. Unlikely as it seems, more than a few of them had become followers. The religion scholars and Pharisees saw him keeping this kind of company and lit into his disciples: “What kind of example is this, acting cozy with the **misfitsriffraff**?”

Mark 2:25-28

²⁵⁻²⁸ Jesus said, “Really? Haven’t you ever read what David did when he was hungry, along with those who were with him? How he entered the sanctuary and ate fresh bread off the altar, with the Chief Priest Abiathar right there watching—holy bread that no one but priests were allowed to eat—and handed it out to his companions?” Then Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made to serve us; we weren’t made to serve the Sabbath. The Son of Man is no ~~yes-man~~ ~~lackey~~ to the Sabbath. He’s in charge!”

Mark 3:1-3

¹⁻³Then he went back in the meeting place where he found a man with a crippled hand. The Pharisees had their eyes on Jesus to see if he would heal him, hoping to catch him in a Sabbath violation~~infraction~~. He said to the man with the crippled hand, "Stand here where we can see you."

Mark 3:20-21

²⁰⁻²¹ Jesus came home and, as usual, a crowd gathered—so many making demands on him that there wasn't even time to eat. His friends heard what was going on and went to rescue him, by force if necessary. They suspected he was **believing his own press** ~~getting carried away with himself~~.

Mark 4:10-12

¹⁰⁻¹²When they were off by themselves, those who were close to him, along with the Twelve, asked about the stories. He told them, “You’ve been given insight into God’s kingdom—you know how it works. But to those who can’t see it yet, everything comes in stories, creating readiness, nudging them toward a welcome awakening ~~receptive insight~~. These are people—

Whose eyes are open but don’t see a thing,
Whose ears are open but don’t understand a word,
Who avoid making an about-face and getting forgiven.”

Mark 4:21-22

²¹⁻²² Jesus went on: “Does anyone bring a lamp home and put it under a ~~bucket~~^{washtub} or beneath the bed? Don’t you put it up on a table or on the mantel? We’re not keeping secrets, we’re telling them; we’re not hiding things, we’re bringing them out into the open.

Mark 4:30-32

³⁰⁻³²“How can we picture God’s kingdom? What kind of story can we use? It’s like an acorn ~~pine nut~~. When it lands on the ground it is quite small as seeds go, yet once it is planted it grows into a huge oak ~~pine~~ tree with thick branches. Eagles nest in it.”

Mark 5:6-8

⁶⁻⁸When he saw Jesus a long way off, he ran and bowed in worship before him—then **howled**~~**bellowed**~~ in protest, “What business do you have, Jesus, Son of the High God, messing with me? I swear to God, don’t give me a hard time!” (Jesus had just commanded the tormenting evil spirit, “Out! Get out of the man!”)

Mark 5:11-13

¹¹⁻¹³A large herd of pigs was ~~grazing~~^{browsing} and rooting on a nearby hill. The demons begged him, "Send us to the pigs so we can live in them." Jesus gave the order. But it was even worse for the pigs than for the man. Crazy, they stampeded over a cliff into the sea and drowned.

Mark 6:1-2

¹⁻²He left there and returned to his hometown. His disciples came along. On the Sabbath, he gave a lecture in the meeting place. He stole the show ~~made a real hit~~, impressing everyone. “We had no idea he was this good!” they said. “How did he get so wise all of a sudden, get such ability?”

Mark 6:21-22

²¹⁻²² But a portentous day arrived when Herod threw a birthday party, inviting all the brass and bluebloods in Galilee. Herodias's daughter entered the banquet hall and danced for the guests. She ~~charmed~~ ~~dazzled~~ Herod and the guests.

Mark 6:47-49

⁴⁷⁻⁴⁹Late at night, the boat was far out at sea; Jesus was still by himself on land. He could see his men struggling with the oars, the wind having come up against them. At about four o'clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them, walking on the sea. He intended to go right by them. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and screamed, scared ~~to death~~ ~~out of their wits~~.

Mark 7:5

⁵The Pharisees and religion scholars asked, “Why do your disciples brush off ~~flout~~ the rules, showing up at meals without washing their hands?”

Mark 9:39-41

³⁹⁻⁴¹ Jesus wasn't pleased. "Don't stop him. No one can use my name to do something good and powerful, and in the next breath **slam me** ~~cut me down~~. If he's not an enemy, he's an ally. Why, anyone by just giving you a cup of water in my name is on our side. Count on it that God will notice.

Mark 10:26

²⁶ *That got their attention* ~~set the disciples back on their heels.~~ “Then who has any chance at all?” they asked.

Mark 11:22-25

²²⁻²⁵ Jesus was matter-of-fact: “Embrace this God-life. Really embrace it, and nothing will be too much for you. This mountain, for instance: Just say, ‘Go jump in the lake’—no shuffling or **hemming and hawing** ~~shilly-shallying~~—and it’s as good as done. That’s why I urge you to pray for absolutely everything, ranging from small to large. Include everything as you embrace this God-life, and you’ll get God’s everything. And when you assume the posture of prayer, remember that it’s not all *asking*. If you have anything against someone, *forgive*—only then will your heavenly Father be inclined to also wipe your slate clean of sins.”

Mark 12:9-11

⁹⁻¹¹“What do you think the owner of the vineyard will do? Right. He’ll come and **get rid of everyone**~~clean house~~. Then he’ll assign the care of the vineyard to others. Read it for yourselves in Scripture:

That stone the masons threw out
is now the cornerstone!
This is God’s work;
we rub our eyes—we can hardly believe it!”

Mark 12:24-27

²⁴⁻²⁷ Jesus said, “You’re way off base, and here’s why: One, you don’t know **what God said**~~your Bibles~~; two, you don’t know how God works. After the dead are raised up, we’re past the marriage business. As it is with angels now, all our ecstasies and intimacies then will be with God. And regarding the dead, whether or not they are raised, don’t you ever read the Bible? How God at the bush said to Moses, ‘I am—not *was*—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? The living God is God of the *living*, not the dead. You’re way, way off base.”

Mark 12:32-33

³²⁻³³The religion scholar said, “A wonderful answer, Teacher! So ~~clear-cut~~^{lucid} and accurate—that God is one and there is no other. And loving him with all passion and intelligence and energy, and loving others as well as you love yourself. Why, that’s better than all offerings and sacrifices put together!”

Mark 13:21-23

²¹⁻²³“If anyone tries to flag you down, calling out, ‘Here’s the Messiah!’ or points, ‘There he is!’ don’t fall for it. Fake Messiahs and lying preachers are going to pop up everywhere. Their impressive credentials and **bewitchingdazzling** performances will pull the wool over the eyes of even those who ought to know better. So watch out. I’ve given you fair warning.

Mark 14:27-28

²⁷⁻²⁸ Jesus told them, “You’re all going to feel that your world is falling apart and that it’s my fault. There’s a Scripture that says,

I will strike the shepherd;
The sheep will scatter ~~go helter-skelter~~.

“But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you, leading the way to Galilee.”

Mark 14:32-34

³²⁻³⁴They came to an area called Gethsemane. Jesus told his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James, and John with him. He **sank into a pit of suffocating darkness**~~plunged into a sinkhole of dreadful agony~~. He told them, "I feel bad enough right now to die. Stay here and keep vigil with me."

Mark 14:43-47

A Bunch of Thugs~~Gang of Ruffians~~

⁴³⁻⁴⁷No sooner were the words out of his mouth when Judas, the one out of the Twelve, showed up, and with him a bunch of thugs~~gang of ruffians~~, sent by the high priests, religion scholars, and leaders, brandishing swords and clubs. The betrayer had worked out a signal with them: “The one I kiss, that’s the one—seize him. Make sure he doesn’t get away.” He went straight to Jesus and said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. The others then grabbed him and roughed him up. One of the men standing there unsheathed his sword, swung, and came down on the Chief Priest’s servant, lopping off the man’s ear.

Mark 14:48-50

⁴⁸⁻⁵⁰ Jesus said to them, "What is this, coming after me with swords and clubs as if I were a dangerous criminal? Day after day I've been sitting in the Temple teaching, and you never so much as lifted a hand against me. What you in fact have done is confirm the prophetic writings." All the disciples **bailed on him**~~cut and ran~~.

Mark 15:25-30

²⁵⁻³⁰They nailed him up at nine o'clock in the morning. The charge against him—THE KING OF THE JEWS—was scrawled across a sign ~~printed on a poster~~. Along with him, they crucified two criminals, one to his right, the other to his left. People passing along the road jeered, shaking their heads in mock lament: “You bragged that you could tear down the Temple and then rebuild it in three days—so show us your stuff! Save yourself! If you’re really God’s Son, come down from that cross!”

Luke 1:57-58

⁵⁷⁻⁵⁸ When Elizabeth was full-term in her pregnancy, she gave birth to ~~her~~ a son. Her neighbors and relatives, seeing that God had overwhelmed her with mercy, celebrated with her.

Luke 2:8-20

⁸⁻¹²There were **shepherds**~~shepherders~~ camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

¹³⁻¹⁴At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:

Glory to God in the heavenly heights,
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

¹⁵⁻¹⁸As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the **shepherds**~~shepherders~~ talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the **shepherds**~~shepherders~~ were impressed.

¹⁹⁻²⁰Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The **shepherds**~~shepherders~~ returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!

Luke 3:7-9

⁷⁻⁹When crowds of people came out for baptism because it was the popular thing to do, John exploded: “Brood of snakes! What do you think you’re doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to deflect God’s judgment? It’s your *life* that must change, not your skin. And don’t think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as ‘father.’ Being a child of Abraham is neither here nor there—children of Abraham are a dime a dozen. God can make children from stones if he wants. What counts is your life. Is it green and ~~flourishing~~ ~~blossoming~~? Because if it’s deadwood, it goes on the fire.”

Luke 3:14

¹⁴Soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?”

He told them, “No harassmentshakedowns, no blackmail—and be content with your rations.”

Luke 4:16-21

¹⁶⁻²¹ He came to Nazareth where he had been ~~raised~~ ~~reared~~. As he always did on the Sabbath, he went to the meeting place. When he stood up to read, he was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written,

God's Spirit is on me;
he's chosen me to preach the Message of good news to the poor,
Sent me to announce pardon to prisoners and
recovery of sight to the blind,
To set the burdened and battered free,
to announce, "This is God's ~~time to shine~~ ~~year to act!~~"

He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the place was on him, intent. Then he started in, "You've just heard Scripture make history. It came true just now in this place."

