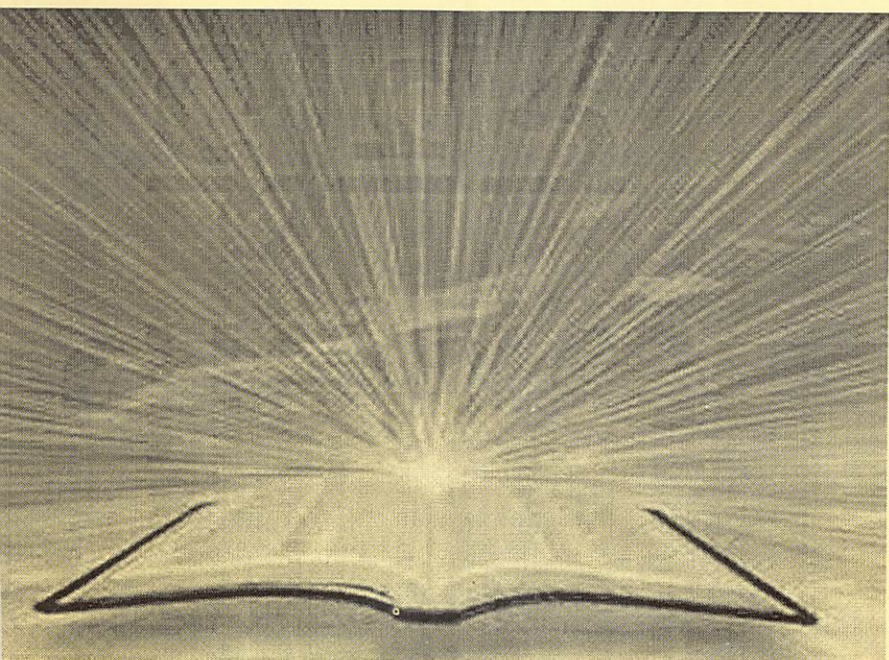


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# THE BIBLE TEACHER



## ***Our Plea***

### ***Let the Truth Prevail***

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18; Col. 1:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the Church. (1 Corinthians 1:10; John 20:20, 21).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands to be saved are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, and Christians only, after His name alone, with no Prefixes or Suffixes, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men which contain doctrines and commandments of men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## Editorial

### What Does the Bible Teach?

*“One’s Life Does Not Consist  
In The Abundance Of The  
Things He Possesses”*

THE ABOVE STATEMENT WAS made by Jesus Christ when He was teaching the true meaning of man’s life on earth from heaven’s viewpoint. He taught that the importance and the greatness of life does not lie in earthly possessions or powers. Because whatsoever is on earth, even the existence of our physical bodies, is of temporary nature and is for a short time. Man, however mighty and powerful he might think of himself to be, must acknowledge the fact that he is on this earth but for a few days. The Bible says, “Man who is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue.” (Job 14:1, 2). At another place it says, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” (James 4:13, 14). Jesus taught, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” (Luke 12:15).

From an earthly or physical standpoint, the above statements are most true about all humans. But from heaven’s spiritual perspective, the greatness of man’s life is seen in the fact that he was created by God in the beginning in His own image and after



His own likeness. (Genesis 1:26, 27). Thus, the fact of the matter is that man is not only a physical being, but he is also a spiritual being, a partaker of immortality. According to Genesis 2:7, we observe that when God created Adam's body out of the dust of the ground, next it says, He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. Man is not only body, but he is a soul, which he received from his maker God when He had breathed into him the breath of life. When man dies, the body, which was created from the dust of the ground, dies, not the soul which man had received directly from God. The Bible says, that at death the soul of man returns to God who gave it, as the body returns to the earth from which it was created. (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Thus, man's existence cannot be ended by any force on earth; no explosive, disease or even death can end or eliminate man's existence. The importance and greatness of man's life, therefore lies in the very fact that, like his creator, he too shall ever live, being the offspring of God. (Acts 17:29). Man is not like animals, who were created by God in the beginning just as He had created everything else by the power of His word. (Genesis 1). But man is a special creation of God, created in the image and after the likeness of God. Like God, man is, therefore, a rational being, who is able to think clearly and make decision based on reason rather than emotions. He is intelligent, is able to invent and make things. Also, man is a worshipful being. All of this shows that man is different than everything else God has created. While everything, including earth and whatsoever is above the earth in the sky, will be destroyed one day as we read in 2 Peter 3:10 and 1 John 2: 17, man, created in the image and likeness of God, will continue to live, like God, forever.

But where? Where does man exist? At the time of his creation, he was, like God, pure and holy, without sin. He was in fellowship with God. But because of his disobedience to God's command, man, by his own choice and against the will of God, separated himself from his Creator. One of the saddest passages in the Bible is found in Romans 3:23, which says, "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." Man was created to glorify God, but because he sinned he made himself unworthy of God's glory. Now being separated from Him because of sin, all humans live under spiritual sentence. Man will always exist, but with his sin. Even after man departs from this world, he will continue to live, but eternally separated from God. The Bible describes that state as "Hell."

