

SOMETHING YOU MUST BELIEVE

“ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (Heb 11:6)

It is not an option! You MUST believe that God exists!

It is not an option! You MUST believe that God rewards those who earnestly seek Him!

As preachers of the Gospel you obviously believe that God exists. Only a fool would say in his heart that there is no God (Ps. 14:1). You may need to be reminded, however, that God will reward you for earnestly seeking Him. As we have already said, this is not an option. You MUST believe that God will reward you for being diligent. God is a Jealous God, and the most important commandment in all the Bible is that we are to love Him with all of our heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37). The concept that God rewards the diligent and punishes the lazy is nothing new. It is an integral part of all Scripture. It is very clear. We are saved by our faith, but rewarded by our works. Remember! When we stand before God in the Judgement, the books will be opened and we will all be judged according to our works (Rev. 20:12).

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ABOUT REWARDS

It is important to know what Jesus taught about rewards, because He is the One Who will be our Judge. Remember! The Father judges no man but has committed all judgement unto the Son (Jn. 5:22). On the last day we will not only be judged by Jesus, but also by the words that Jesus has spoken (Jn. 12:48). Everyone needs to be familiar with the words that Jesus has spoken!

Please consider:

- Jesus said that those who are persecuted because of righteousness will receive a great reward in heaven (Matt. 5:11 - 12). If we suffer with Him, we will also reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12).
- Jesus said that those who do their acts of righteousness to be praised by men have no reward from God. God will reward, however, those who give in secret (Matt. 6:1 - 4).
- Jesus said that those who pray to be seen by men have only a temporary reward. God will give an eternal reward, however, to those who pray to Him in secret (Matt. 6:5 - 15).
- Jesus said that those who fast to be seen by men have only a temporary reward. Those who fast in secret to please God, however, have an eternal reward (Matt. 6: 16 - 18).
- Jesus encouraged us to lay up treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and thieves cannot break in and steal (Matt. 6:19 - 21).
- Jesus said that those who receive a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and those who receive a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. Jesus also said that those who give only a cup of cold water to one of His disciples will certainly not lose their reward (Matt. 10:40 - 42).
- Jesus told the parable of the ten virgins. The five wise virgins were diligent and were rewarded. The five foolish virgins who were not diligent were rejected (Matt. 25:1 - 13).
- Jesus told the parable of the talents. The man who received 5 talents gained 5 talents more and was rewarded for his diligence. The man who received 2 talents gained 2 talents more and was rewarded for his diligence. The man who received only 1 talent did nothing

- with it and was rejected because he was lazy and slothful (Matt. 25:14 - 30).
- Jesus also told the parable of the 10 minas. A man of noble birth was going to a distant country. He called 10 of his servants and gave each of them a mina. When the noble man became king he returned to find out what his servants had done with his money. The first had been diligent and gained 10 minas. He was rewarded with 10 cities. The second had gained 5 minas and was rewarded with 5 cities. The third did nothing with his master's money and was rejected (Lk. 19:11 - 27).
 - There are other Scriptures that teach this same truth, but these should be sufficient to convince you to be diligent if you expect to be rewarded.
 - Remember that Peter once wanted to build three tabernacles, one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Jesus. God interrupted from heaven and told Peter: **“This is my Son, whom I love, with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!” (Matt. 17:5).** You can never go wrong listening to Jesus!

EVERYONE WHO IS DILIGENT WILL BE REWARDED

While this present study is focused on the work of evangelists, pastors, and teachers, it is important to remember that everyone is important to Jesus. Nobody was too sinful, too poor, too sick, or too unpopular for Jesus to love. When Jesus adds you to His Body He has a purpose. Just as every member of the human body has a purpose, every member of the Body of Christ also has a purpose. Certainly every member of the Body is important, for when one member ceases to function the Body of Christ is handicapped. The Body of Christ has many more members than just evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and every member needs to be diligent. Paul wrote about this to the Corinthians. Please read carefully 1 Cor. 12:12 - 31). In this passage we are told that:

- Just like the human body has many members, the Body of Christ is also composed of many members (v. 12).
- In the final analysis, there is only One Body. Regardless of our nationality we were all baptized by One Spirit into One Body. In the Body of Christ we lose our national identity and become one in Christ (v. 13).
- Just as the human body needs feet, hands, ears, and eyes, the Body of Christ also needs a variety of members to function as it should (vss. 15 - 17).
- It is God who distributes gifts and places each member in the Body as it pleases Him (v. 18).
- Every member of the Body is needed. Just as a human body without a hand or foot is handicapped, so also the Body of Christ is handicapped when any member ceases to function (vss. 20, 21).
- Just as we honor the parts of our body that are less honorable, God also has given greater honor to the parts of His Body that lacked it (vss. 20 - 24).
- Regardless of the spiritual gift God has given you, love is more important (see 1 Cor. 13)
- Regardless of your spiritual gift, God expects you to be diligent in the use of that gift. Remember! We are stewards of what God has given us, and it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful (1 Cor. 4:2).
- Also remember that you **MUST** believe that God will reward you for being diligent! This principle is true regardless of the spiritual gift God has given you.

