

**THE  
UNCOMPLICATED GOSPEL**

*Nine Biblical Themes for Proclaiming the Good  
News to a World that Needs to Hear It*

James Spencer, PhD

**Launching in June 2023**

# **USEFUL TO GOD**

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ministries

Useful to God Ministries mobilizes God's people to be and make disciples. We challenge Christians to replace activities that hinder discipleship with those designed to open them up the God's active presence in their daily lives. Useful to God ministries seeks to partners with the local church to develop gap leaders prepared to encourage others to be useful to God.

**[www.usefultogod.org](http://www.usefultogod.org)**



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THE  
**SHINE BRIGHT**  
PROJECT

As part of **Useful to God Ministries**, the Shine Bright Project encourages God's people to be and make disciples. We challenge Christians through a variety of free campaigns and low cost discipleship and spiritual enrichment resources.

[www.shinebrightproject.org](http://www.shinebrightproject.org)



## **D. L. MOODY CENTER**

The D. L. Moody Center is a place where Christians gather for prayer, worship, study, and discernment. Inspired by the life and ministry of D. L. Moody, the D. L. Moody Center calls God's people to gather together at the property Dwight Moody called home in Northfield, MA.

[www.moodycenter.org](http://www.moodycenter.org)

# INTRODUCTION

Greetings,

The gospel is uncomplicated. Jesus died for sinners and was raised in victory over sin so that by grace through faith we might be saved and live in the presence of God forever serving him and practicing good works in observance of his law.

The Bible contains a number of themes that contribute to the message of the gospel. The themes addressed here are listed in a roughly sequential order but these themes recur in a variety of places throughout the scriptures.

My hope is that these themes will help you approach the Bible with a broad understanding of its story while spending time in the word of God reading it and reflecting on it so that you learn to find delight in God's instruction.

Blessings,

James Spencer, PhD  
President, D. L. Moody Center





# goodnes and order

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis 1:31

# GOD CREATED A VERY GOOD ORDER

*Genesis 1:1-2:3*

The creation narrative conveys more than the origins of humankind. It offers a picture of a trustworthy God who not only stands above his creation but for and with his creation.

God is revealed as...

...the Sovereign whose word bring order to chaos

...the wise Creator whose creative work results in harmony

...the benevolent Lord whose world is uniquely suited for  
human flourishing

We trust God because he has the power and authority to rule, the wisdom to determine and bring about “the good,” and the benevolence to be for humankind seeking always to help us thrive in his presence.



A close-up photograph of a white snake with a highly textured, scaly surface. The snake is coiled, with its head in the lower-left quadrant, looking towards the right. The background is a solid, deep black, which makes the white snake stand out prominently.