However, since God knows the importance and greatness of man's life and his eternal value, He did not spare even Himself in

His effort to restore lost humanity. Knowing that man was unable to come to Him because of his sin, He came down on earth, to save man from sin, and consequently from hell, in Jesus Christ. Speaking of Christ, the Bible says, "Who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:6-8). Again, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8). And yet again, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The good news is that by partaking of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who is the propitiation for man's sin, man can again become worthy of God's glory and live with Him in heaven forever. "There is therefore" we read in Romans 8:1, "now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." The redemption is in Jesus Christ. (John 14:6). Galatians 3:27 teaches, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." This is the Bible way of getting into Christ. There is no other way. After getting into Christ as we follow daily His steps, becoming obedient children of God, we make Christ our example in daily life, and carefully follow those things He has commanded us to do. We surely know, then, that when our temporary existence on earth will be over we will inherit that which is incorruptible and undefiled, which does not fade away: the eternal life of love, joy and peace in heaven with our Creator God. (1 Peter 1:3,4).

Heaven, therefore, and not earthly possessions, wealth or fame or power on earth, should be life's greatest objective. "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." (1 Timothy 6:7). We should do everything God requires of us so that we may inherit the eternal life in heaven, and not live in hell eternally because of sin.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).



# INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

**J.C. Choate**

THE WORD BIBLE LITERALLY means "the book." It is the greatest book in all the world. It is the world's best seller. Actually, it is a combination of many books.

The Bible is divided into two main divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Old Testament has reference to the old law or old will that was given to God's people in the long ago. Naturally, the New Testament is the latter law or will that was given to replace the first law.

The Bible is composed of 66 books, with the Old section having 39 and the New division 27. Beginning with the Old Testament we have it broken down into several divisions. First, there are five books of law, which are also called the Pentateuch. These are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Next there are twelve books of history. We have Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Then come five books of poetry. They are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. The remaining seventeen books are composed of prophecy but even these may be divided into two distinct sections. First, we have the major prophets with five books. There is Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentation Ezekiel, and Daniel. Second, there are the minor prophets with twelve books and they are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

In the New Testament we also have the books broken down into divisions or sections. The first four books are biography and they consist of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There is one book of history and that is called the Acts of the Apostles. Next come twenty-one books, epistles dealing with Christian living. Beginning with Romans, they continue with 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon. Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude. And finally there is one book of prophecy, the book of Revelation.

Even though the Bible had many authors, and even though it was written over a period of many years, nevertheless, there is complete harmony and unity throughout. It never contradicts itself. One writer does not pen something, and another write just the opposite. This is one proof of its inspiration by God, for what other book can boast of such a record?

The Bible is the only book that gives the story of the beginning of things, of man's creation, of the purpose of his existence, and where he shall eventually go. This great volume not only tells of the good traits in man's character, but also points out the bad side as well.

Through this book we may learn of the past, know what is expected of us at the present, and be able to look into the future. The many prophecies contained in it have been fulfilled. The many promises have been thus far kept. Could there be any doubt that it will not stand the future tests as well?

God himself speaks through this medium. Through it he has revealed his Son and his will for man. It tells of the beginning of the church and of its growth. It assures victory to all who will obey its precepts.

In speaking of it in the long ago, the apostle Paul said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works". (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Thus, it is all inspired of God, it is from God, it is the word of God, and therefore completely informs man of the good work he is to do.

Christ spoke of the scripture as truth and only the truth can make one free. (John 8:32; 17:17). Peter says that we are to speak only as the oracles of God, that is, in harmony with the teachings of the Bible. (1 Peter 4:11). Again, Paul says that we are to study the word and Christ adds that the scriptures are to be searched. (2 Timothy 2:15; John 5:39). And last, but not least, we are warned not to add to or subtract from the word. (Revelation 22:18, 19).

Yes, the Bible is the greatest and grandest book in the world. It can bless you if you will obey it or will curse you if you neglect it or oppose it. Study its contents, respect it, love it, and obey it, and it will prove to be a blessing to you, both in this life and in the world to come.

# What Happens If We Change The Message?

Ron Bryant

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS based upon the revealed will of God. The Scriptures, inspired of God, are not amenable—that means they cannot be **added to, subtracted from, or edited**. They are complete and furnish the believer completely (2 Timothy 3:16,17). They contain *“all that pertains to life and godliness”* (2 Peter 1:3). They serve to bring to the heart of man the will of God, in order to bring the believer into a right relationship with God (Romans 1:16,17).

The Scriptures are full of warnings concerning the *“handling aright of the word of truth.”* The words are pointedly simple. There is the warning against *“going beyond what is written,”* against, *“going beyond the doctrine of Christ,”* against, *“adding to”* or *“taking away from”* the Word. The directive to *“preach the word”* is undergirded by the warning not to *“preach another gospel”* than that preached by the apostles (2 Timothy 4:2; Galatians 1:6-9).

The whole of Christianity rests upon the inspired Word of God. No part of it is drawn from the doctrines of men.

The Gospel of Christ calls men to life in Christ. The terms of salvation are set forth in the doctrine of Christ (the Gospel of Christ). Salvation is to be found only through the doctrine of Christ. It cannot be found in the doctrines of men.