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS WAS PLANNED BEFORE HE WAS BORN

- Remember! The essence of the Gospel is that Jesus lived, died, and rose again “according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:2 - 4). Every aspect of the life of Jesus was predicted in the Scriptures before Jesus was born.
- Because Jesus was on a divine mission God protected Him until His mission was completed.
 - The Pharisees plotted how they might kill Jesus (Matt. 12:14).
 - The people of Nazareth also tried to kill Him (Lk. 4:29).
 - Later, the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him (John 5:18).
 - After Lazarus was raised from the dead the Jews were so desperate that they wanted to kill both Lazarus and Jesus (John 11:45 - 53; 12:10).
 - Jesus, however, was protected from death during these difficult days because His “time had not yet come”. This phrase is found over and over in Scripture.
 - “My time has not yet come” (John 2:4).
 - “The right time for me has not yet come” (John 7:4).
 - “No one laid a hand on Him because His time had not yet come” (John 7:30).
 - “No one seized Him because His time had not yet come” (John 8:20).
 - FINALLY, JESUS SAID: “THE TIME HAS COME FOR MY DEPARTURE (JOHN 17:1).
 - NOBODY TOOK THE LIFE OF JESUS, HE LAID IT DOWN (JOHN 10:18).
 - Note, however, that before laying down His life, Jesus completed everything God had called Him to do. The last words of Jesus on earth were: “It is finished” (John 19:30).

OTHERS ALSO HAD MINISTRIES PLANNED BEFORE THEY WERE BORN

David - David wrote that God had ordained all of his days before one of the came to be (Ps. 139:16). Among many other things, God ordained that David would be the King of Israel (1 Sam. 16:1 - 13). God also ordained that one of David’s descendants would always be upon the throne of Israel (1 Ki. 2:4; 8:25; 9:5; 2 Chron. 6:16; 7:18; etc.) David was a man of war and did many dangerous things, but God protected him until his calling was completed.

Samson - Samson was set apart from birth to begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines (Judges 13:5). Samson fought many battles, but God protected him from death until his calling was complete. Even the death of Samson was a victory, for at that time he killed more Philistines than he did during his life (Judges 16:30).

Isaiah - Isaiah was called by God before he was born (Is. 49:1) and formed to be the servant of God in his mother’s womb (Is. 49:5). The Scriptures tell us that Isaiah had a long ministry and served during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Is. 1:1). Isaiah made so many predications about Jesus that he is called “the Gospel Prophet”. When his calling was complete, however, God allowed him to die as a martyr during the reign of Manasseh.

Jeremiah - Jeremiah was also appointed by God to be a prophet to the nations before he was formed in his mother’s womb (Jer. 1:5). He began his prophetic ministry in the thirteenth years of Josiah, and continued until the fifth month and the eleventh year of Zedekiah (Jer. 1:1 - 3). God

also used Jeremiah in a mighty way and protected him until his calling was complete. We are particularly indebted to Jeremiah for predictions regarding the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31 - 34).

Cyrus - Cyrus, the King of Persia, is the only Gentile ever called the Lord's anointed (Is. 45:1). Generations before he was born Isaiah predicted that he would rebuild Jerusalem and lay the foundations of the Jewish Temple (Is. 44:28). At this time, however, neither Jerusalem, or the temple had been destroyed. The devil tried many ways to kill Cyrus, but God protected him until the calling of his life had been completed.

Peter - Jesus said to Peter: **"I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.** (John 21:18-19) Note that Jesus had determined the way Peter would die over 30 years before it happened. When King Herod tried to kill Peter, God sent an angel to deliver him for his time had not yet come (Acts 12:6-17). God can also send angels to deliver us until our earthly mission is complete (Heb. 1:14)

Paul - Paul was set apart from birth to be an apostle to the Gentiles. **"But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles"** (Gal 1:15-16). Obviously God protected Paul during his young and formative years. God even protected him during those years when he was persecuting Christians. The protection of God was on his life until his divine mission was completed. Finally, however, Paul finished his course. Just before he was executed he wrote: **"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."** (2 Tim 4:6-8)

PLEASE CONSIDER THAT YOU ALSO MAY HAVE A CALLING FROM GOD BEFORE YOU WERE BORN!