# distrust and rebellion

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3:6

# DISTRUST LEADS TO REBELLION YET GOD IS GRACIOUS

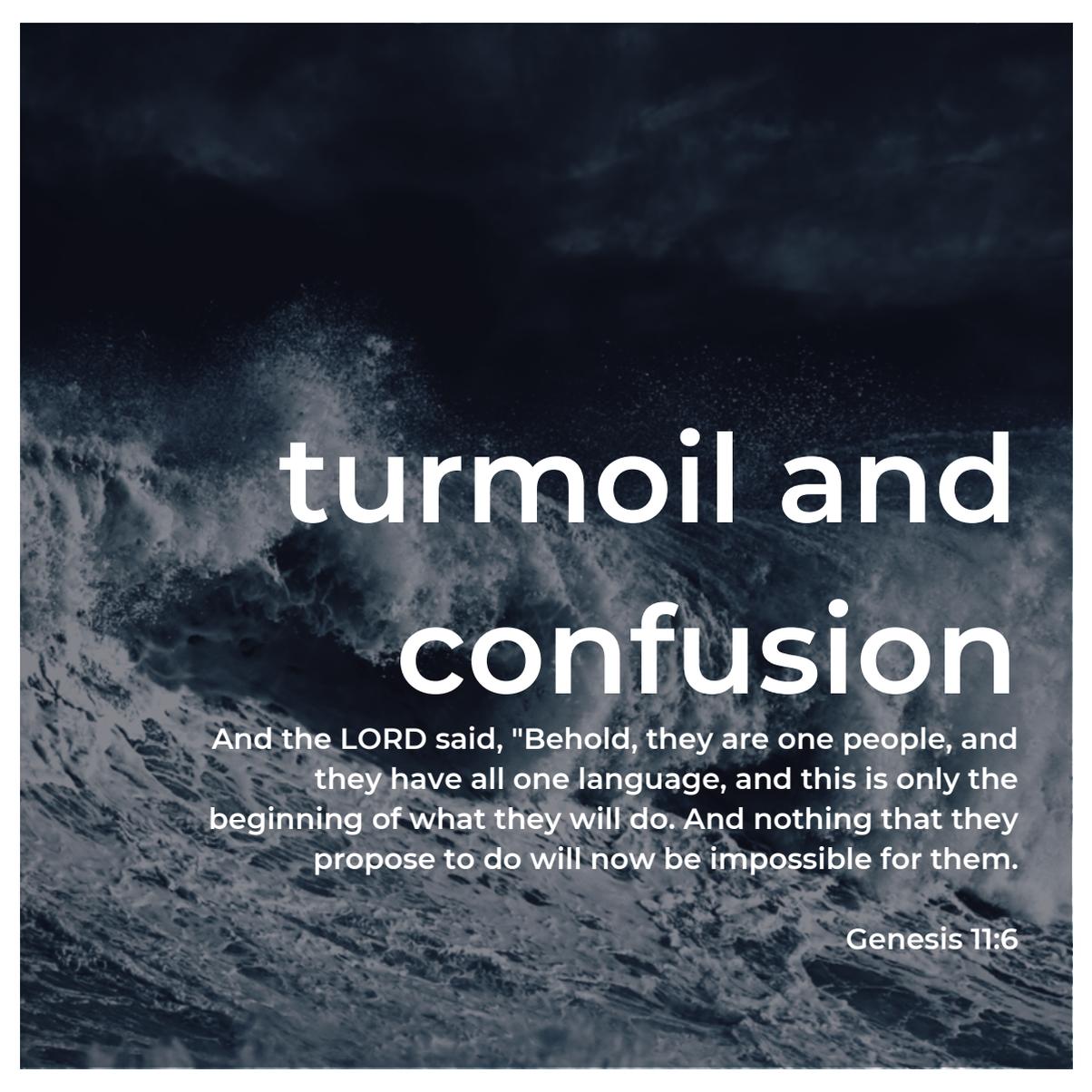
*Genesis 3:1-24*

The serpent convinces humanity that God's prohibition is not intended to help them flourish but to keep humankind under God's thumb. Obeying God was no longer wise but foolish. To leave the fruit would be to embrace the rule of a God who no longer appeared to have the good of humankind in mind.

Deception led to distrust. Distrust led to rebellion. In determining our own path by our own wisdom, we reject God's order. We see paradise as a prison only to have our eyes opened to the harsh realities and vulnerabilities that plague us when we do not depend on God for provision. We set aside the wisdom of obedience and chart a course of rebellion.

Yet, even in our rebellion God is gracious by barring us from living forever in a fallen state.





# turmoil and confusion

And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

Genesis 11:6

# IGNORANCE BRINGS TURMOIL AND CONFUSION

*Genesis 11:1-9*

After Noah the flood, the peoples of the earth gather at the plain of Shinar. Seemingly unaware of God's destiny for humankind. . .to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. . .these people take strides to avoid being scattered over the whole earth. The people have the capability to build a city and a tower. They will, as even God recognizes, be able to accomplish all they have set out to do and more. They will be able to make a name for themselves apart from God. God will remain unrecognized and unknown.

God intervenes. He scatters the people and confuses their language but the first confusion is the one the people have about humanity's destiny. As it was before the flood when people sought greatness apart from God, so it is again. Humankind cannot realize the destiny God has determined if God remains unknown.