The worship and work of the people of God, as well as the moral and spiritual conduct that honors God, can be learned only from the doctrine of Christ. The Christian life is produced and maintained only in the acceptance of the will of God in Christ — the will of God, expressed in the Gospel. It cannot be produced by or maintained in the doctrines of men (Matthew 15:8,9; Mark 7:7-9; 2 John 9-11; Galatians 1:6-9; Romans 6:16-18, 12:1,2).

An *amended* gospel, a *partial* gospel, or a *different* gospel, is *not* the Gospel of Christ. The doctrines of men are not the counsel of God.

And yet, there are folks who say with all candor that the word of God is not “law”, as such, but is merely a suggested pattern which can be changed with changes in culture. These men do not see anything wrong with re-writing, in essence, the Word of God, setting aside His confirmed Will, or going beyond what is given in the New Covenant. They claim that they are vitally interested in the future of the church, the future of the youth, and that they want to see the church grow.



Yet, these brethren assume a very strange position: they conduct themselves as *authorities* who are *above the Word of God*, which they are perfectly willing to change, ignore, or set aside. They are ready for new terminology, new freedoms, new and different doctrines, broader fellowship, more exciting whatever. They are ready to embrace anything that will allow them greater personal choice in matters of faith and practice. With them, it is “the plan of salvation of your choice”, “the worship of your choice”, “the church of your choice”. With some who are a little more progressive, it is “the Jesus of your choice”, or “the godhead of your choice”. Their agenda is personal rather than Scriptural. They are ready to set aside the holy and are eager to offer in its place the profane.

But, who can re-write the will of God and still be loyal to God? I ask you, is there a greater or more urgent matter than the question of loyalty to God? Or has loyalty been negotiated down to nothing?

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## ***Hear And Obey The Lord Jesus***

**Tim Childs**

NEAR THE CONCLUSION OF Jesus' address to the multitudes in His Sermon on the Mount, He declared, ***“Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven”*** (Matthew 7:21). This is a passage that must be embedded in our minds. We should not live a day without pondering its meaning and significance to our lives and to others around us.

The term “Lord” is translated from a word in the Koine Greek, *kurios*, which, according to Strong, is the title of one who is “supreme in authority, that is controller.” Thayer adds that the title is one “of honour expressive of respect and reverence, with which servants greet their master.”

Jesus came to this earth, in part, to bring the message of God's will to all of humanity so we would not live and die in ignorance. In His prayer to the Father, Jesus said, ***“For I have given to them the words which thou gavest me...”***

(John 17:8). God no longer winks at ignorance, but He commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

Saul of Tarsus asked the right question when he made the query of Jesus, ***“Lord, what will You have me to do?”*** (Acts 9:6). A man demonstrating great wisdom, Saul, did as the Lord told him to do. He went into the city of Damascus and waited for Ananias. Saul

was ultimately forgiven of his past sins when he was washed in the blood of Christ upon obeying the voice of God's messenger, Ananias (Acts 22:16).

Jesus does not want to hear an empty profession. Could Jesus ask you and me the same question He asked some of His day? ***"And why call you me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say"*** (Luke 6:46)?

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## *You Have Compassed This Mountain Long Enough*

**Jeff Archey**

GOD DECLARED DIVINE INSTRUCTION through Moses, *"Ye have compassed this mountain long enough..."* (Deuteronomy 2:3). In other words, Israel, you have gone around the base of this mountain for several days; it is time to move onward!

In another sense, there are "mountains" in life we compass or go around and around. We stay in the same old direction, but we need to listen to God and turn to a better direction, Friends! Why not resolve to do so? I challenge us to follow what God directs today. It is time that we cease compassing the mountains!

**Wasting time** is a mountain we compass. ***"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil"*** (Ephesians 5:16). As Robertson puts it, "We all have the same time. Paul goes into the open market and buys it up by using it rightly." There is the factor: It is imperative we use our time wisely and rightly. God forbid any of us were to be like Felix in Acts 24:24-25. He sent for Paul, but afterwards he trembled at what he heard. There is no example from the Scriptures where Felix came to Christ. We go around and around not using time wisely. Schedule carefully and prioritize with importance.

**Apathy. Simply not caring.** Can you imagine? No emotion, no compassion, no concern for anything or anyone. In Revelation 3:14-16, the church allowed the things of the world to dictate their comfort, and the Lord commanded them to repent! Indeed, a mountain that takes us around and around with no direction and no concern. **Oh, "turn northward,"** Friend!

**Worry** is a never-ending compass. Around and around with emotions all torn. ***"Be careful [or anxious] for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"*** (Philippians 4:6). Turn

it over to the Lord—the worry, the concern and the strife. Always remember a rule of thumb concerning worry: If you cannot do anything about it, worry will not change it, and if you can do something about it, then work and do not worry!

**Ignorance** is a mountain (Hosea 4:6). Ignorance is destructive. Those at Berea did not allow ignorance to permeate their lives (Acts 17:10-11). Ignorance and refusal to learn is as one that is **“ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”** (2 Timothy 3:7). Let us grow in our knowledge and put it to use (2 Peter 3:18).