We know that the ministry of Jesus was planned before He was born.

We also know that many others also had ministries planned by God before they were born.

PLEASE CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY THAT YOUR MINISTRY WAS ALSO PLANNED BY GOD BEFORE YOU WERE BORN?

Isn't this an exciting thought! If God has plans for us before we were born, certainly he will protect us until His calling on our life is complete. That's why Paul wrote to Timothy: **"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,"** (2 Tim 1:6-9).

JESUS WAS DILIGENT AND WE NEED TO BE DILIGENT TOO

- Nobody worked harder than Jesus.
- Nobody was more obedient than Jesus..
- Nobody will get a greater reward than Jesus.
- That's why we need to follow the example of Jesus.

Please consider that Jesus is a perfect example in every way!

- **“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5)**
- **“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” (John 13:15).**
- **“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you,” (John 13:34)**
- **“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” (1 John 2:6)**
- **“For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “ (1 Peter 2:18-21)**
- Etc.

Jesus worked hard, and was rewarded..
When we work hard we will also be rewarded.
This is something you MUST believe!

JESUS GIVES EVERY BELIEVER A SPIRITUAL GIFT

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful” (1 Cor 4:2)

Every believer has been given a trust, or spiritual gift. (Rom. 12:3). Different “gifts” in the Body of Christ are like different members in our human bodies. Just as every member of the human body has a purpose, every member of the Body of Christ also has a purpose. Paul uses this same illustration to explain spiritual gifts to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 12). Peter also knew that every believer has been given a gift and wrote: **“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” (1 Peter 4:10)**

Of course God expects us to be faithful in using the gift He has given us. If God gives you a talent He expects you to use it and not bury it in the ground.

While there are other spiritual gifts, let us focus on the seven mentioned in Rom. 12:6 - 8 to illustrate our need to be faithful. Here is the passage: **“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.” (Rom**

12:6 - 8).

Let us consider these seven spiritual gifts one at a time.

1. The prophet - A prophet is one who speaks for another. Aaron, for example, was a prophet for Moses (Ex. 7:1). Moses told Aaron what to say, and Aaron spoke for Moses to the Pharaoh. A prophet of God is one who speaks for God. Sometimes this involves predicting the future, but usually it involved rebuking people for their sins. John the Baptist was the greatest prophet ever born and his primary message was repentance. It is also interesting to remember that John the Baptist never performed a miraculous sign (John 10:41). If God has given you the gift of prophecy, use that gift diligently in proportion to your faith.

2. The server - Jesus gave new significance to the ministry of serving. In the world important people sit at the table and less important people serve them. Jesus, however, came to be a servant (Lk. 22:24 - 27). The Greek word translated as "server" is "diakonian" from which we get our word "deacon". If God has given you the gift of service then use that gift in a diligent way.

3. The teacher - All believers are to teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16), but some have a special gift from God to be a teacher. Just as bits turn a horse, and a rudder turns a ship, so also a teacher can influence a large body of people. (Ja. 3:1 - 5). Just as the pilot of a ship is responsible for his passenger, so also a teacher is responsible for his students. If God has given you the gift to teaching, please be diligent in the use of that gift.

4. The encourager - One of the most dangerous sins is the sin of discouragement. The reason it is so dangerous is that it seems to be harmless. The man who will not kill, steal, or commit adultery might very well become discouraged. It is when we are the most discouraged, however, that we do the most ungodly things. That's why God has given some the special ability to encourage others. If God has given you this gift, please be diligent in using it.

5. The contributor - Every believer can contribute something, but some are especially gifted by God to contribute. Some person, for example, owned a large upper room and allowed the early church to meet there. (Acts 1:12 - 16) The facility was large enough to accommodate 120 people. Another example of this spiritual gift is seen in a Levite from Cyprus named Joseph. When his brethren were in need he sold a field and brought the money to the apostles. The apostles were so impressed that they call him "Barnabas" which literally means "son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36). If God has given you wealth, then use it generously for His glory.