# revelation and obedience

Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20



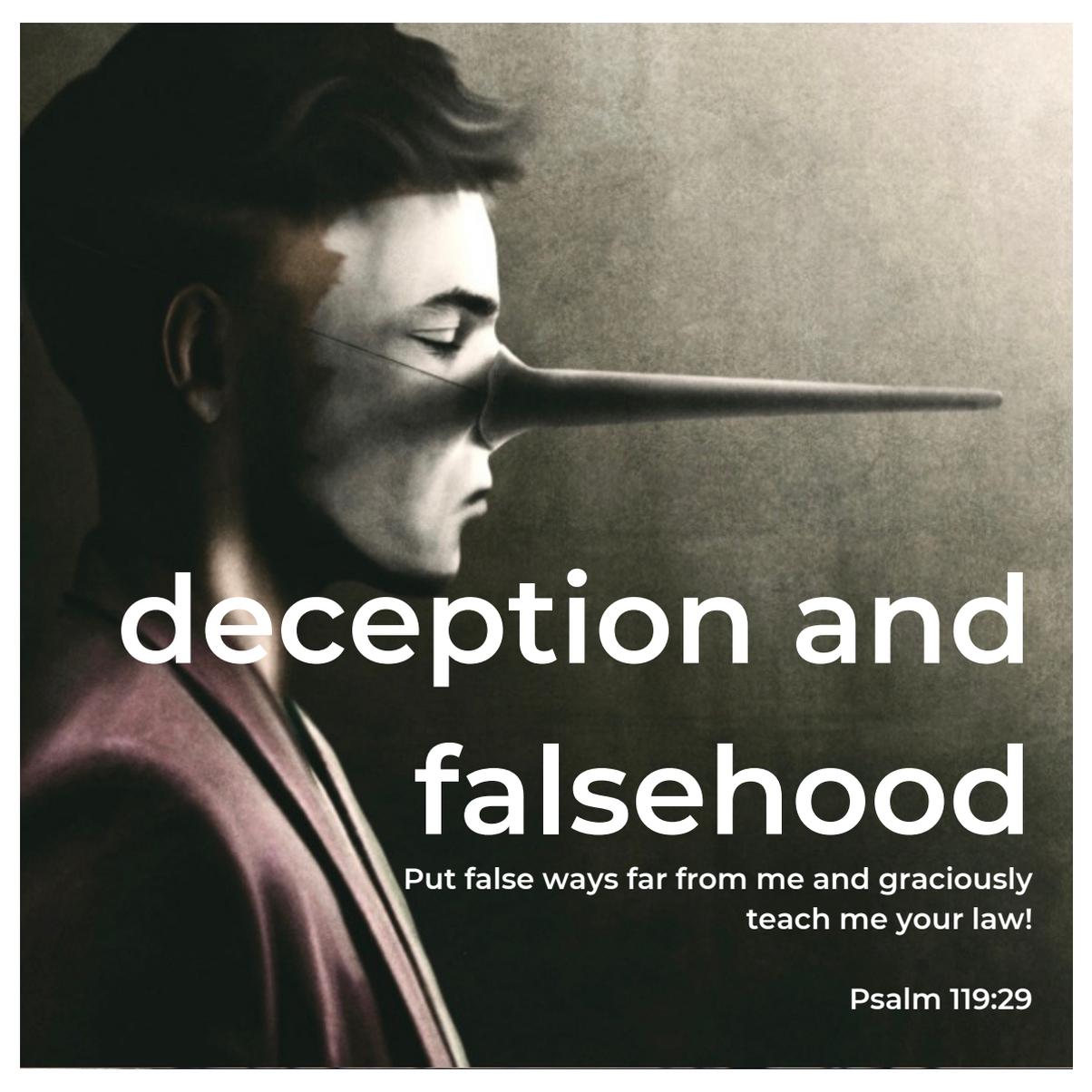
# GOD'S REVELATION MAKES OBEDIENCE POSSIBLE

*Deuteronomy 30:11-20*

Following the Tower of Babel incident, God reveals himself to Abraham by making a covenant with him. God teaches Abraham and his descendants who He is. He shows them how to live in the presence of a sovereign, wise, benevolent God.