Wasting precious time, apathy, worry and ignorance. Oh, there are so many throughout the world that compass these mountains and get nowhere. Praise to God that we have a direction to go! Dear Friend, do you have that right direction and plan?

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## ***Entertainment And True Worship***

**Basil Overton**

THERE ARE GOOD KINDS and bad kinds of entertainment. Any amount of the bad kind is too much. Even good entertainment can be overdone. We live in an age that could well be called “the entertainment age.”

A popular late-night American TV showman began working for another TV network. Media people said he got a pay raise from seven million dollars per year to 14 million dollars per year. The salary of the President of the United States is \$200,000 of taxable income per year. With all the demands and pressures of his job, I am confident the President earns every penny of it.

Even though the President’s salary is paid by taxpayers, compared to a 14 million dollar per year salary, his salary is a classic demonstration of how America’s priorities are out of balance. It is likely the above mentioned TV showman will be paid more in two years than all presidents of the United States have been paid in the 200 years since George Washington was President. Likely, the income taxes that the TV showman will pay will be more than enough money to pay the President’s salary.

Ann Landers said in one of her columns that the prizefighter Evander Holyfield was paid 60 million dollars in 1990. She also said Joe Montana was paid three and a half million dollars in 1991 and missed several games because of an injured elbow. The list of such highly paid athletes would be much too long to publish here.

## May Have Influenced The Church

The craze and craving for entertainment may have already adversely influenced the church. It may be that this age of entertainment has so surrounded, saturated and subdued so many people that some in the church expect to be entertained during the worship periods. It seems that even the short pause from entertainment involved by some who attend worship sessions seems to cause them to be bored because they are not entertained.

They may say, "I did not get anything out of it." It may be that some **do not get anything out of worship because they do not put anything in to it!** Furthermore, Christians should not attend worship sessions with the attitude that they are there to see what they can get out of it. Instead, **they should attend with the attitude that they are there to worship God and do their best to praise and please him!**

If the preacher is not "dynamic," some get bored. His preaching the Word of God and what people need to hear is not entertaining to some. If the preacher does not tell some intriguing, gripping, secular story every time he starts a sermon, and then tell several more such stories in his sermon, to some he is boring. If the preacher emphasizes what the Bible says, some may be bored.

I heard about a preacher who was doing his best to tell of the awful ordeal of the crucifixion of the Son of God, and he realized the people were not listening very well. Some were about to go to sleep. The preacher suddenly began telling a story he made up about a dog getting killed, and the audience began to lean toward the preacher out of their seats! The preacher said, "I was telling you the story of our blessed Savior dying for our sins and you seemed very indifferent. I began to entertain you with an untrue story about a dying dog and I got your undivided attention!"

I heard an audio taped speech (I cannot call it a sermon) that was made by a popular preacher at a big religious gathering in Nashville, Tennessee. Along with other ridiculous things he said, he emphasized that worship should be "a party." He emphasized this in a context in which he made it clear that he thought worship services should be entertaining. He said people are not interested in doctrine, but he said nothing about any of the abundance of passages in the New Testament that emphasize the importance of right doctrine. He **was** using wrong doctrine to **emphasize that right doctrine was not important!** He made it clear that we need to have an atmosphere of entertainment in our worship services if we expect to attract people. Certainly, we should be friendly in

worship services, but **being boisterous and acting “slap happy” or giddy are not proofs of true devotion and spirituality in worship!**

### **True Worship**

Over the years, I have observed that many, including preachers, have emphasized what we can get out of worship. Of course, true worshippers can get much out of worship, but that should never be the primary concern. The primary concern should be what we put into worship as we turn our hearts to God our Father and Creator in solemn and devoted praise and adoration, and as we recognize our helplessness and emptiness without Him.

Jesus said we must worship God **“in spirit and in truth”** (John 4:24). In the context of New Testament teaching, we know this means we must worship God in the right attitude and in the way God said to worship Him! If one is bored when worshipping God as God says to worship Him, he is neither humble nor poor in spirit.

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## *Seeking The Kingdom*

**Ancil Jenkins**

**“BUT SEEK FIRST THE kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”** (Matthew 6:33).

The casual Bible reader will probably find the “kingdom” a confusing subject to study. The word is used over 140 times in the New Testament, the majority of these in the Gospel accounts. In some cases, the kingdom and its blessings seem to be in the future, while in others it is a present reality (Matthew 3:1,2; Mark 1:14,15; Colossians 1:13). At times Jesus Himself seems to embody the kingdom (Luke 11:20; 17:20,21). In other places the church and kingdom are used synonymously (Matthew 16:18,19).

Despite a danger in oversimplification, there are some simple and perhaps adequate guidelines to enable us to understand the subject of the kingdom:

The “kingdom of God” (or of “heaven”) often refers to *the rule of God in our world or in the hearts of men.*

The earthly representation of this rule is *the church.* At time’s end, those who have submitted to God on earth and who are part of His church will be delivered up to the Father to share in that eternal spiritual kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Despite the enormity of the study, there are some simple aspects of the kingdom that should humble and challenge us.

As Christians **we are citizens of God's kingdom**. Yet, we also live in a *world kingdom* that often conflicts with the aims, ideals, and goals of God's kingdom. In such cases, our loyalty is tested, and we must choose if we will continue to submit to the Heavenly King.