Luke 4:22

²²All who were there, watching and listening, were surprised at how well he spoke. But they also said, “Isn’t this Joseph’s son, the one we’ve known since he was just a ~~kid~~ ~~youngster~~?”

Luke 4:33-34

³³⁻³⁴In the meeting place that day there was a man demonically disturbed. He screamed, “**Stop** ~~He~~! What business do you have here with us, Jesus? Nazarene! I know what you’re up to. You’re the Holy One of God and you’ve come to destroy us!”

Luke 4:36-37

³⁶⁻³⁷ That knocked the wind out of everyone and got them ~~set everyone back on their heels,~~ whispering and wondering, “What’s going on here? Someone whose words make things happen? Someone who orders demonic spirits to get out and they go?” Jesus was the talk of the town.

Luke 5:14-16

¹⁴⁻¹⁶ Jesus instructed him, “Don’t talk about this all over town. Just quietly present your healed self to the priest, along with the offering ordered by Moses. Your cleansed and obedient life, not your words, will bear witness to what I have done.” But the man couldn’t keep it to himself, and the word got out. Soon a large crowd of people had gathered to listen and be healed of their ~~sicknesses~~ ailments. As often as possible Jesus withdrew to out-of-the-way places for prayer.

Luke 5:22-26

²²⁻²⁶ Jesus knew exactly what they were thinking and said, “Why all this gossipy whispering? Which is simpler: to say ‘I forgive your sins,’ or to say ‘Get up and start walking’? Well, just so it’s clear that I’m the Son of Man and authorized to do either, or both. . . .” He now spoke directly to the paralytic: “Get up. Take your bedroll and go home.” Without a moment’s hesitation, he did it—got up, took his blanket, and left for home, giving glory to God all the way. The people rubbed their eyes, **stunned****incredulous**—and then also gave glory to God. Awestruck, they said, “We’ve never seen anything like that!”

Luke 5:29-30

²⁹⁻³⁰ Levi gave a large dinner at his home for Jesus. Everybody was there, tax men and other disreputable characters as guests at the dinner. The Pharisees and their religion scholars came to his disciples greatly offended. "What is he doing eating and drinking with ~~misfits~~^{crooks} and 'sinners'?"

Luke 5:34-35

³⁴⁻³⁵ Jesus said, “When you’re celebrating a wedding, you don’t skimp on the cake and wine. You feast. Later you may need to **exercise moderation**~~pull in your belt~~, but this isn’t the time. As long as the bride and groom are with you, you have a good time. When the groom is gone, the fasting can begin. No one throws cold water on a friendly bonfire. This is Kingdom Come!

Luke 6:6-8

⁶⁻⁸On another Sabbath he went to the meeting place and taught. There was a man there with a crippled right hand. The religion scholars and Pharisees had their ~~eyes~~eye on Jesus to see if he would heal the man, hoping to catch him in a Sabbath ~~violation~~infraction. He knew what they were up to and spoke to the man with the crippled hand: "Get up and stand here before us." He did.

Luke 6:17-23

You're Blessed

¹⁷⁻²¹Coming down off the mountain with them, he stood on a plain surrounded by disciples, and was soon joined by a huge congregation from all over Judea and Jerusalem, even from the seaside towns of Tyre and Sidon. They had come both to hear him and to be cured of their ~~diseases~~ ailments. Those disturbed by evil spirits were healed. Everyone was trying to touch him—so much energy surging from him, so many people healed! Then he spoke:

You're blessed when you've lost it all.
God's kingdom is there for the finding.

You're blessed when you're ravenously hungry.
Then you're ready for the Messianic meal.

You're blessed when the tears flow freely.
Joy comes with the morning.

²²⁻²³“Count yourself blessed every time someone cuts you down or throws you out, every time someone smears or blackens your name to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and that that person is uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—skip like a lamb, if you like!—for even though they don't like it, I do . . . and all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company; my preachers and witnesses have always been treated like this.

Luke 6:27-30

²⁷⁻³⁰“To you who are ready for the truth, I say this: Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the **supple moves** ~~energies~~ of prayer for that person. If someone slaps you in the face, stand there and take it. If someone grabs your shirt, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more **payback** ~~tit for tat stuff~~. Live generously.

Luke 7:31-35

³¹⁻³⁵“How can I account for the people of this generation? They’re like spoiled children complaining to their parents, ‘We wanted to skip rope and you were always too tired; we wanted to talk but you were always too busy.’ John the Baptizer came fasting and you called him crazy. The Son of Man came feasting and you called him a boozer~~lush~~. Opinion polls don’t count for much, do they? The proof of the pudding is in the eating.”

Luke 8:26-29

²⁶⁻²⁹They sailed on to the country of the Gerasenes, directly opposite Galilee. As he stepped out onto land, a madman from town met him; he was a victim of demons. He hadn't worn clothes for a long time, nor lived at home; he lived in the cemetery. When he saw Jesus he screamed, fell before him, and ~~howled~~~~belowed~~, "What business do you have messing with me? You're Jesus, Son of the High God, but don't give me a hard time!" (The man said this because Jesus had started to order the unclean spirit out of him.) Time after time the demon threw the man into convulsions. He had been placed under constant guard and tied with chains and shackles, but crazed and driven wild by the demon, he would shatter the bonds.

Luke 8:32-33

³²⁻³³ A large herd of pigs was ~~grazing~~ ~~browsing~~ and rooting on a nearby hill. The demons begged Jesus to order them into the pigs. He gave the order. It was even worse for the pigs than for the man. Crazy, they stampeded over a cliff into the lake and drowned.

Luke 9:12

¹²As the ~~sun set~~ day declined, the Twelve said, “Dismiss the crowd so they can go to the farms or villages around here and get a room for the night and a bite to eat. We’re out in the middle of nowhere.”

Luke 9:42-43

⁴²⁻⁴³ While he was coming, the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into convulsions. Jesus stepped in, ordered the **foulvile** spirit gone, healed the boy, and handed him back to his father. They all shook their heads in wonder, astonished at God's greatness, God's majestic greatness.

Luke 10:15

¹⁵“And you, Capernaum! Do you think you’re about to be promoted to heaven? Think again. You’re on a **fast track** **mudslide** to hell.

Luke 11:33-36

³³⁻³⁶“No one lights a lamp, then hides it in a drawer. It’s put on a lamp stand so those entering the room have light to see where they’re going. Your eye is a lamp, lighting up your whole body. If you live wide-eyed in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a ~~musty~~ dank cellar. Keep your eyes open, your lamp burning, so you don’t get musty and murky. Keep your life as well-lighted as your best-lighted room.”

Luke 11:37-41

³⁷⁻⁴¹ When he finished that talk, a Pharisee asked him to dinner. He entered his house and sat right down at the table. The Pharisee was shocked and somewhat offended when he saw that Jesus didn't wash up before the meal. But the Master said to him, "I know you Pharisees buffburnish the surface of your cups and plates so they sparkle in the sun, but I also know your insides are maggoty with greed and secret evil. Stupid Pharisees! Didn't the One who made the outside also make the inside? Turn both your pockets and your hearts inside out and give generously to the poor; then your *lives* will be clean, not just your dishes and your hands.

Luke 12:39-40

³⁹⁻⁴⁰“You know that if the house owner had known what night the burglar was coming, he wouldn’t have stayed out late and left the place unlocked. So don’t you be ~~lazy~~~~slovenly~~ and careless. Just when you don’t expect him, the Son of Man will show up.”

Luke 12:42-46

⁴²⁻⁴⁶The Master said, "Let me ask you: Who is the dependable manager, full of common sense, that the master puts in charge of his staff to feed them well and on time? He is a blessed man if when the master shows up he's doing his job. But if he says to himself, 'The master is certainly taking his time,' begins **beating up on** ~~maltreating~~ the servants and maids, throws parties for his friends, and gets drunk, the master will walk in when he least expects it, give him the thrashing of his life, and put him back in the kitchen peeling potatoes.

Luke 13:18-19

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Then he said, "How can I picture God's kingdom for you? What kind of story can I use? It's like an acorn ~~a pine nut~~ that a man plants in his front yard. It grows into a huge oak ~~pine~~ tree with thick branches, and eagles build nests in it."

Luke 13:31

³¹Just then some Pharisees came up and said, “Run for your life! Herod’s got your number ~~on~~
~~the hunt~~. He’s out to kill you!”

Luke 14:7-9

⁷⁻⁹He went on to tell a story to the guests around the table. Noticing how each had tried to elbow into the place of honor, he said, “When someone invites you to dinner, don’t take the place of honor. Somebody more important than you might have been invited by the host. Then he’ll come and call out in front of everybody, ‘You’re in the wrong place. The place of honor belongs to this man.’ **Embarrassed**~~Red-faced~~, you’ll have to make your way to the very last table, the only place left.

Luke 14:10-11

¹⁰⁻¹¹“When you’re invited to dinner, go and sit at the last place. Then when the host comes he may very well say, ‘Friend, come up to the front.’ That will give the dinner guests something to talk about! What I’m saying is, If you walk around **all high and mighty** ~~with your nose in the air~~, you’re going to end up flat on your face. But if you’re content to be simply yourself, you will become more than yourself.”

Luke 14:21

²¹“The servant went back and told the master what had happened. He was outraged and told the servant, ‘Quickly, get out into the city streets and alleys. Collect all who look like they need a square meal, all the misfits and homeless and ~~down-and-out~~ ~~wretched~~ you can lay your hands on, and bring them here.’

Luke 15:1-3

¹⁻³By this time a lot of men and women of ~~questionable~~ ~~doubtful~~ reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, “He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends.” Their grumbling triggered this story.

Luke 15:12-16

¹²⁻¹⁶“So the father divided the property between them. It wasn’t long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to feel it ~~hurt~~. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corn-cobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.

Luke 15:22-24

²²⁻²⁴“But the father wasn’t listening. He was calling to the servants, ‘Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a prize-winning ~~grain-fed~~ heifer and roast it. We’re going to feast! We’re going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!’ And they began to have a wonderful time.

Luke 15:28-30

²⁸⁻³⁰“The older brother **stomped** **stalked** off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!'

Luke 17:1-2

¹⁻²He said to his disciples, "Hard trials and temptations are bound to come, but too bad for whoever brings them on! Better to wear a concrete vest ~~millstone-necklace~~ and take a swim with the fishes ~~in the deep blue sea~~ than give even one of these dear little ones a hard time!