6. Leadership - Everyone has some influence on others. No man lives to himself and no man dies to himself (Rom. 14:7). Some, however, have been given by God a special ability to influence others. Paul, for example, was gifted by God to be a leader, that's why he was considered a mover of sedition among Jews throughout the whole world and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5). Fortunately, Paul used his leadership gift to advance the cause of Christ. If God has given you this gift, you must use "govern diligently".

7. Showing mercy - Everyone is to be merciful. Jesus said: "Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy" (Matt. 5:7). Some, however, are especially gifted by God with mercy. Jesus, of course, is a perfect example of all spiritual gifts. Isaiah predicted centuries before Jesus was born that He would not break a bruised reed or snuff out a smoldering wick (Is. 42:1 - 4; Matt. 12:18 -

21). Reeds are so plentiful that when one is bruised most people would throw it away and get another. When the lamp is out of oil and the wick is smoldering, most people would moisten their fingers and snuff it out. Jesus, however, was so merciful that when He found people that were considered worthless, he helped them to be strong and to let their light shine brightly. If God has given you the gift of mercy, use it cheerfully.

An illustration - Let's suppose that seven people are seated around a table and that each one has a different spiritual gift. Suddenly, someone spills the milk. To the prophet the most important thing is to tell the truth about what happened. He points out the cost of the milk, and the trouble involved in cleaning it up and getting more milk. The server feels that the most important thing is not to talk about the problem, but to do something about it. Consequently he will be led of God to clean up the mess. The teacher has a different point of view. He is analyzing why the milk was spilled and to him, the most important thing is to teach the proper care of milk so that such an accident never happens again. The encourager also has a different perspective. To him the most important thing is to keep the situation from causing anyone to leave the table. The contributor feels that the most important thing is for the person who spilled the milk to have something to drink. That's why he will offer his own milk to the person who has none. The leader considers the most important thing is organization. He will see to it that someone cleans up the mess, and someone gets more milk, and someone else puts the milk in a proper place so that it won't be spilled. The man with the gift of mercy puts his arm around the person who made the mistake and reminds him of God's forgiveness.

Karismata - The Greek word translated as "gifts" in Rom. 12:6 is "karismata". From this we get our word "charismatic" The meaning of the word is clearly explained by the way Paul used it in Rom. 6:23. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord". We earn "wages" but not a "gift". Just as God has freely given us the gift of salvation, he has also freely given us the gift of being useful and productive in His work on earth. Let us be diligent in the use of our gift for it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS LIKE RUNNING A RACE

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. " (Heb 12:1-3)

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. " (1 Cor 9:24-10:1)

"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Phil 3:13-14)

“You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?” (Gal 5:7-8)

“. . . exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” (1 Tim 4:7-8)

Running a race is so familiar that it scarcely needs any comment. Serious runners prepare for months before they compete. Sometimes, on the day of the race there are many spectators. The fact that the race is being watched is a special encouragement for every runner to do their best. Runners take off their coats and cast aside anything that would prevent them from doing their best. Remember! Those who start the race are not honored, but those who finish it. That’s why it is important to be faithful until death so that you can receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

SUFFERING CAN ACTUALLY HELP US

When Jesus told His disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, Peter rebuked Him (Matt. 16:22). Isn’t this interesting! Peter thought he was smarter than Jesus. Jesus, however, is always right. Even when we do not understand, we must always trust and obey. Even though Jesus is the Son of God He still learned obedience by the things which He suffered (heb., 5:8)

So, when Peter didn’t understand the purpose of suffering, Jesus said to him: **“Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” (Matt 16:23)** Suffering was an important part of the ministry of Jesus and it may also be an important part of God plan for your life.

Peter repented of his bad attitude toward suffering. Note what he taught about suffering in I Peter.

- We can greatly rejoice in our suffering (1 Pet. 1:6).
- When we suffer for doing good we are commended (1 Pet. 2:20).
- We were called to suffer and Christ is our example (1 Pet. 2:21).
- It is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil (1 Pet. 3:17).
- Suffering in the flesh helps us to overcome sin (1 Pet. 4:1).
- We should not be surprised by suffering (1 Pet. 4:12).
- By suffering we can be partakers of the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet. 4:13).
- We should never be ashamed to suffer as a Christian (1 Pet. 4:16)
- **“So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good “ (1 Peter 4:19).**

Paul also was called to suffer.