We must consider the cost and pay the price of entering the kingdom: Jesus answered, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"* (John 3:5). Entrance into and membership in God's kingdom is limited to those who have experienced the *new birth of baptism into God's family*. Baptism is the expression of our faith which indicates submission to God and willingness for Him to be our king. Without this expression, there can be no subjection to Him. Thus, there is no question as to *when* one becomes a kingdom subject.

**The price of entering the kingdom is high.** It calls for a sacrifice of anything that hinders our entering, no matter how precious it may be. *"And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire"* (Mark 9:47).

*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it"* (Matthew 13:45). Such sacrifice is impossible without a mind that embodies **the submission to the King**. *"Assuredly, I say to you unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:3). Such a change of mind will bring **a change of conduct**. *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Corinthians 6:9,10).

What does membership in the kingdom mean to us? It means we should prize it greatly. Membership in the kingdom is costly; it calls for **the total surrender of ourselves, our thoughts, and our possessions**. Do not shrink from such surrender, since the cost is not high **compared to the benefits and alternatives**.

# Baptism In The Right Order

E. Claude Gardner

JESUS SAID, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*” (Mark 16:16, NKJV). **Belief, baptism and salvation** are mentioned in this verse. But is there any significant *order* in the statement? Does it make any difference to Christ what order was followed in meeting the conditions of pardon? Can one be **baptized** and be **saved**, and then **believe**? Or can one *believe* and be *saved* and then be *baptized*? Or can one be **saved** and later **believe** and be **baptized**? Or must one both *believe* and be *baptized* before he can be *saved*? Does the order of the words, or the order of obedience to them, have any significance at all when it comes to God granting salvation?

It is understood that the proper order is important in matters of business. If one is a merchant and sends a bill to a customer for \$91.92, but then he receives a check for payment in the amount of \$19.29, certainly he would object. But perhaps the customer will affirm that he has the proper numbers on the bill; they have simply been rearranged. Is the matter settled?

Obviously, the right order makes a difference in the bill payment, and so does the order of one's obedience to God. One may reason that if the person has met both conditions laid down by Christ, he has, in fact, obeyed God even though what he did was not in the order Jesus gave.

It is a popular religious belief that one can “accept Jesus” by only “believing” in Him as Savior. The believer, therefore, has been saved from his sin, even though he has not yet been baptized. He is taught that *after* his faith has resulted in his salvation, he is *then* baptized as “an outward testimony of an inward grace” — in other words, he is baptized *because he has been saved* [looking backward to the event], *not in order to be saved* [looking forward to the event]. Let us examine whether the order of obedience *toward salvation* makes any difference to Jesus.

Why is it right to follow the order Christ gave: 1. Belief; 2. Baptism; 3. Salvation? Because He requires **both belief in Him** and the new *birth* of baptism **before** one becomes a Christian — both are essential to salvation. Before being baptized, one must believe in Jesus, for the simple reason that “baptism” is only the wetting of the body unless it is motivated by “belief. In the same way, one does not actually “believe” in Christ unless he is willing to do whatever Jesus has asked, and unless he believes what Jesus said about

the results of his actions: one *believes*, and as a result he is *baptized* because he believes that Jesus will *then save* him, as He promised. It's very simple logic.

Baptism *always* is a requirement to be saved. One must do it *in the way* the Lord says do it and *for the Bible purpose*.

One may be baptized *in order to be inducted into a denomination* or religious body unknown in the Bible. No denominations existed in the beginning of the church (A.D. 33), and therefore to be baptized to become a member of a denomination is not what the Bible teaches.

### What Is The Scriptural Way To Be Baptized?

- Baptism is a **burial in water**. If you read each conversion recorded in the New Testament, you will see that in every case the penitent believers were baptized. Neither sprinkling of water nor pouring of water on the head was ever used as baptism. Rather, baptism was a burial in water, depicting the burial of Christ, as recorded in Romans 6:3,4, and Acts 8:36-38.
- According to the New Testament, when one is baptized (immersed), it is **“for the remission of sins”** (Acts 2:38). He or she becomes a saved person who is automatically **added** (not subject to *joining the church of your choice*) **to the church for which Jesus gave His blood**. It is the one church that is presented in the Bible. The Word of God attests to this truth. *“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them...and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”* (Acts 2:41,47). *“...on this rock I will build My church and the gates of hades will not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18). If one has not been baptized into the Lord's church, being saved in the process, how can one know that he or she is in Christ's body? The decision cannot be determined by the way an individual feels, or by generations of traditions.
- Being baptized requires **proper motive and purpose**. To proceed with the act without being taught as to the reason makes the action invalid. To be immersed to please the preacher, or parents, or friends, or for business reasons, is worthless in the sight of God. A person must sincerely *“obey from the heart”* (Romans 6:17). In every Bible passage, when both salvation and baptism are discussed in the same verses, it is taught that being saved always comes *after* baptism and



not *before*. Consider the following and observe that the order is *first* baptism and *then* salvation. The order must be significant for Bible writers to make it so clear.