Luke 18:31-34

³¹⁻³⁴Then Jesus took the Twelve off to the side and said, “Listen carefully. We’re on our way up to Jerusalem. Everything written in the Prophets about the Son of Man will take place. He will be handed over to the Romans, jeered at, ridiculed~~made sport of~~, and spit on. Then, after giving him the third degree, they will kill him. In three days he will rise, alive.” But they didn’t get it, could make neither heads nor tails of what he was talking about.

Luke 20:15-16

¹⁵⁻¹⁶“What do you think the owner of the vineyard will do? Right. He’ll come and **get rid of everyone**~~clean house~~. Then he’ll assign the care of the vineyard to others.”

Those who were listening said, “Oh, no! He’d never do that!”

Luke 20:17-18

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ But Jesus didn't back down. "Why, then, do you think this was written:

That stone the masons threw out—
It's now the cornerstone!?

"Anyone falling over that stone will break every bone in his body; if the stone falls on anyone, he'll be smashed to smithereens ~~it will be a total smashup.~~"

Luke 20:27-33

²⁷⁻³³Some Sadducees came up. This is the Jewish party that denies any possibility of resurrection. They asked, “Teacher, Moses wrote us that if a man dies and leaves a wife but no child, his brother is obligated to **marry her and give her children**~~take the widow to wife and get her with child~~. Well, there once were seven brothers. The first took a wife. He died childless. The second married her and died, then the third, and eventually all seven had their turn, but no child. After all that, the wife died. That wife, now—in the resurrection whose wife is she? All seven married her.”

Luke 21:20-24

The Day of Reckoning ~~Vengeance Day~~

²⁰⁻²⁴“When you see soldiers camped all around Jerusalem, then you’ll know that she is about to be devastated. If you’re living in Judea at the time, run for the hills. If you’re in the city, get out quickly. If you’re out in the fields, don’t go home to get your coat. This is *the Day of Reckoning* ~~Vengeance Day~~—everything written about it will come to a head. Pregnant and nursing mothers will have it especially hard. Incredible misery! Torrential rage! People dropping like flies; people dragged off to prisons; Jerusalem under the boot of barbarians until the nations finish what was given them to do.

Luke 21:34-36

³⁴⁻³⁶“But be on your guard. Don’t let the sharp edge of your expectation get dulled by parties and drinking and shopping. Otherwise, that Day is going to take you by complete surprise, spring on you suddenly like a trap, for it’s going to come on everyone, everywhere, at once. So, whatever you do, don’t **fall asleep at the wheel**~~go to sleep at the switch~~. Pray constantly that you will have the strength and wits to make it through everything that’s coming and end up on your feet before the Son of Man.”

Luke 24:50-51

⁵⁰⁻⁵¹ He then led them out of the city over to Bethany. Raising his hands he blessed them, and while blessing them, **made his exit**~~took his leave~~, being carried up to heaven.

John 1:16-18

16-18 We all live off his generous abundance ~~bounty~~,
gift after gift after gift.

We got the basics from Moses,
and then this exuberant giving and receiving,
This endless knowing and understanding—
all this came through Jesus, the Messiah.

No one has ever seen God,
not so much as a glimpse.

This one-of-a-kind God-Expression,
who exists at the very heart of the Father,
has made him plain as day.

John 4:53-54

⁵³⁻⁵⁴That ~~settled~~ ~~clinched~~ it. Not only he but his entire household believed. This was now the second sign Jesus gave after having come from Judea into Galilee.

John 6:29

²⁹Jesus said, “~~Sign on~~~~Throw your lot in~~ with the One that God has sent. That kind of a commitment gets you in on God’s works.”

John 6:35-38

³⁵⁻³⁸ Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life. The person who aligns with me hungers no more and thirsts no more, ever. I have told you this explicitly because even though you have seen me in action, you don't really believe me. Every person the Father gives me eventually comes running to me. And once that person is with me, I hold on and don't let go. I came down from heaven not to follow my own ~~agenda~~ ~~whim~~ but to accomplish the will of the One who sent me.

John 6:61-65

⁶¹⁻⁶⁵ Jesus sensed that his disciples were having a hard time with this and said, “Does this rattle~~throw~~ you completely? What would happen if you saw the Son of Man ascending to where he came from? The Spirit can make life. Sheer muscle and willpower don’t make anything happen. Every word I’ve spoken to you is a Spirit-word, and so it is life-making. But some of you are resisting, refusing to have any part in this.” (Jesus knew from the start that some weren’t going to risk themselves with him. He knew also who would betray him.) He went on to say, “This is why I told you earlier that no one is capable of coming to me on his own. You get to me only as a gift from the Father.”

John 6:66-67

⁶⁶⁻⁶⁷ After this, ~~many~~ of his disciples left. They no longer wanted to be associated with him. Then Jesus gave the Twelve their chance: “Do you also want to leave?”

John 7:6-8

⁶⁻⁸Jesus came back at them, “Don’t ~~pressure~~ ~~crowd~~ me. This isn’t my time. It’s your time—it’s *always* your time; you have nothing to lose. The world has nothing against you, but it’s up in arms against me. It’s against me because I expose the evil behind its pretensions. You go ahead, go up to the Feast. Don’t wait for me. I’m not ready. It’s not the right time for me.”

John 7:21-24

²¹⁻²⁴ Jesus said, “I did one miraculous thing a few months ago, and you’re still standing around getting all upset, wondering what I’m up to. Moses prescribed circumcision—originally it came not from Moses but from his ancestors—and so you circumcise a man, dealing with one part of his body, even if it’s the Sabbath. You do this in order to preserve one item in the Law of Moses. So why are you upset with me because I made a man’s whole body well on the Sabbath? Don’t be hypercritical nitpickers; use your head—and heart!—to discern what is right, to test what is authentically right.”

John 8:12

You're Missing ~~God~~ in All This

¹²Jesus once again addressed them: "I am the world's Light. No one who follows me stumbles around in the darkness. I provide plenty of light to live in."

John 8:34-38

³⁴⁻³⁸ Jesus said, "I tell you most solemnly that anyone who chooses a life of sin is trapped in a dead-end life and is, in fact, a slave. A slave ~~is a transient, who~~ can't come and go at will. The Son, though, has an established position, the run of the house. So if the Son sets you free, you are free through and through. I know you are Abraham's descendants. But I also know that you are trying to kill me because my message hasn't yet penetrated your thick skulls. I'm talking about things I have seen while keeping company with the Father, and you just go on doing what you have heard from your father."

John 8:48

⁴⁸The Jews then said, “That **settles** **clinches** it. We were right all along when we called you a Samaritan and said you were crazy—demon-possessed!”

John 8:54-56

⁵⁴⁻⁵⁶ Jesus said, “If I ~~were striving to get all the attention turned the spotlight on myself~~, it wouldn’t amount to anything. But my Father, the same One you say is your Father, put me here at this time and place of splendor. You haven’t recognized him in this. But I have. If I, in false modesty, said I didn’t know what was going on, I would be as much of a liar as you are. But I do know, and I am doing what he says. Abraham—your ‘father’—with ~~elated jubilant~~ faith looked down the corridors of history and saw my day coming. He saw it and cheered.”

John 10:6-10

⁶⁻¹⁰ Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So he tried again. “I’ll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep rustlers stealers, every one of them. But the sheep didn’t listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

John 11:45-48

⁴⁵⁻⁴⁸That was a **turning point**~~turnaround~~ for many of the Jews who were with Mary. They saw what Jesus did, and believed in him. But some went back to the Pharisees and told on Jesus. The high priests and Pharisees called a meeting of the Jewish ruling body. "What do we do now?" they asked. "This man keeps on doing things, creating God-signs. If we let him go on, pretty soon everyone will be believing in him and the Romans will come and remove what little power and privilege we still have."

John 11:57

⁵⁷Meanwhile, the high priests and Pharisees gave out the word that anyone **who knew his whereabouts**~~getting wind of him~~ should inform them. They were all set to arrest him.

John 12:27-28

²⁷⁻²⁸“Right now I am ~~shaken~~~~storm-tossed~~. And what am I going to say? ‘Father, get me out of this’? No, this is why I came in the first place. I’ll say, ‘Father, put your glory on display.’”

A voice came out of the sky: “I have glorified it, and I’ll glorify it again.”

John 12:41

⁴¹Isaiah said these things after he got a glimpse of God's overflowing glory cascading brightness that would pour through the Messiah.

John 13:18-20

¹⁸⁻²⁰“I’m not including all of you in this. I know precisely whom I’ve selected, so as not to interfere with the fulfillment of this Scripture:

The one who ate bread at my table

Will stab me in the back ~~Turned on his heel against me.~~

“I’m telling you all this ahead of time so that when it happens you will believe that I am who I say I am. Make sure you get this right: Receiving someone I send is the same as receiving me, just as receiving me is the same as receiving the One who sent me.”

John 14:1-4

¹⁻⁴“Don’t let this ~~rattle~~throw you. You trust God, don’t you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my Father’s home. If that weren’t so, would I have told you that I’m on my way to get a room ready for you? And if I’m on my way to get your room ready, I’ll come back and get you so you can live where I live. And you already know the road I’m taking.”

John 17:1-5

¹⁻⁵Jesus said these things. Then, raising his eyes in prayer, he said:

Father, it's time.

Display the bright splendor of your Son

So the Son in turn may show your bright splendor.

You put him in charge of everything human

So he might give real and eternal life to all in his **carecharge**.

And this is the real and eternal life:

That they know you,

The one and only true God,

And Jesus Christ, whom you sent.

I glorified you on earth

By completing down to the last detail

What you assigned me to do.

And now, Father, glorify me with your very own splendor,

The very splendor I had in your presence

Before there was a world.

John 17:6-12

⁶⁻¹² I spelled out your character in detail
To the men and women you gave me.
They were yours in the first place;
Then you gave them to me,
And they have now done what you said.
They know now, beyond the shadow of a doubt,
That everything you gave me is firsthand from you,
For the message you gave me, I gave them;
And they took it, and were convinced
That I came from you.
They believed that you sent me.
I pray for them.
I'm not praying for the God-rejecting world
But for those you gave me,
For they are yours by right.
Everything mine is yours, and yours mine,
And my life is on display in them.
For I'm no longer going to be visible in the world;
They'll continue in the world
While I return to you.
Holy Father, guard them as they pursue this life
That you conferred as a gift through me,
So they can be one heart and mind
As we are one heart and mind.
As long as I was with them, I guarded them
In the pursuit of the life you gave through me;
I even posted a ~~lookout~~~~night watch~~.
And not one of them got away,
Except for the rebel bent on destruction
(the exception that proved the rule of Scripture).