- On the Damascus Road Jesus showed him how much he would suffer (Acts 9:16).
- He wrote to the Corinthians: **“To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.” (1 Cor 4:11-13)**
- When comparing himself to false apostles, Paul listed some of his suffering: **“I have**

worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.” (2 Cor 11:23-28)

- In particular, Paul had a “thorn” his flesh. He pleaded with the Lord three times to take it away, but the Lord replied **“my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 11:9)**. Realizing this Paul came to the place where he could delight in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties (2 Cor. 11:10).
- Paul wrote: **“Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.” (Col 1:24-25)**

If you are a believer you can rejoice in suffering:

- You can also rejoice in sufferings because suffering produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us because God’s love is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:3 -
- **“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. “ (1 Peter 4:12-14)**
- When you are persecuted you can rejoice and leap for joy (Lk. 6:23)

JESUS WILL NEVER ALLOW YOU TO BE TEMPTED BEYOND
WHAT YOU ARE ABLE TO BEAR

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Cor 10:12-13).

Paul, who wrote these inspired words, knew they were true because he had experienced them in his own life. Paul was once so discouraged that he despaired even of life (2 Cor. 1:8). God, however, delivered him from this deadly peril and Paul was confident that God would continue to deliver him. God is Sovereign and all powerful and we have His promise that we will never be tempted beyond what we are able to bear. God makes available all the resources of heaven and earth to make this promise come true. **“All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future-all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God. “ (1 Cor 3:21-23)**

Sometimes God uses human beings to help us. Paul was saved from death in Damascus

because some of the brethren lowered him over the wall in a basket (2 Cor. 11:33). Barnabas helped him in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27). Lydia helped him in Philippi (Acts 16:15). Jason helped him in Thessalonica (Acts 17:7). Aquila and Priscilla helped him in Corinth (Acts 18:3). When you are being tempted, God can also send human help to keep you from being tempted beyond what you are able.

Sometimes God helps us with visions. God directed Paul to Ananias with a vision (Acts 9:12). God directed Paul to be an apostle to the gentiles with a vision (Acts 26:19). God directed Peter to Cornelius with a vision (Acts 10:9 - 20). God directed Paul to Macedonia with a vision (Acts 16:9). God gave Paul; comfort in Corinth with a vision (Acts 18:9). Paul's thorn in the flesh was explained to him by a vision (2 Cor. 12:1 - 10). The Gospel of Christ is associated with young men having visions (Acts 2:17). God can also give you visions to help you from being tempted beyond what you are able.

Sometimes God sends angels to help us. Angels, as you know, are ministering spirits to serve those who are the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). Angels ministered to Jesus in the wilderness, and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mk. 1:13; Lk. 22:43). An angel delivered the apostles from prison (Acts 5:19). An angel directed Philip to the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26). An angel directed Cornelius to send for Peter (Acts 10:1 - 8). An angel delivered Peter from prison and death (Acts 12:6 - 11). An angel encouraged Paul during a time of ship wreck (Acts 27:23). God can also send angels to help you keep from being tempted beyond what you are able.

Some times the Lord Himself comes to help us in a time of need. God is faithful! He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. When you need Him, He is a very present help in time of trouble (Ps. 46:1). He will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5). When Stephen was dying God opened heaven and he saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:55, 56). At Corinth the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision (Acts 18:9). When Paul was in prison the Lord stood near him and gave him courage (Acts 23:11). When we claim the promise of God: **“We can say with confidence, The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (Heb. 13:6).**

There is no reason for you to quit! All of the resources of heaven and earth are available to see to it that you finish the race and receive your reward. Even birds, animals, and fish obey God and are available to help you in a time of need. It's true - ravens fed Elijah (1 Ki. 17:4), bears killed the enemies of Elisha (2 Ki. 2:24), and a fish brought money to Peter (Matt. 17:27). Praise the Lord, nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:37 - 39).

YOU CAN FINISH YOUR RACE WITH JOY

Put a smile on your face! Yes! You must work hard! ;Yes! You must be diligent! You can still rejoice, however, for great is your reward in heaven. No! You do not have to be sad. No! You don't have to wear a frown. Christians are the happiest people on earth. The very essence of the Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). Jesus was not unhappy. He endured the cross because of the joy that was set before Him, and we can do the same (Heb. 12:2). Joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22), that's why the disciples of Jesus are said to be filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:52). The two go together! We should pray with joy (Phil. 1:4); give with joy (2 Cor. 8:2); be anointed with the oil of joy (Heb. 1:9); and

face our trials with joy (Ja. 1:2). In fact, the joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. 8:10).

Keep your eyes on Jesus and do not look back! You **MUST** believe that He will reward you for being diligent!

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” (Jude 24)