Compare your salvation with these passages of Scripture:

*"Then Peter said to them. Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).*

*"But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized" (Acts 8:12).*

*"...and immediately he and his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household" (Acts 16:33,34).*

*"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).*

Several other verses teach the same order: Acts 8:36-39; Colossians 2:12; and 1 Peter 3:21.

The only right order for carrying out the commands of Christ is to follow the teaching of the New Testament. One may have thought that salvation was given **on the point of belief only** and then one could be **baptized later**, but the Bible teaches that the purpose of baptism is **"for the remission of sins."** Those who have followed the doctrines of men need to be properly baptized according to the Bible plan. One can be misled regarding becoming a Christian. Solomon warns, *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12).*

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## ***Hope in the Seed***

**Roger E. Dickson**

WHEN ADAM SINNED IN the Garden of Eden, he died spiritually, for his sin separated him from God (Romans 5:12). He was also separated from the tree of life, and thus, took all humanity with him. All of us now suffer the consequences of his sin in that we all must physically die (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

In the midst of this human tragedy, however, God made a promise

that a solution for sin would come (Genesis 3:15). Throughout the Old Testament there are hundreds of prophecies that foretold the coming of the Messiah who would make atonement for the sins of men. All of these prophecies were concerning Jesus, who would die on the cross in order to reconcile us to God. He also came to give us a way to conquer that which all of us fear: physical death (Hebrews 2:14).

God chose a man by the name of Abraham through whom He would bring into the world the One who would be the Savior of mankind. God promised Abraham, *"And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 12:3). From the time this promise was made around 2000 B.C., God continually reminded His people that there was a "blessing" coming who would bear the iniquities of the people (Isaiah 53). The promise was not only to the descendants of Abraham, the Jews, but to all families of the earth. It was God's promise to humanity.

### **The Seed!**

So, who was the blessing? Peter stated, *"You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed!' To you first, God having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities"* (Acts 3:25,26).

### **Who is the "Seed of Abraham"?**

The Seed of Abraham that would bless all mankind was Jesus. Paul wrote, *"Now to Abraham and His Seed were the promises made. He does not say, And to seeds,' as to many, but as to one, And to your Seed,' who is Christ"* (Galatians 3:16). So the Seed was Jesus Christ. This was the Seed of woman Whom God promised after Adam sinned, the One who would crush the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15).

### **The Blessing!**

Now, what was *the blessing* of Abraham that would come from the Seed? The Bible answers, *"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed'"* (Genesis 13:8). The Gospel in this promise has reference to good news that would be preached to all the world!

### **What is the "Blessing of Abraham"?**

The Gospel was the good news of the Seed who would take

care of our sin problem in our relationship with God. He would bring us to justification by faith (Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16). He would thus reconcile us to God by His blood (Romans 5:10,11). This is how Jesus blesses all those who believe in Him and obey the commands of the Gospel. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

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## ***Our Lord Prayed For Unity***

**Albert Gardner**

*“NEITHER PRAY I FOR these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20,21).*

Just before going to the cross, our blessed Lord prayed that all who believed in Him should be united. When one considers conditions today, he sees a world torn with people fighting each other, often in the same church. This is anything but the answer to the prayer of Christ.

One man who keeps up with current conditions says that in the USA alone, there are 1,586 different churches. This counts the break-offs and splinter groups. Worldwide, there are many thousands. No wonder some turn away from Christianity in disgust and complete disinterest! Jesus said **unity will make believers**, so the opposite is also true: **division will make unbelievers!**

The church at Corinth was severely divided. They were divided into factions wearing the names of men. They were saying, *“I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.”* Paul asks three questions that must be true in order for one to wear the name of another. *“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”* (1 Corinthians 1:12,13).

Someone may ask, “What harm is there in wearing different names? Still, we’re all ‘Christians’.” The name we wear determines the status of our salvation. *“Neither is there salvation in any other; for **there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved**”* (Acts 4:12). This reference is to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. There is enough in a name to cause division! There is enough in a name to cause damnation! And there is enough in His name to save us, if we obey Him!

The solution is spelled out for us. *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same*

*thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Does that sound like division should be taken lightly?

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## **What Is An 'Undenominational' Church?**

**David Tarbet**

WHEN JESUS BUILT HIS church upon the foundational rock that He is the Son of God (Matthew 16:18) it was an "undenominational" fellowship. Here are some characteristics of that church, which, if we will imitate them, will help us be "undenominational" Christians today:

- 1. Christ's church accepted the New Testament as final authority.** *"All Scripture is ...profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness"* (2 Timothy 3:16). Man-made traditions only divide believers and have no place in the Lord's plan.
- 2. Christ's church opposed every practice and doctrine not found in the Word of God.** Beware of those who teach *"strange and diverse teachings"* (Hebrews 13:9).
- 3. Christ's church worshiped according to the New Testament pattern.** *"Follow the pattern of the sound words..."* (2 Timothy 1:13,14).
- 4. Christ's church required nothing for church membership other than what God Himself required.** When we repent and are baptized, God adds us to His church (Acts 2:38-47). There should be no other requirements for church membership! God sees to it that the saved are added to His church the moment their sins are forgiven. Anything more than this is a denominational requirement.