John 18:2-4

²⁻⁴Judas, his betrayer, knew the place because Jesus and his disciples went there often. So Judas led the way to the garden, and the Roman soldiers and police sent by the high priests and Pharisees followed. They arrived there with lanterns and torches and swords. Jesus, knowing by now everything that was implodingcoming down on him, went out and met them. He said, "Who are you after?"

They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene."

John 18:19-21

¹⁹⁻²¹Annas interrogated Jesus regarding his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered, "I've spoken openly in public. I've taught regularly in meeting places and the Temple, where the Jews all come together. Everything has been out in the open. I've said nothing in secret. So why are you treating me like a ~~traitor~~ ~~conspirator~~? Question those who have been listening to me. They know well what I have said. My teachings have all been aboveboard."

John 20:1-2

¹⁻²Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone was moved away from the entrance. She ran at once to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, **gasping for breath**, ~~breathlessly~~ **panting**, “They took the Master from the tomb. We don’t know where they’ve put him.”

John 20:15

¹⁵Jesus spoke to her, “Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?”

She, thinking that he was the gardener, said, “~~Sir~~~~Mister~~, if you took him, tell me where you put him so I can care for him.”

John 20:20-21

²⁰⁻²¹The disciples, seeing the Master with their own eyes, were **awestruck**~~exuberant~~. Jesus repeated his greeting: "Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you."

Acts 2:5-11

⁵⁻¹¹There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were **blown away** ~~thunderstruck~~. They couldn't for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying, "Aren't these all Galileans? How come we're hearing them talk in our various mother tongues?"

Parthians, Medes, and Elamites;
Visitors from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia,
Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,
Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene;
Immigrants from Rome, both Jews and proselytes;
Even Cretans and Arabs!

"They're speaking our languages, describing God's mighty works!"

Acts 3:12-16

Turn to Face ~~God~~God

¹²⁻¹⁶When Peter saw he had a congregation, he addressed the people:

“Oh, Israelites, why does this take you by such complete surprise, and why stare at us as if *our* power or piety made him walk? The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his Son Jesus. The very One that Pilate called innocent, you repudiated. You repudiated the Holy One, the Just One, and asked for a murderer in his place. You no sooner killed the Author of Life than God raised him from the dead—and we’re the witnesses. Faith in Jesus’ name put this man, whose condition you know so well, on his feet—yes, faith and nothing but faith put this man healed and whole right before your eyes.

Acts 13:40-41

⁴⁰⁻⁴¹“Don’t take this lightly. You don’t want the prophet’s ~~revelation~~^{sermon} to describe you:

Watch out, cynics;

Look hard—watch your world fall to pieces.

I’m doing something right before your eyes

That you won’t believe, though it’s staring you in the face.”

Acts 14:21-22

²¹⁻²²After proclaiming the Message in Derbe and establishing a strong core of disciples, they retraced their steps to Lystra, then Iconium, and then Antioch, putting ~~grit~~**grit**~~muscle and sinew~~ in the lives of the disciples, urging them to stick with what they had begun to believe and not quit, making it clear to them that it wouldn't be easy: "Anyone signing up for the kingdom of God has to go through plenty of hard times."

Acts 15:37-41

³⁷⁻⁴¹Barnabas wanted to take John along, the John nicknamed Mark. But Paul wouldn't have him; he wasn't about to take along a quitter who, as soon as the going got tough, had jumped ship on them in Pamphylia. Tempers flared, and they ended up going their separate ways: Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus; Paul chose Silas and, offered up by their friends to the grace of the Master, went to Syria and Cilicia to **put grit**~~build up muscle and sinew~~ in those congregations.

Acts 16:16-18

Beaten~~Beat~~ Up and Thrown in Jail

¹⁶⁻¹⁸One day, on our way to the place of prayer, a slave girl ran into us. She was a psychic and, with her fortunetelling, made a lot of money for the people who owned her. She started following Paul around, calling everyone's attention to us by yelling out, "These men are working for the Most High God. They're laying out the road of salvation for you!" She did this for a number of days until Paul, finally fed up with her, turned and commanded the spirit that possessed her, "Out! In the name of Jesus Christ, get out of her!" And it was gone, just like that.

Acts 17:17-18

¹⁷⁻¹⁸He discussed it with the Jews and other like-minded people at their meeting place. And every day he went out on the streets and talked with anyone who happened along. He got to know some of the Epicurean and Stoic intellectuals pretty well through these conversations. Some of them dismissed him with sarcasm: “What a moron~~an airhead~~!” But others, listening to him go on about Jesus and the resurrection, were intrigued: “That’s a new slant on the gods. Tell us more.”

Acts 19:17-20

¹⁷⁻²⁰It was soon news all over Ephesus among both Jews and Greeks. The realization spread that God was in and behind this. Curiosity about Paul developed into reverence for the Master Jesus. Many of those who thus believed **stepped out into the light**~~came out of the closet~~ and made a clean break with their secret sorceries. All kinds of witches and warlocks came out of the woodwork with their books of spells and incantations and made a huge bonfire of them. Someone estimated their worth at fifty thousand silver coins. In such ways it became evident that the Word of the Master was now sovereign and prevailed in Ephesus.

Acts 19:21-22

²¹⁻²² After all this had **reached its peak**~~come to a head~~, Paul decided it was time to move on to Macedonia and Achaia provinces, and from there to Jerusalem. “Then,” he said, “I’m off to Rome. I’ve got to see Rome!” He sent two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, on to Macedonia and then stayed for a while and wrapped things up in Asia.

Acts 22:4-5

⁴⁻⁵“I went after anyone connected with this ‘Way,’ went at them **with all my might**~~hammer~~
~~and tongs~~, ready to kill for God. I rounded up men and women right and left and had them thrown in prison. You can ask the Chief Priest or anyone in the High Council to verify this; they all knew me well. Then I went off to our brothers in Damascus, armed with official documents authorizing me to hunt down the followers of Jesus there, arrest them, and bring them back to Jerusalem for sentencing.

Acts 22:22-25

²²⁻²⁵The people in the crowd had listened attentively up to this point, but now they broke loose, shouting out, "Kill him! He's an insect! Stomp on him!" They shook their fists. They filled the air with curses. That's when the captain intervened and ordered Paul taken into the barracks. By now the captain was thoroughly exasperated. He decided to interrogate Paul under torture in order to get to the bottom of this, to find out what he had done that provoked this outraged violence. As they spread-eagled him with **strips of leather** ~~thongs~~, getting him ready for the whip, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is this legal: torturing a Roman citizen without a fair trial?"

Acts 24:22-23

²²⁻²³Felix ~~waffled~~ ~~shilly-shallied~~. He knew far more about the Way than he let on, and could have settled the case then and there. But uncertain of his best move politically, he played for time. "When Captain Lysias comes down, I'll decide your case." He gave orders to the centurion to keep Paul in custody, but to more or less give him the run of the place and not prevent his friends from helping him.

Acts 28:3-6

³⁻⁶Paul pitched in and helped. He had gathered up a bundle of sticks, but when he put it on the fire, a venomous snake, roused from its ~~sleepiness~~^{torpor} by the heat, struck his hand and held on. Seeing the snake hanging from Paul's hand like that, the natives jumped to the conclusion that he was a murderer getting ~~what he deserved~~^{his just deserts}. Paul shook the snake off into the fire, ~~like it was nothing~~^{none the worse for wear}. They kept expecting him to drop dead, but when it was obvious he wasn't going to, they jumped to the conclusion that he was a god!

Romans 2:17-24

¹⁷⁻²⁴If you're brought up Jewish, don't assume that you can lean back in the arms of your religion and take it easy, feeling smug because you're an insider to God's revelation, a connoisseur of the best things of God, informed on the latest doctrines! I have a special word of caution for you who are sure that you have it all together yourselves and, because you know God's revealed Word inside and out, feel qualified to guide others through their blind alleys and dark nights and confused emotions to God. While you are guiding others, who is going to guide you? I'm quite serious. While preaching "Don't steal!" are you going to rob people blind? Who would suspect you? The same with adultery. The same with idolatry. You can get by with almost anything if you front it with eloquent talk about God and his law. The line from Scripture, "It's because of you Jews that the outsiders ~~frown~~^{are down} on God," shows it's an old problem that isn't going to go away.

Romans 3:2-6

²⁻⁶First, there's the matter of being put in charge of writing down and caring for God's revelation, these Holy Scriptures. So, what if, in the course of doing that, some of those Jews abandoned their post? God didn't abandon them. Do you think their faithlessness cancels out his faithfulness? Not on your life! Depend on it: God keeps his word even when the whole world is lying through its teeth. Scripture says the same:

Your words stand fast and true;
Rejection doesn't faze you.

But if our wrongdoing only underlines and confirms God's rightdoing, shouldn't we be commended for helping out? Since our ~~lies~~~~bad words~~ don't even make a dent in his ~~truth~~~~good words~~, isn't it wrong of God to back us to the wall and hold us to our word? These questions come up. The answer to such questions is *no*, a most emphatic *No!* How else would things ever get straightened out if *God* didn't do the straightening?

Romans 4:6-9

⁶⁻⁹David confirms this way of looking at it, saying that the one who trusts God to do the putting-everything-right without insisting on having a say in it is one fortunate man:

Fortunate those whose crimes are whisked away~~carted off~~,
whose sins are wiped clean from the slate.

Fortunate the person against
whom the Lord does not keep score.

Do you think for a minute that this blessing is only pronounced over those of us who keep our religious ways and are circumcised? Or do you think it possible that the blessing could be given to those who never even heard of our ways, who were never brought up in the disciplines of God? We all agree, don't we, that it was by embracing what God did for him that Abraham was declared fit before God?

Romans 5:15-17

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ Yet the rescuing gift is not exactly parallel to the death-dealing sin. If one man's sin put crowds of people at the dead-end abyss of separation from God, just think what God's gift poured through one man, Jesus Christ, will do! There's no comparison between that death-dealing sin and this generous, life-giving gift. The verdict on that one sin was the death sentence; the verdict on the many sins that followed was this wonderful life sentence. If death got the upper hand through one man's wrongdoing, can you imagine the breathtaking recovery life makes, ~~absolute~~ ~~sovereign~~ life, in those who grasp with both hands this wildly extravagant life-gift, this grand setting-everything-right, that the one man Jesus Christ provides?

Romans 6:6-11

⁶⁻¹¹Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life—no longer **captive to sin's demands**~~at sin's every beck and call!~~ What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did.