After the exodus, the Lord gives Israel his law. Through obedience to the law Israel would experience the blessing of God. They only needed to trust Him. They needed to recognize the kindness and wisdom God exhibited in giving them his instruction. He was not imprisoning them, but setting them free to live in his presence.

God desires to see Israel “choose life” by obeying his instruction and recognizing him as “your life and length of days” (Deut 30:20). Israel is not to lean on the wisdom of the world and the mechanisms by which other nations secure themselves. Instead, they are to embrace the wisdom of obedience trusting God to sustain and protect them.

A man with a long, thin nose, resembling Pinocchio, looking to the right. The image is in a dark, moody style with a textured background.

# deception and falsehood

Put false ways far from me and graciously  
teach me your law!

Psalm 119:29

# DECEPTION AND FALSEHOOD OPPOSE OBEDIENCE

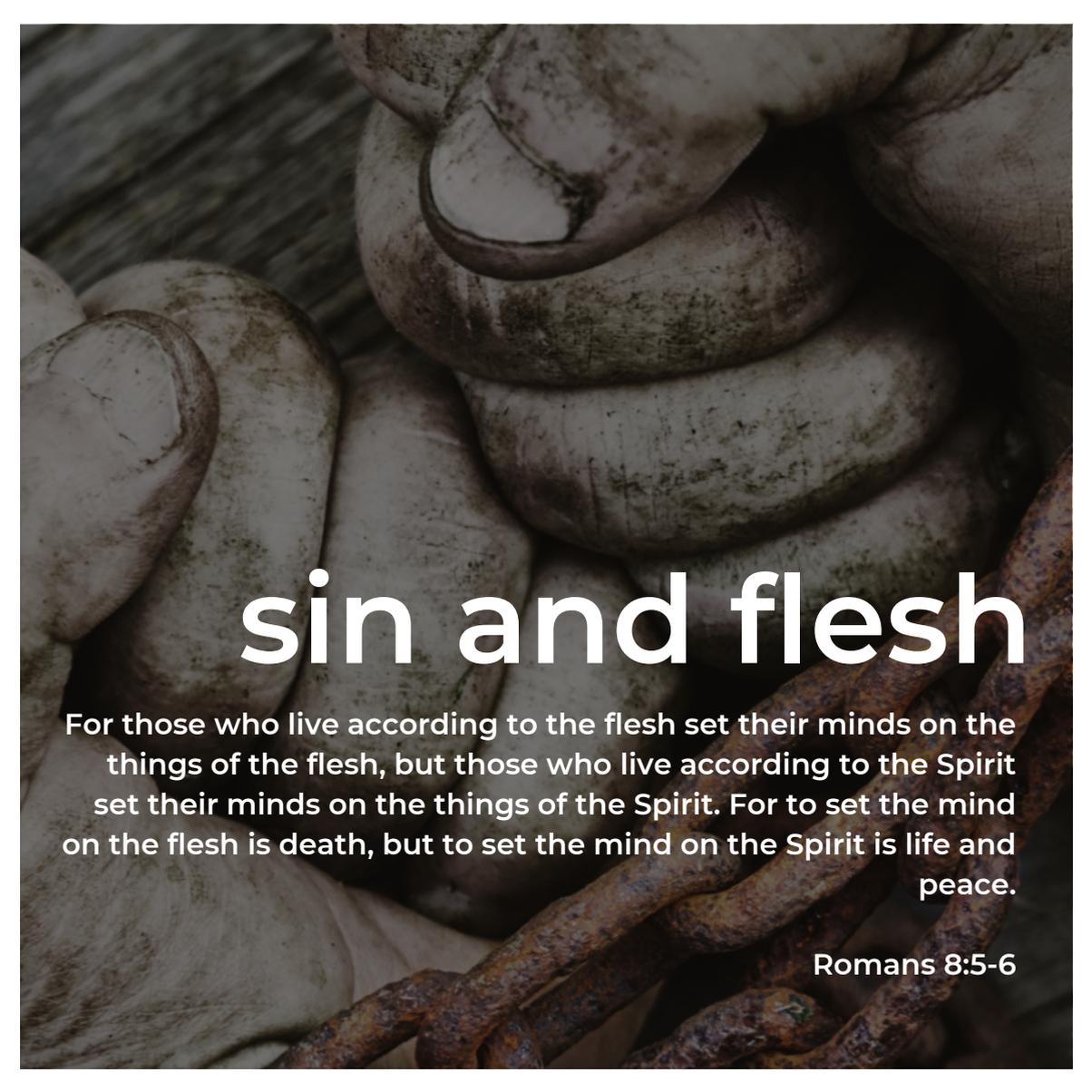
*Psalm 119:25-32*

Christians are a people dedicated to the truth. It is that commitment that prompts us to confess our sins even though it is often inconvenient to do so (1 Jn 1:9). It is the truth that Jesus is Lord that sets us free to live as God's people (Jn 8:31-32).

Deceiving ourselves and others or living according to a false view of reality makes it impossible to obey. God's instruction offers us a truthful understanding of the way the world works as such, putting false ways far from us is necessarily bound up with learning God's law (Ps 119:29).