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## *Every Member Is Important*

**Jimmy Jividen**

SOME OF THE CHRISTIANS at Corinth had a poor self-image. They were "ungifted" and felt inferior to those who possessed the showy miraculous gifts of speaking in foreign languages. They felt "left out" in the church and "unimportant".

Paul used an analogy to deal with this problem. The church, he

said, is the body of Christ. Every Christian is a member of this spiritual body, just as the arm and leg are members of our physical body. They are connected and interdependent. The poor self-perception of the “ungifted” is reflected in the text. *“Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body...because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body”* (1 Corinthians 12:15).

Paul affirmed that every member of the body is important. Every Christian has a place and is needed. To prove this, he asked three rhetorical questions: *“If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ...And if they were all one member, where would the body be?”* (1 Corinthians 12:17,19).

Every member was important at Corinth. It is the same today. Those members who perform “unglamorous” jobs are necessary. Those with physical and mental abilities are important. Paul said, *“The members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary”* (1 Corinthians 12:22).

Instead of being envious or feeling inferior because of our own limitations, we should rejoice that we are all a part of the body of Christ. Our concern should be **to do what we can with what we have where we are.**

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## MEANINGFUL WORSHIP

**David Deffenbaugh**

No one, God included, likes dry, dull, emotionless worship. Sometimes we express our desire in this regard to be for “meaningful” worship. This is an outstanding goal. Even in the often turbulent realm of discussion and debate over worship, virtual consensus reigns on this point. The explosion (of divergent ideas, philosophies, approaches, and even tempers) comes when answering the question of *how* to make worship meaningful.

There is, of course, a large clamoring of voices calling for a course of action directed at adding *emotional punch* to the worship. What is it that connects and stirs people emotionally? Often, cues are taken from the entertainment world. This industry, by necessity, is quite savvy to what connects with people. The problem here, beyond the obvious superficiality, is that *the public's taste is constantly changing, is seldom satisfied for long, and usually falls into extremes!* What satisfied (and sold) yesterday will not do so tomorrow. Is true “meaning” really that fickle?

A better approach is to ask what it is about worship that gives meaning. Is it not the very being of God and His gracious act of providing salvation from sin through Jesus Christ? Is not meaning heightened as our understanding and appreciation of God and all that He has done increases? And what's more, the depth of meaning is limitless, as we will never fully comprehend and appreciate — this side of eternity — God and all He has done. "*Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!*" (Romans 11:33).

That being said, does it not also make sense for contemporary man to give expression in contemporary language to praising and extolling the greatness of God? Is there any reason for modern Christians to be bound *only* to psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs penned *one, two, three, or four or more centuries ago*? Neither, though, is there any valid reason to abandon these beautiful and, — dare we say? — *meaningful*, expressions of faith from centuries gone by?

So, in pursuit of the "meaningful", it appears that focusing on what gives true meaning would be the sensible thing, within the framework of Scripture.

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## PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

**W. Douglass Harris**

THERE ARE DIVERGENT VIEWS of what is the most paramount need of the church. There are many, and reverence in worship is one of the greatest. Some of the urgency of this need may be caused by our *lack of preparation* and *lack of teaching* on **how** to prepare. Nothing can be done well without preparation. Today's cultural impact of various religious groups destroys reverence **by noisy participation**. "*Be still, and know that I am God...*" (Psalm 46:10).

Genuine and sincere worship requires preparation. The principles of proper preparation are suggested by an Old Testament example. (Laws can and do change, but eternal principles do not change; see Romans 15:4). Our example is God's requirements of the children of Israel to meet Him at the base of Mount Sinai for the giving of the ten-commandment law (Exodus 19). (The reader would be well-advised to read that chapter thoughtfully before continuing further in this article.)

In preparing to meet God for this momentous occasion, Israel was instructed to:

**1. Remember all that God had done for them in the past and what He would do for them in the future, if they obeyed and kept His covenant with them (verses 4-6).** This review of God's care would prepare them to meet Him at the base of Sinai. Memory is a powerful factor. Remembering the greatness and holiness of God and His grace in saving us from the slavery of sin; remembering the sacrifice for our sins, and the promised blessings of faithful service to Him should be ample preparation for acceptable worship. The Lord's Supper is a memorial (remembrance), if observed discerningly (1 Corinthians 11:24,25).

**2. Be ready for the third day when God descends on the mountain (verses 11, 15).** The Israelites were to recognize that this was a holy and solemn occasion. They were to wash their garments (verse 10); they were to set bounds and limits on where they could go and what they could do (verses 12-15). They were to be forgiven first and sanctified for the awesome-ness of being in the presence of God.

In contrast to the experience of the Israelites, the writer of Hebrews said in chapter 12, verses 18-29:

*"For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: 'And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.' And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, 'I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.')*

*"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

*"See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven'."*

In our worship assemblies of this age, God is always present in the special personal sense, as described in Hebrews 12. When we

worship, we enter into His presence. And although the promise made by Christ in Matthew 18:20 was specifically to the apostles, He is still in the midst of any number assembled in His name and for the purpose of worship.