Romans 9:14-18

¹⁴⁻¹⁸Is that grounds for complaining that God is unfair? Not so fast, please. God told Moses, “*I’m* in charge of mercy. *I’m* in charge of compassion.” Compassion doesn’t originate in our bleeding hearts or moral sweat, but in God’s mercy. The same point was made when God said to Pharaoh, “I picked you as a bit player in this drama of my salvation power.” All we’re saying is that God has the first word, initiating the action in which we play our part for **better or worse**~~good or ill~~.

Romans 10:1-3

¹⁻³Believe me, friends, all I want for Israel is what's best for Israel: salvation, nothing less. I want it with all my heart and pray to God for it all the time. I readily admit that the Jews are impressively energetic regarding God—but they are doing everything exactly backward. They don't seem to realize that this comprehensive setting-things-right that is salvation is *God's* business, and a most flourishing business it is. Right across the street they set up their own salvation shops and noisily peddle their knockoffs ~~hawk their wares~~. After all these years of refusing to really deal with God on his terms, insisting instead on making their own deals, they have nothing to show for it.

Romans 11:16-18

¹⁶⁻¹⁸ Behind and underneath all this there is a holy, God-planted, God-tended root. If the primary root of the tree is holy, there's bound to be some holy fruit. Some of the tree's branches were pruned and you wild olive shoots were grafted in. Yet the fact that you are now fed by that rich and holy root gives you no cause to **gloat** over the pruned branches. Remember, you aren't feeding the root; the root is feeding you.

Romans 11:21-22

²¹⁻²²If God didn't think twice about taking pruning shears to the natural branches, why would he hesitate over you? He wouldn't give it a second thought. Make sure you stay alert to these qualities of gentle kindness and ruthless severity that exist side by side in God—ruthless with the deadwood, gentle with the grafted shoot. But don't presume on this gentleness. The moment you become deadwood, ~~it's game over~~ ~~you're out of there~~.

Romans 14:10-12

¹⁰⁻¹²So where does that leave you when you criticize a brother? And where does that leave you when you condescend to a sister? I'd say it leaves you looking pretty silly—or worse. Eventually, we're all going to end up kneeling side by side in the place of judgment, facing God. Your critical and condescending ways aren't going to improve your position there one bit. Read it for yourself in Scripture:

“As I live and breathe,” God says,
“every knee will bow before me;
Every tongue will tell the honest truth
that I and only I am God.”

So **mind your own business**~~tend to your knitting~~. You've got your hands full just taking care of your own life before God.

Romans 16:16

¹⁶Holy hugs ~~embraces~~ all around! All the churches of Christ send their warmest greetings!

Romans 16:25-26

²⁵⁻²⁶All of our praise rises to the One who is strong enough to make *you* strong, exactly as preached in Jesus Christ, precisely as revealed in the mystery kept secret for so long but now an open book through the prophetic Scriptures. All the nations of the world can now know the truth and be brought into obedient belief, carrying out the orders of God, who got all this started, down to the **final detail**~~very last letter~~.

1 Corinthians 1:18-21

¹⁸⁻²¹The Message that points to Christ on the Cross seems like sheer silliness to those hellbent on destruction, but for those on the way of salvation it makes perfect sense. This is the way God works, and most powerfully as it turns out. It's written,

I'll turn conventional wisdom on its head,
I'll expose so-called experts as ~~shams~~ crackpots.

So where can you find someone truly wise, truly educated, truly intelligent in this day and age? Hasn't God exposed it all as pretentious nonsense? Since the world in all its fancy wisdom never had a clue when it came to knowing God, God in his wisdom took delight in using what the world considered stupid—*preaching*, of all things!—to bring those who trust him into the way of salvation.

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

²²⁻²⁵ While Jews clamor for miraculous demonstrations and Greeks go in for philosophical wisdom, we go right on proclaiming Christ, the Crucified. Jews treat this like an *anti*-miracle—and Greeks pass it off as absurd. But to us who are personally called by God himself—both Jews and Greeks—Christ is God’s ultimate miracle and wisdom all wrapped up in one. Human wisdom is so ~~cheap~~ ~~tinny~~, so impotent, next to the seeming absurdity of God. Human strength can’t begin to compete with God’s “weakness.”

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

¹⁻²You'll remember, friends, that when I first came to you to let you in on God's sheer genius~~master-stroke~~, I didn't try to impress you with polished speeches and the latest philosophy. I deliberately kept it plain and simple: first Jesus and who he is; then Jesus and what he did—Jesus crucified.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4

¹⁻⁴But for right now, friends, I'm completely frustrated by your unspiritual dealings with each other and with God. You're acting like infants in relation to Christ, capable of nothing much more than nursing at the breast. Well, then, I'll nurse you since you don't seem capable of anything more. As long as you grab for what makes you feel good or makes you look important, are you really much different than a babe at the breast, content only when everything's going your way? When one of you says, "I'm on Paul's side," and another says, "I'm for Apollos," aren't you being totally ~~childish~~ ~~infantile~~?

1 Corinthians 3:18-20

¹⁸⁻²⁰ Don't fool yourself. Don't think that you can be wise merely by being ~~relevant up-to-date with the times~~. Be God's fool—that's the path to true wisdom. What the world calls smart, God calls stupid. It's written in Scripture,

He exposes the ~~hype of the hipsters chicanery of the chic~~.

The Master sees through the smoke screens
of the know-it-alls.

1 Corinthians 4:1-4

¹⁻⁴Don't imagine us leaders to be something we aren't. We are servants of Christ, not his masters. We are guides into God's ~~divine~~^{most-sublime} secrets, not security guards posted to protect them. The requirements for a good guide are reliability and accurate knowledge. It matters very little to me what you think of me, even less where I rank in popular opinion. I don't even rank myself. Comparisons in these matters are pointless. I'm not aware of anything that would disqualify me from being a good guide for you, but that doesn't mean much. The *Master* makes that judgment.

1 Corinthians 4:9-13

⁹⁻¹³It seems to me that God has put us who bear his Message on stage in a theater in which no one wants to buy a ticket. We're something everyone stands around and stares at, like an accident in the street. We're the Messiah's misfits. You might be sure of yourselves, but we live in the midst of frailties and uncertainties. You might be well-thought-of by others, but we're mostly kicked around. Much of the time we don't have enough to eat, we wear patched and threadbare clothes, we get doors slammed in our faces, and we pick up odd jobs anywhere we can to eke out a living. When they call us names, we say, "God bless you." When they spread rumors about *us*, we put in a good word for *them*. We're treated like garbage, **the leftovers that nobody wants**~~potato peelings from the culture's kitchen~~. And it's not getting any better.

1 Corinthians 4:14-16

¹⁴⁻¹⁶I'm not writing all this as a neighborhood scold to shame you just to make you feel rotten. I'm writing as a father to you, my children. I love you and want you to grow up well, not spoiled. There are a lot of people around who can't wait to tell you what you've done wrong, but there aren't many fathers willing to take the time and effort to help you grow up. It was as Jesus helped me proclaim God's Message to you that I became your father. I'm not, you know, asking you to do anything I'm not already doing myself.

1 Corinthians 4:21

²¹So how should I prepare to come to you? As a severe disciplinarian who makes you **walk the line**~~toe the mark~~? Or as a good friend and counselor who wants to share heart-to-heart with you? You decide.

1 Corinthians 5:9-13

⁹⁻¹³ I wrote you in my earlier letter that you shouldn't make yourselves at home among the sexually promiscuous. I didn't mean that you should have nothing at all to do with outsiders of that sort. Or with ~~criminals~~ ~~crooks~~, whether blue- or white-collar. Or with spiritual phonies, for that matter. You'd have to leave the world entirely to do that! But I *am* saying that you shouldn't act as if everything is just fine when a friend who claims to be a Christian is promiscuous or crooked, is flip with God or rude to friends, gets drunk or becomes greedy and predatory. You can't just go along with this, treating it as acceptable behavior. I'm not responsible for what the *outsiders* do, but don't we have some responsibility for those within our community of believers? God decides on the outsiders, but we need to decide when our brothers and sisters are out of line and, if necessary, clean house.

1 Corinthians 6:7-8

⁷⁻⁸These court cases are a ~~black eye~~ ~~an ugly blot~~ on your community. Wouldn't it be far better to just take it, to let yourselves be wronged and forget it? All you're doing is providing fuel for more wrong, more injustice, bringing more hurt to the people of your own spiritual family.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

²⁹⁻³¹ I do want to point out, friends, that time is of the essence. There is no time to waste, so don't complicate your lives unnecessarily. Keep it simple—in marriage, grief, joy, whatever. Even in ordinary things—your daily routines of shopping, and so on. Deal as sparingly as possible with the things the world thrusts on you. This world as you see it is fading away ~~on its way out~~.

1 Corinthians 9:3-7

³⁻⁷I'm not shy in standing up to my critics. We who are on missionary assignments for God have a right to decent accommodations, and we have a right to support for us and our families. You don't seem to have raised questions with the other apostles and our Master's brothers and Peter in these matters. So, why me? Is it just Barnabas and I who have to go it alone and pay our own way? Are soldiers self-employed? Are gardeners forbidden to eat vegetables from their own gardens? Don't dairy farmersmilkmaids get to drink their fill from the pail?

1 Corinthians 9:15-18

¹⁵⁻¹⁸ Still, I want it made clear that I've never gotten anything out of this for myself, and that I'm not writing now to get something. I'd rather die than give anyone ammunition to discredit me or ~~question~~ ~~impugn~~ my motives. If I proclaim the Message, it's not to get something out of it for myself. I'm *compelled* to do it, and doomed if I don't! If this was my own idea of just another way to make a living, I'd expect some pay. But since it's *not* my idea but something solemnly entrusted to me, why would I expect to get paid? So am I getting anything out of it? Yes, as a matter of fact: the pleasure of proclaiming the Message at no cost to you. You don't even have to pay my expenses!

1 Corinthians 9:26-27

²⁶⁻²⁷ I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finish line. I'm giving it everything I've got. No ~~lazysloppy~~ living for me! I'm staying alert and in top condition. I'm not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself.

1 Corinthians 12:14-18

¹⁴⁻¹⁸I want you to think about how all this makes you more significant, not less. A body isn't just a single part blown up into something huge. It's all the different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together. If Foot said, "I'm not elegant like Hand, embellished with rings; I guess I don't belong to this body," would that make it so? If Ear said, "I'm not beautiful like Eye, transparent~~limpid~~ and expressive; I don't deserve a place on the head," would you want to remove it from the body? If the body was all eye, how could it hear? If all ear, how could it smell? As it is, we see that God has carefully placed each part of the body right where he wanted it.

