

Imperatives that demand a specific, concrete action are valid insofar as the action they demand is a specification under specific, concrete circumstances of the action called for by such general imperatives as "Let us also walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:25), "Let us also not allow sin to rule over us" (Rom 6: 2, 12), "Let us also cleanse out the old leaven" (1 Cor 5:7; cf. Gal 5:9), "Let us also put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 13:14; cf. Gal 3:27).

But all such general imperatives are themselves only different ways of expressing the imperative to believe: "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20), which is addressed not only to believers but also to unbelievers. To respond to this imperative, one must entrust oneself to the God who has reconciled the world to himself and live in loyalty to that God as well as to all to whom he is loyal—namely, the world.

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When Paul issues specific, concrete moral instructions, it is not so that, by following them, his readers can attain a salvation they do not yet have, but so that the salvation that is already theirs can become specific and concrete in their actual lives. In this sense, his specific, concrete moral instructions are offered as helps for making decisions to those who are already living salvation. If, however, they are not already living this salvation, they cannot attain it by following them.