This — the *lack of preparation*, or being ready — may be the most critically deficient aspect of our worship today. **To obtain the fullest spiritual benefit from worship we must put something into it in the way of preparation.**

**3. To reverence God because of His nature (verse 16ff; 20:5,6).** Moses was reminded at the burning bush which was not consumed that *he was standing on holy ground* (Exodus 3:2-5). Joshua proclaimed to Israel, before they crossed the Jordan in conquest of the promised land, that Jehovah was a holy and jealous God (Joshua 24:19). Realizing that we are in the presence of the Almighty God in a special sense when assembled for worship should inspire great reverence for Him. *“Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire”* (Hebrews 12:28,29 RSV).

## “MY HEART IS FIXED, O GOD”

**Maxie B. Boren**

IN PSALM 57:7, DAVID PENNED these prayerful thoughts to Jehovah... *“My heart is fixed, O God.”* What does the word rendered “fixed” in the KJV mean? What was David expressing? Most all the other translations, such as the NKJV, NASV, NRSV, NIV, and NEB render it “steadfast”. The CEV translates it “faithful”. Brother Roy Deaver, in a lecture he gave on this section of the Psalms, lists “confident and certain” as sort of synonyms or alternate definitions of “fixed”.

In the context, David is praising God, concluding the Psalm in verse 11 with these words, *“Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.”* That seems to sum up the whole tenor of the thoughts expressed in this particular Psalm. Indeed, the psalmist had a fixation on God and His greatness, affirming that his own heart was fixed on Him. Undoubtedly, he had resolved to be steadfast in his devotion to the Creator, certain and confident as to the direction and goal he himself was taking while living on earth. This is in keeping with what we read from Solomon’s



pen. *"The whole of man is to reverence God and keep His commandments"* (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

What about you, friend? How do you feel about God? Is your heart fixed on Him? Is He the object of your spiritual affection? Are you devoted and dedicated to Him, steadfast and faithful? I hope every Christian can address God in prayer and sincerely say the same thing David did in the long ago, *"My heart is fixed, O God."*

## ***ADVERSITY and GROWTH***

**Rex Banks**

"IT IS NOT TRUE that suffering ennoble the character; happiness does that sometimes, but suffering, for the most part, makes men petty and vindictive" — William Somerset Maugham.

True, we don't have to walk far down life's thorny pathway to meet individuals who have been embittered by pain and soured by adversity. The failed businessman who becomes a petty tyrant at home, the disadvantaged child who develops into a cynical adult and the frustrated artist, carrying around his disappointment like a security blanket — all bear testimony to the negative effects of hardship and suffering. A succession of defeats can crush the soul's most noble aspirations, while a deeply felt loss can extinguish the light of hope within the human heart.

Devastated by the death of his beloved daughter, Mark Twain wrote, "A myriad of men are born; they scramble for little, mean advantages over each other; age creeps upon them and infirmities follow; shame and humiliation bring down their pride and vanities...At length ambition is dead; longing for release is in its place. It comes at last — the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence, where they left no sign that they have existed — a world that will lament them for a day and then forget them forever."

That's sad! Poor grief-stricken hopeless men.

Now as one who has never really known deep, soul-crushing sorrow I need to be careful about pious platitudes and empty cliches when confronted with the pain of others. I've just never been there myself but what I do know, from revelation rather than from experience, is that pain can ennoble, hardship can improve, suffering can enrich — provided it is accompanied by a deep, abiding faith in Jehovah's goodness and power!

Read the book of Job (esp. 40:3-5; 42) and tell me that the patriarch was not a deeper, wiser, richer character at the end of his trials.

Read the book of 1st and 2nd Peter, taking note of such words as *“patience”*, *“hope”* and *“suffering”* and tell me that this aged apostle who has learned to entrust his soul to “a faithful Creator” in the midst of suffering (I Pet. 4:19) is not more noble, gracious, courageous and attractive than the youthful Peter of the gospel accounts.

Paul’s deprivation and hardship (I Corinthians 4:9ff, II Corinthians 11:18ff) didn’t produce a bitter, cynical, suspicious old man, but a man possessed of a lovely, sturdy, unshakable faith. (*“I know whom I have believed”* and *“...in the future there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,”* 2 Tim. 1:12;4:8 — this in a Roman prison, awaiting death!)

You see, the difference between a Somerset Maugham and a Peter is the knowledge that God indeed *“causes all things to work together for good to them who love God”* (Romans 8:28). Yes, even the most difficult of times and deepest of losses. The difference between a poor, sad Mark Twain and the victorious apostle Paul was simple belief in His word.

Brethren, when the gray, chilling clouds of adversity threaten to draw a veil over the sunlight, keep this in-mind — that same sun which hardens clay also softens butter, and the same trials which can embitter the unbeliever can enrich the life of the believer.

Our job is not to understand the purpose behind every trial — our job is to believe that God is in control! Our task is not to fathom the depth of each and every disappointment or to neatly explain life’s tragedies — our task is to cling to God’s promises so that we too may be able to sing songs at midnight.

We began with the words of an uninspired man; let’s finish with a word from the Holy Spirit: *“...but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character, and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint”* (Romans 5:3-5).

It’s an easy verse to quote — the real trick is living as if we believe it.

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