1 Corinthians 14:20-25

²⁰⁻²⁵To be perfectly frank, I'm getting exasperated with your childish~~infantile~~ thinking. How long before you grow up and use your head—your *adult* head? It's all right to have a childlike unfamiliarity with evil; a simple *no* is all that's needed there. But there's far more to saying *yes* to something. Only mature and well-exercised intelligence can save you from falling into gullibility. It's written in Scripture that God said,

In strange tongues
and from the mouths of strangers
I will preach to this people,
but they'll neither listen nor believe.

So where does it get you, all this speaking in tongues no one understands? It doesn't help believers, and it only gives unbelievers something to gawk at. Plain truth-speaking, on the other hand, goes straight to the heart of believers and doesn't get in the way of unbelievers. If you come together as a congregation and some unbelieving outsiders walk in on you as you're all praying in tongues, unintelligible to each other and to them, won't they assume you've taken leave of your senses and get out of there as fast as they can? But if some unbelieving outsiders walk in on a service where people are speaking out God's truth, the plain words will bring them up against the truth and probe their hearts. Before you know it, they're going to be on their faces before God, recognizing that God is among you.

1 Corinthians 16:20

²⁰All the friends here say hello.

Pass the greetings around with holy hugs**em**braces!

2 Corinthians 1:17-19

¹⁷⁻¹⁹ Are you now going to accuse me of flip-flopping being flip with my promises because it didn't work out? Do you think I talk out of both sides of my mouth—a glib *yes* one moment, a glib *no* the next? Well, you're wrong. I try to be as true to my word as God is to his. Our word to you wasn't a careless *yes* canceled by an indifferent *no*. How could it be? When Silas and Timothy and I proclaimed the Son of God among you, did you pick up on any *yes-and-no*, *on-again, off-again* waffling? Wasn't it a clean, strong *Yes*?

2 Corinthians 5:16-20

¹⁶⁻²⁰ Because of this decision we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don't look at him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life **emerges** **burgeons**! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you.

2 Corinthians 11:1-3

¹⁻³Will you put up with a little foolish aside from me? Please, just for a moment. The thing that has me so upset is that I care about you so much—this is the passion of God burning inside me! I promised your hand in marriage to Christ, presented you as a pure virgin to her husband. And now I'm afraid that exactly as the Snake seduced Eve with his smooth ~~tongue~~^{patter}, you are being lured away from the simple purity of your love for Christ.

Galatians 1:6-9

⁶⁻⁹I can't believe how you waver ~~your fickleness~~—how easily you have turned traitor to him who called you by the grace of Christ by embracing an alternative ~~a variant~~ message! It is not a minor variation, you know; it is completely other, an alien message, a no-message, a lie about God. Those who are provoking this agitation among you are turning the Message of Christ on its head. Let me be blunt: If one of us—even if an angel from heaven!—were to preach something other than what we preached originally, let him be cursed. I said it once; I'll say it again: If anyone, regardless of reputation or credentials, preaches something other than what you received originally, let him be cursed.

Galatians 1:10-12

¹⁰⁻¹²Do you think I speak this strongly in order to manipulate crowds? Or ~~courtesy~~ favor with God? Or get popular applause? If my goal was popularity, I wouldn't bother being Christ's slave. Know this—I am most emphatic here, friends—this great Message I delivered to you is not mere human optimism. I didn't receive it through the traditions, and I wasn't taught it in some school. I got it straight from God, received the Message directly from Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:13-16

¹³⁻¹⁶I'm sure that you've heard the story of my earlier life when I lived in the Jewish way. In those days I went all out in persecuting God's church. I was systematically destroying it. I was so enthusiastic about the traditions of my ancestors that I advanced head and shoulders above my peers in my career. Even then God had his eye designs on me. Why, when I was still in my mother's womb he chose and called me out of sheer generosity! Now he has intervened and revealed his Son to me so that I might joyfully tell non-Jews about him.

Galatians 2:14

¹⁴But when I saw that they were not maintaining a steady, straight course according to the Message, I spoke up to Peter in front of them all: “If you, a Jew, live like a non-Jew when you’re not being observed by the watchdogs from Jerusalem, what right do you have to require non-Jews to conform to Jewish customs just to make a favorable impression on your old Jerusalem buddiescronies?”

Galatians 2:17-18

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Have some of you noticed that we are not yet perfect? (No great surprise, right?) And are you ready to make the accusation that since people like me, who go through Christ in order to get things right with God, aren't perfectly virtuous, Christ must therefore be an accessory to sin? The accusation is frivolous. If I was "trying to be good," I would be rebuilding the same old barn that I tore down. I would be acting as a ~~pretender~~ ~~charlatan~~.

Galatians 3:1

You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a ~~spell~~hex on you? Have you taken leave of your senses? Something crazy has happened, for it's obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives. His sacrifice on the cross was certainly set before you clearly enough.

Galatians 3:15-18

¹⁵⁻¹⁸ Friends, let me give you an example from everyday affairs of the free life I am talking about. Once a person's will has been signed^{ratified}, no one else can annul it or add to it. Now, the promises were made to Abraham and to his descendant. You will observe that Scripture, in the careful language of a legal document, does not say "to descendants," referring to everybody in general, but "to your descendant" (the noun, note, is singular), referring to Christ. This is the way I interpret this: A will, earlier signed^{ratified} by God, is not annulled by an addendum attached 430 years later, thereby negating the promise of the will. No, this addendum, with its instructions and regulations, has nothing to do with the promised inheritance in the will.

Galatians 4:8-11

⁸⁻¹¹Earlier, before you knew God personally, you were enslaved to so-called gods that had nothing of the divine about them. But now that you know the real God—or rather since God knows you—how can you possibly subject yourselves again to those **tin gods**~~paper tigers~~? For that is exactly what you do when you are intimidated into scrupulously observing all the traditions, taboos, and superstitions associated with special days and seasons and years. I am afraid that all my hard work among you has gone up in a puff of smoke!

Galatians 4:18

¹⁸⁻²⁰ It is a good thing to be ~~passionate~~ ~~ardent~~ in doing good, but not just when I am in your presence. Can't you continue the same concern for both my person and my message when I am away from you that you had when I was with you? Do you know how I feel right now, and will feel until Christ's life becomes visible in your lives? Like a mother in the pain of childbirth. Oh, I keep wishing that I was with you. Then I wouldn't be reduced to this blunt, letter-writing language out of sheer frustration.

Galatians 4:21-31

²¹⁻³¹Tell me now, you who have become so enamored with the law: Have you paid close attention to that law? Abraham, remember, had two sons: one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. The son of the slave woman was born by human plotting~~connivance~~; the son of the free woman was born by God's promise. This illustrates the very thing we are dealing with now. The two births represent two ways of being in relationship with God. One is from Mount Sinai in Arabia. It corresponds with what is now going on in Jerusalem—a slave life, producing slaves as offspring. This is the way of Hagar. In contrast to that, there is an invisible Jerusalem, a free Jerusalem, and she is our mother—this is the way of Sarah. Remember what Isaiah wrote:

Rejoice, barren woman who bears no children,
shout and cry out, woman who has no birth pangs,
Because the children of the barren woman
now surpass the children of the chosen woman.

Isn't it clear, friends, that you, like Isaac, are children of promise? In the days of Hagar and Sarah, the child who came from faithless plotting~~connivance~~ (Ishmael) harassed the child who came—empowered by the Spirit—from the faithful promise (Isaac). Isn't it clear that the harassment you are now experiencing from the Jerusalem heretics follows that old pattern? There is a Scripture that tells us what to do: "Expel the slave mother with her son, for the slave son will not inherit with the free son." Isn't that conclusive? We are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Galatians 5:16-18

¹⁶⁻¹⁸My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness. For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are **contrary to each other** **antithetical**, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day. Why don't you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a law-dominated existence?

Ephesians 1:13-14

¹³⁻¹⁴It's in Christ that you, once you heard the truth and believed it (this Message of your salvation), found yourselves home free—signed, sealed, and delivered by the Holy Spirit. This **down payment**~~signet~~ from God is the first installment on what's coming, a reminder that we'll get everything God has planned for us, a praising and glorious life.

Ephesians 4:7-13

⁷⁻¹³But that doesn't mean you should all look and speak and act the same. Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given his own gift. The text for this is,

He climbed the high mountain,
He captured the enemy and seized the **plunder**~~booty~~,
He handed it all out in gifts to the people.

Is it not true that the One who climbed up also climbed down, down to the valley of earth? And the One who climbed down is the One who climbed back up, up to highest heaven. He handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven with his gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christ's followers in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ.

Ephesians 4:14-16

¹⁴⁻¹⁶No prolonged infancies among us, please. We'll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are **easy prey for predators**~~an easy mark for impostors~~. God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love.

Ephesians 5:18-20

¹⁸⁻²⁰ Don't drink too much wine. That cheapens your life. Drink the Spirit of God, huge ~~drafts~~ draughts of him. Sing hymns instead of drinking songs! Sing songs from your heart to Christ. Sing praises over everything, any excuse for a song to God the Father in the name of our Master, Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 6:4

⁴Fathers, don't frustrate your children with no-win scenarios ~~exasperate your children by coming down hard on them~~. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master.

Ephesians 6:10-12

¹⁰⁻¹²And that about wraps it up. God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is no **weekend war**~~afternoon athletic contest~~ that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels.

Philippians 1:18-21

¹⁸⁻²¹So how am I to respond? I've decided that I really don't care about their motives, whether mixed, bad, or indifferent. Every time one of them opens his mouth, Christ is proclaimed, so I just cheer them on!

And I'm going to keep that celebration going because I know how it's going to turn out. Through your faithful prayers and the generous response of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, everything he wants to do in and through me will be done. I can hardly wait to continue on my course. I don't expect to be embarrassed in the least. On the contrary, everything happening to me in this jail only serves to make Christ more accurately known, regardless of whether I live or die. They didn't shut me up; they gave me a **platform** ~~pulpit~~! Alive, I'm Christ's messenger; dead, I'm his **prize** ~~bounty~~. Life versus even more life! I can't lose.