God's people are to live according to the truth to show the manifold wisdom of God to a world that has been deceived, has adopted falsehoods, and is incapable of pleasing God (Rom 8:8; Eph 4:17-19).





# sin and flesh

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

Romans 8:5-6

# LIFE IN THE FLESH IS SLAVERY TO SIN

*Romans 8:1-17*

The Bible makes a distinction between those who live according to the flesh and those who live according to the Spirit. Living according to the flesh leads to death. As Paul says, “the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot” (Rom 8:7).

The flesh offers only the illusion of freedom claiming that the law of God desires to enslave. Yet, we always serve a master because we are slaves of the one whom we obey (Rom 6:16). Serving sin in the flesh will lead to death, but the gift of God is eternal life received by faith and demonstrated by good works (Rom 6:23; James 2:14-26).



# faith and salvation

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

# SALVATION COMES THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

*Ephesians 2:1-10*

The sin that separates us from Christ cannot be overcome by good works. Weakened by the flesh, God's Law was unable to produce righteousness. In other words, our inability to obey the law demanded a new work that would create within us new hearts (Ezek 36:26).

We are incapable of keeping the whole law. When Christ "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:7), he lived a life in full alignment with the will of God. His resurrection demonstrates his victory over sin and death. We have been saved by grace through faith (Eph 2:8) so that we may have eternal life and (Jn 3:16).





# witness and endurance

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

Hebrews 12:28-29

# FAITHFUL WITNESS REQUIRES ENDURANCE

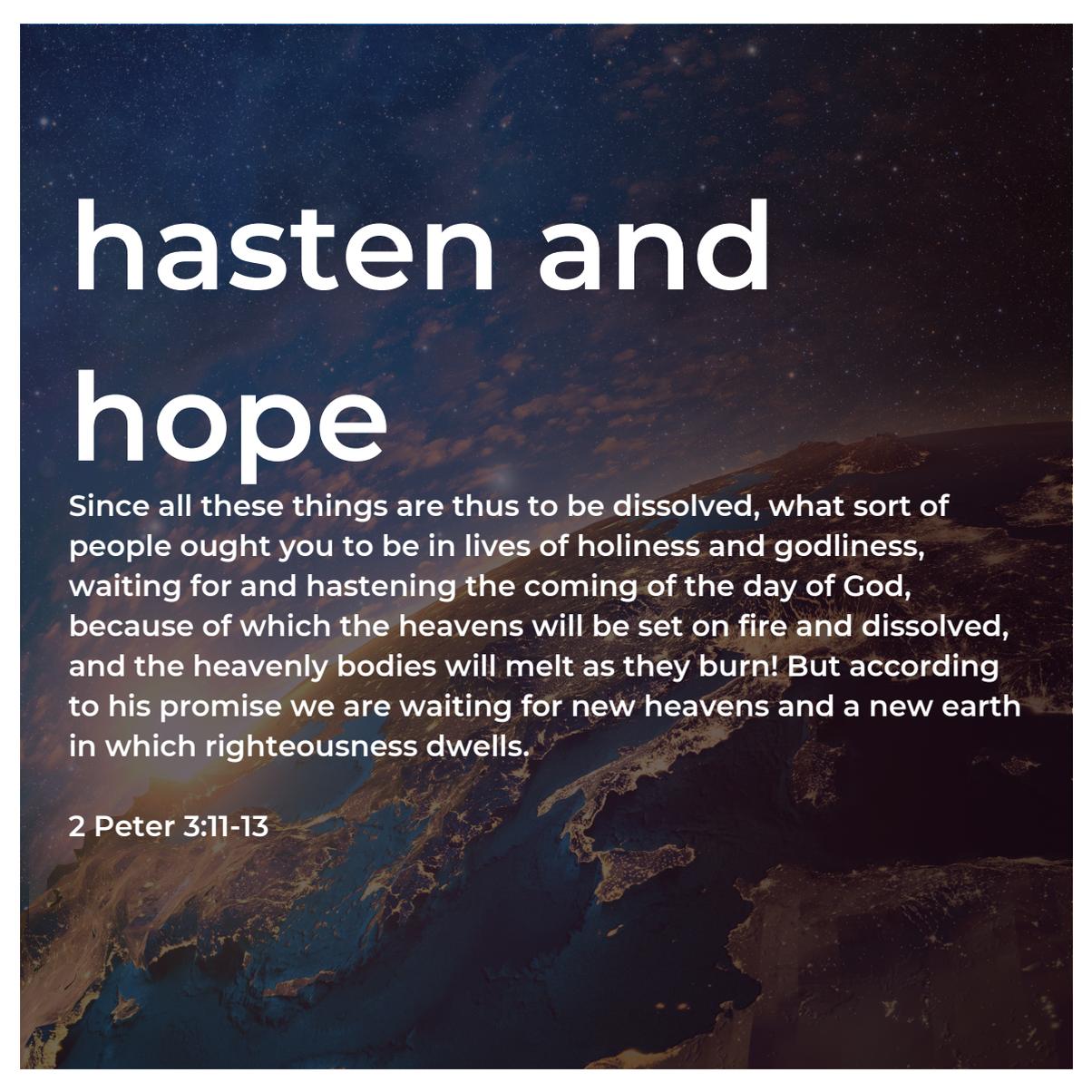
*2 Timothy 2:1-13*

The decision to follow Christ is a lifelong commitment by which we dedicate ourselves to being and making disciples. Dedicating our lives to Christ is an all-encompassing commitment that requires focused, diligent, God-pleasing efforts performed in accordance with God's instruction (2 Tim 2:4-6).

Even when we suffer for the gospel, we do so for the sake of God's people and the salvation of all those who would place their faith in Christ. If we surrender our faith when trouble comes, we do so for our own comfort not for the gospel.

Our endurance in the faith will demonstrate our true commitment to Christ. Enduring till the end reveals that we are truly God's people who, by being united with Christ in his death, will share in Christ's resurrection and reign (2 Tim 2:11-12).





# hasten and hope

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

2 Peter 3:11-13

# WE HASTEN GOD'S KINGDOM AND THE NEW CREATION

*2 Peter 3:11-13*

This world and all of its treasures are fleeting. Knowing that what the world has to offer will not last should motivate us to live “lives of holiness and godliness” (2 Pt 3:11). When we seek to follow the Spirit and align ourselves with the truth, we wait faithfully for and hasten the coming of the full manifestation of God’s Kingdom and the re-creation of the heavens and the earth.

As believers, we do not hope for heaven but for God to make all things new and to re-make the world that he formed “in the beginning” (Gen 1:1). We wait for the coming of Christ and the day of the Lord when God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and eliminate death, mourning, crying, and pain (Rev 21:4). Such is life in the blessing presence of our God.



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