Philippians 2:28-30

²⁸⁻³⁰So you can see why I'm so delighted to send him on to you. When you see him again, **strong and strapping**~~hale and hearty~~, how you'll rejoice and how relieved I'll be. Give him a grand welcome, a joyful embrace! People like him deserve the best you can give. Remember the ministry to me that you started but weren't able to complete? Well, in the process of finishing up that work, he put his life on the line and nearly died doing it.

Colossians 1:18-20

¹⁸⁻²⁰ He was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so **expansive** ~~roomy~~, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross.

Colossians 2:20-23

²⁰⁻²³So, then, if with Christ you've put all that **puffed-up and childish**~~pretentious and infantile~~ religion behind you, why do you let yourselves be bullied by it? "Don't touch this! Don't taste that! Don't go near this!" Do you think things that are here today and gone tomorrow are worth that kind of attention? Such things sound impressive if said in a deep enough voice. They even give the illusion of being pious and humble and **austere**~~ascetic~~. But they're just another way of showing off, making yourselves look important.

1 Thessalonians 2:6-8

⁶⁻⁸Even though we had some standing as Christ's apostles, we never threw our weight around or tried to come across as important, with you or anyone else. We weren't ~~standoffish~~ ~~aloof~~ with you. We took you just as you were. We were never patronizing, never condescending, but we cared for you the way a mother cares for her children. We loved you dearly. Not content to just pass on the Message, we wanted to give you our hearts. And we *did*.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

¹³And now we look back on all this and thank God, a geyser~~an artesian well~~ of thanks! When you got the Message of God we preached, you didn't pass it off as just one more human opinion, but you took it to heart as God's true word to you, which it is, God himself at work in you believers!

1 Thessalonians 2:17-20

¹⁷⁻²⁰Do you have any idea how very homesick we became for you, dear friends? Even though it hadn't been that long and it was only our bodies that were separated from you, not our hearts, we tried our very best to get back to see you. You can't imagine how much we missed you! I, Paul, tried over and over to get back, but Satan thwarted stymied us each time. Who do you think we're going to be proud of when our Master Jesus appears if it's not you? You're our pride and joy!

1 Thessalonians 4:6-7

⁶⁻⁷Don't run roughshod over the concerns of your brothers and sisters. Their concerns are God's concerns, and *he* will take care of them. We've warned you about this before. God hasn't invited us into a disorderly, ~~grungy~~ ~~unkempt~~ life but into something holy and beautiful—as beautiful on the inside as the outside.

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

³⁻⁴You need to know, friends, that thanking God over and over for you is not only a pleasure; it's a must. We *have* to do it. Your faith is growing phenomenally; your love for each other is developing wonderfully. Why, it's only right that we give thanks. We're so proud of you; you're so steady and determined in your faith despite all the hard times that have **broadsided** ~~you come down on you~~. We tell everyone we meet in the churches all about you.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-5

³⁻⁵Before that day comes, a couple of things have to happen. First, the Apostasy. Second, the debut of the Anarchist, a **partner in crime with**~~real dog of~~ Satan. He'll defy and then take over every so-called god or altar. Having cleared away the opposition, he'll then set himself up in God's Temple as "God Almighty." Don't you remember me going over all this in detail when I was with you? Are your memories that short?

2 Thessalonians 3:1-3

¹⁻³One more thing, friends: Pray for us. Pray that the Master's Word will simply take off and race through the country to a groundswell of response, just as it did among you. And pray that we'll be rescued from these ~~troublemakers~~ ~~scoundrels~~ who are trying to do us in. I'm finding that not all "believers" are believers. But the Master never lets us down. He'll stick by you and protect you from evil.

1 Timothy 1:5-7

⁵⁻⁷The whole point of what we're urging is simply *love*—love uncontaminated by self-interest and counterfeit faith, a life open to God. Those who fail to keep to this point soon wander off into **dead ends**~~cul-de-sacs~~ of gossip. They set themselves up as experts on religious issues, but haven't the remotest idea of what they're holding forth with such imposing eloquence.

1 Timothy 1:8-11

⁸⁻¹¹It's true that moral guidance and counsel need to be given, but the way you say it and to whom you say it are as important as what you say. It's obvious, isn't it, that the law code isn't primarily for people who live responsibly, but for the irresponsible, who defy all authority, riding roughshod over God, life, sex, truth, whatever! They are cynical toward contemptuous of this great Message I've been put in charge of by this great God.

1 Timothy 1:12-14

¹²⁻¹⁴I'm so grateful to Christ Jesus for making me adequate to do this work. He went out on a limb, you know, in trusting me with this ministry. The only credentials I brought to it were violence~~invective~~ and witch hunts and arrogance. But I was treated mercifully because I didn't know what I was doing—didn't know Who I was doing it against! Grace mixed with faith and love poured over me and into me. And all because of Jesus.

2 Timothy 2:19

¹⁹Meanwhile, God's firm foundation is as firm as ever, these sentences engraved on the stones:

GOD KNOWS WHO BELONGS TO HIM.

STEER CLEAR OF ~~SPURN~~ EVIL, ALL YOU WHO NAME GOD AS GOD.

2 Timothy 2:22-26

²²⁻²⁶Run away from ~~childish~~ **infantile** indulgence. Run after mature righteousness—faith, love, peace—joining those who are in honest and serious prayer before God. Refuse to get involved in inane discussions; they always end up in fights. God’s servant must not be argumentative, but a gentle listener and a teacher who keeps cool, working firmly but patiently with those who refuse to obey. You never know how or when God might sober them up with a change of heart and a turning to the truth, enabling them to escape the Devil’s trap, where they are caught and held captive, forced to run his errands.

Titus 2:7-8

⁷⁻⁸But mostly, show them all this by doing it yourself, ~~trustworthy~~~~incorruptible~~ in your teaching, your words solid and sane. Then anyone who is dead set against us, when he finds nothing weird or misguided, might eventually come around.

Titus 3:3-8

³⁻⁸It wasn't so long ago that we ourselves were stupid and stubborn, **easy marks for dupes of** sin, ordered every which way by our glands, going around with a chip on our shoulder, hated and hating back. But when God, our kind and loving Savior God, stepped in, he saved us from all that. It was all his doing; we had nothing to do with it. He gave us a good bath, and we came out of it new people, washed inside and out by the Holy Spirit. Our Savior Jesus poured out new life so generously. God's gift has restored our relationship with him and given us back our lives. And there's more life to come—an eternity of life! You can count on this.

Hebrews 3:12-14

¹²⁻¹⁴So watch your step, friends. Make sure there's no evil unbelief lying around that will trip you up and throw you off course, diverting you from the living God. For as long as **God's still calling it's still God's** Today, keep each other on your toes so sin doesn't slow down your reflexes. If we can only keep our grip on the sure thing we started out with, we're in this with Christ for the long haul.

These words keep ringing in our ears:

Today, please listen;
don't turn a deaf ear as in the bitter uprising.

Hebrews 4:12-13

¹²⁻¹³ God means what he says. What he says goes. His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey. Nothing and no one ~~can resist~~ ~~is impervious to~~ God's Word. We can't get away from it—no matter what.

Hebrews 6:13-18

¹³⁻¹⁸ When God made his promise to Abraham, he backed it **all the way to the hilt**, putting his own reputation on the line. He said, “I promise that I’ll bless you with everything I have—bless and bless and bless!” Abraham stuck it out and got everything that had been promised to him. When people make promises, they guarantee them by appeal to some authority above them so that if there is any question that they’ll make good on the promise, the authority will back them up. When God wanted to guarantee his promises, he gave his word, a rock-solid guarantee—God *can’t* break his word. And because his word cannot change, the promise is likewise unchangeable.

Hebrews 10:1-10

¹⁻¹⁰The old plan was only a hint of the good things in the new plan. Since that old “law plan” wasn’t complete in itself, it couldn’t complete those who followed it. No matter how many sacrifices were offered year after year, they never added up to a complete solution. If they had, the worshipers would have gone **blissfully**~~merrily~~ on their way, no longer dragged down by their sins. But instead of removing awareness of sin, when those animal sacrifices were repeated over and over they actually heightened awareness and guilt. The plain fact is that bull and goat blood can’t get rid of sin. That is what is meant by this prophecy, put in the mouth of Christ:

You don’t want sacrifices and offerings year after year;
you’ve prepared a body for me for a sacrifice.
It’s not fragrance and smoke from the altar
that whet your appetite.
So I said, “I’m here to do it your way, O God,
the way it’s described in your Book.”

When he said, “You don’t want sacrifices and offerings,” he was referring to practices according to the old plan. When he added, “I’m here to do it your way,” he set aside the first in order to enact the new plan—*God’s* way—by which we are made fit for God by the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus.

Hebrews 12:4-11

⁴⁻¹¹In this all-out match against sin, others have suffered far worse than you, to say nothing of what Jesus went through—all that bloodshed! So don't feel sorry for yourselves. Or have you forgotten how good parents treat children, and that God regards you as *his* children?

My dear child, don't shrug off God's discipline,
but don't be crushed by it either.
It's the child he loves that he disciplines;
the child he embraces, he also corrects.

God is educating you; that's why you must never drop out. He's treating you as dear children. This trouble you're in isn't punishment; it's *training*, the normal experience of children. Only irresponsible parents leave children to fend for themselves. Would you prefer an irresponsible God? We respect our own parents for training and not spoiling us, so why not embrace God's training so we can truly *live*? While we were children, our parents did what *seemed* best to them. But God is doing what *is* best for us, training us to live God's holy best. At the time, discipline isn't much fun. It always feels like it's going against the grain. Later, of course, it pays off **big-time** ~~handsomely~~, for it's the well-trained who find themselves mature in their relationship with God.

James 2:21-24

²¹⁻²⁴ Wasn't our ancestor Abraham "made right with God by works" when he placed his son Isaac on the sacrificial altar? Isn't it obvious that faith and works are yoked partners, that faith expresses itself in works? That the works are "works of faith"? The full meaning of "believe" in the Scripture sentence, "Abraham believed God and was set right with God," includes his action. It's that ~~weave~~ ~~mesh~~ of believing and acting that got Abraham named "God's friend." Is it not evident that a person is made right with God not by a barren faith but by faith fruitful in works?

James 3:13-16

¹³⁻¹⁶Do you want to be counted wise, to build a reputation for wisdom? Here's what you do: Live well, live wisely, live humbly. It's the way you live, not the way you talk, that counts. Mean-spirited ambition isn't wisdom. Boasting that you are wise isn't wisdom. Twisting the truth to make yourselves sound wise isn't wisdom. It's the furthest thing from wisdom—it's animal cunning, devilish **plotting** ~~conniving~~. Whenever you're trying to look better than others or get the better of others, things fall apart and everyone ends up at the others' throats.

James 4:7-10

⁷⁻¹⁰So let God work his will in you. Yell a loud *no* to the Devil and watch him **make himself scarce**~~scamper~~. Say a quiet *yes* to God and he'll be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify your inner life. Quit playing the field. Hit bottom, and cry your eyes out. The fun and games are over. Get serious, really serious. Get down on your knees before the Master; it's the only way you'll get on your feet.

1 Peter 1:13-16

¹³⁻¹⁶So roll up your sleeves, **get your head in the game**~~put your mind in gear~~, be totally ready to receive the gift that's coming when Jesus arrives. Don't lazily slip back into those old grooves of evil, doing just what you feel like doing. You didn't know any better then; you do now. As obedient children, let yourselves be pulled into a way of life shaped by God's life, a life energetic and blazing with holiness. God said, "I am holy; you be holy."

1 Peter 1:22-25

²²⁻²⁵ Now that you've cleaned up your lives by following the truth, love one another as if your lives depended on it. Your new life is not like your old life. Your old birth came from mortal sperm; your new birth comes from God's living Word. Just think: a life conceived by God himself! That's why the prophet said,

The old life is a grass life,
its beauty as short-lived as wildflowers;
Grass dries up, flowers ~~wilt~~ droop,
God's Word goes on and on forever.

This is the Word that conceived the new life in you.

1 Peter 2:11-12

¹¹⁻¹²Friends, this world is not your home, so don't make yourselves cozy in it. Don't indulge your ego at the expense of your soul. Live an exemplary life **in your neighborhood**~~among the natives~~ so that your actions will refute their prejudices. Then they'll be won over to God's side and be there to join in the celebration when he arrives.

1 Peter 5:13-14

¹³⁻¹⁴The church in exile here with me—but not for a moment forgotten by God—wants to be remembered to you. Mark, who is like a son to me, says hello. Give holy **hugse****embraces** all around! Peace to you—to all who walk in Christ's ways.

2 Peter 3:3-4

³⁻⁴First off, you need to know that in the last days, mockers are going to have a heyday. Reducing everything to the level of their petty~~puny~~ feelings, they'll mock, "So what's happened to the promise of his Coming? Our ancestors are dead and buried, and everything's going on just as it has from the first day of creation. Nothing's changed."

2 Peter 3:10

¹⁰But when the Day of God's Judgment does come, it will be unannounced, like a thief. The sky will collapse with a thunderous bang, everything disintegrating in a **raging inferno** **huge conflagration**, earth and all its works exposed to the scrutiny of Judgment.

1 John 1:8-10

⁸⁻¹⁰If we claim that we're free of sin, we're only fooling ourselves. A claim like that is errant nonsense. On the other hand, if we admit our sins—**simply come clean about**~~make a clean breast of~~ them—he won't let us down; he'll be true to himself. He'll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing. If we claim that we've never sinned, we out-and-out contradict God—make a liar out of him. A claim like that only shows off our ignorance of God.

1 John 2:7-8

⁷⁻⁸My dear friends, I'm not writing anything new here. This is the oldest commandment in the book, and you've known it from day one. It's always been implicit in the Message you've heard. On the other hand, perhaps it is new, freshly minted as it is in both Christ and you—the darkness ~~fading away~~ ~~on its way out~~ and the True Light already blazing!

1 John 3:9-10

⁹⁻¹⁰ People conceived and brought into life by God don't make a practice of sin. How could they? God's seed is deep within them, making them who they are. It's not in the nature of the **God-born**~~God-begotten~~ to practice and parade sin. Here's how you tell the difference between God's children and the Devil's children: The one who won't practice righteous ways isn't from God, nor is the one who won't love brother or sister. A simple test.

1 John 5:1-21

¹⁻³Every person who believes that Jesus is, in fact, the Messiah, is **God-born**~~God-begotten~~. If we love the One who conceives the child, we'll surely love the child who was conceived. The reality test on whether or not we love God's children is this: Do we love God? Do we keep his commands? The proof that we love God comes when we keep his commandments and they are not at all troublesome.

⁴⁻⁵Every **God-born**~~God-begotten~~ person conquers the world's ways. The conquering power that brings the world to its knees is our faith. The person who wins out over the world's ways is simply the one who believes Jesus is the Son of God.

⁶⁻⁸Jesus—the Divine Christ! He experienced a life-giving birth and a death-killing death. Not only birth from the womb, but baptismal birth of his ministry and sacrificial death. And all the while the Spirit is confirming the truth, the reality of God's presence at Jesus' baptism and crucifixion, bringing those occasions alive for us. A triple testimony: the Spirit, the Baptism, the Crucifixion. And the three in perfect agreement.

⁹⁻¹⁰If we take human testimony at face value, how much more should we be reassured when God gives testimony as he does here, testifying concerning his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God inwardly confirms God's testimony. Whoever refuses to believe in effect calls God a liar, refusing to believe God's own testimony regarding his Son.

¹¹⁻¹²This is the testimony in essence: God gave us eternal life; the life is in his Son. So, whoever has the Son, has life; whoever rejects the Son, rejects life.

¹³⁻¹⁵My purpose in writing is simply this: that you who believe in God's Son will know beyond the shadow of a doubt that you have eternal life, the reality and not the illusion. And how bold and free we then become in his presence, freely asking according to his will, sure that he's listening. And if we're confident that he's listening, we know that what we've asked for is as good as ours.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷For instance, if we see a Christian believer sinning (clearly I'm not talking about those who make a practice of sin in a way that is "fatal," leading to eternal death), we ask for God's help and he gladly gives it, gives life to the sinner whose sin is not fatal. There is such a thing as a fatal sin, and I'm not urging you to pray about that. Everything we do wrong is sin, but not all sin is fatal.

¹⁸⁻²¹We know that none of the **God-born**~~God-begotten~~ makes a practice of sin—fatal sin. The **God-born**~~God-begotten~~ are also the God-protected. The Evil One can't lay a hand on them. We know that we are held firm by God; it's only the people of the world who continue in the grip of the Evil One. And we know that the Son of God came so we could recognize and understand the truth of God—what a gift!—and we are living in the Truth itself, in God's Son, Jesus Christ. This Jesus is both True God and Real Life. Dear children, be on guard against all clever facsimiles.

2 John 1:7

⁷There are a lot of smooth-talking ~~con artists~~ ~~charlatans~~ loose in the world who refuse to believe that Jesus Christ was truly human, a flesh-and-blood human being. Give them their true title: Deceiver! Antichrist!

Jude 1:12-13

¹²⁻¹³These people are eyesores at ~~warts on~~ your love feasts as you worship and eat together. They're giving you a black eye—carousing shamelessly, grabbing anything that isn't nailed down. They're—

Puffs of smoke pushed by gusts of wind;
late autumn trees stripped clean of leaf and fruit,
Doubly dead, pulled up by the roots;
wild ocean waves leaving nothing on the beach
but the foam of their shame;
Lost stars in outer space
on their way to the black hole.

Jude 1:14-16

¹⁴⁻¹⁶Enoch, the seventh after Adam, prophesied of them: “Look! The Master comes with thousands of holy angels to bring judgment against them all, convicting each person of every defiling act of shameless sacrilege, of every dirty word they have spewed of their pious filth.” These are the complainers, ~~“grumpers,”~~ the bellyachers, grabbing for the biggest piece of the pie, talking big, saying anything they think will get them ahead.

Revelation 1:9-17

⁹⁻¹⁷I, John, with you all the way in the trial and the Kingdom and the passion of patience in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of God's Word, the witness of Jesus. It was Sunday and I was in the Spirit, praying. I heard a loud voice behind me, trumpet-clear and piercing: "Write what you see into a book. Send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea." I turned and saw the voice.

I saw a gold menorah
with seven branches,
And in the center, the Son of Man,
in a robe and gold breastplate,
hair a blizzard of white,
Eyes pouring fire-blaze,
both feet furnace-fired bronze,
His voice a ~~roar~~cataract,
right hand holding the Seven Stars,
His mouth a sharp-biting sword,
his face a ~~blinding~~perigee sun.

I saw this and fainted dead at his feet. His right hand pulled me upright, his voice reassured me:

Revelation 6:5-6

⁵⁻⁶When he ripped off the third seal, I heard the third Animal cry, "Come out!" I looked. A black horse this time. Its rider carried a set of scales in his hand. I heard a message (it seemed to issue from the Four Animals): "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, or three quarts of barley, but ~~don't lay even a finger on the oil and wine~~~~all the oil and wine you want.~~"

Revelation 14:1-2

¹⁻²I saw—it took my breath away!—the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, 144,000 standing there with him, his Name and the Name of his Father inscribed on their foreheads. And I heard a voice out of Heaven, the sound like ~~rapids~~^{a cataract}, like the crash of thunder.

Revelation 16:17-21

¹⁷⁻²¹The seventh Angel poured his bowl into the air: From the Throne in the Temple came a shout, “Done!” followed by lightning flashes and shouts, thunder crashes and a colossal earthquake—a huge and devastating earthquake, never an earthquake like it since time began. The Great City split three ways, the cities of the nations toppled to ruin. Great Babylon had to drink the wine of God’s raging anger—God remembered to give her the cup! Every island fled and not a mountain was to be found. Hailstones weighing **close to a hundred pounds**~~a ton~~ plummeted, crushing and smashing men and women as they cursed God for the hail, the epic disaster of hail.

Revelation 19:6-8

⁶⁻⁸Then I heard the sound of massed choirs, the sound of mighty rapids~~a mighty cataract~~, the sound of strong thunder:

Hallelujah!

The Master reigns,

our God, the Sovereign-Strong!

Let us celebrate, let us rejoice,

let us give him the glory!

The Marriage of the Lamb has come;

his Wife has made herself ready.

She was given a bridal gown

of bright and shining linen.

The linen is the righteousness of the saints.

Revelation 21:15-21

¹⁵⁻²¹The Angel speaking with me had a gold measuring stick to measure the City, its gates, and its wall. The City was laid out in a perfect square. He measured the City with the measuring stick: **fifteen hundred miles**~~twelve thousand stadia~~, its length, width, and height all equal. Using the standard measure, the Angel measured the thickness of its wall: **seventy-two yards**~~144 cubits~~. The wall was jasper, the color of Glory, and the City was pure gold, translucent as glass. The foundations of the City walls were garnished with every precious gem imaginable: the first foundation jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate a single pearl.