



COLOSSIANS SERIES: THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST IN THE POSTMODERN WORLD

## CONTINUE IN YOUR FAITH

Colossians 1:21-23

January 11, 2009

Dr. Todd Wilson, *Senior Pastor*

### INTRODUCTION

Well, you know, sometimes a book will catch you at just the right time. I had been for three years, cooped up as it were, in a research library in England, ten hours a day with books and laptop computer, and notes and more notes and more notes, and had finished that whole journey, and three year's up, and was ready for an adventure in my life. So we moved back to the States and the adventure was getting a copy of John Krakow's "Into thin Air." Have you read this book? It narrates the story of the 1996 Mt. Everest tragedy where several teams went up Mt. Everest and nearly half the people died in the ascent.

Well, after having been cooped up in a library for three years, when I got this book I began reading it and I'll just tell you, I was enraptured with what I read. It was just a thrilling read and as I would read a few pages or a couple of chapters, and I would say to Katie, "Honey, I would like to do that. I'd like to ascend Everest," and she would just say, "Ah that's great, just keep reading." Then I would read some more and you see what they would do, and you start thinking to yourself in your more inspired moments, "That doesn't sound so hard. Honey, I think I could do that. I think I could do that." And she would then just smile at me, that benign sort of wifely smile, saying, "You really have been cooped up in the library way too long. Should have gone for more bike rides!"

Well, my aspirations to ascend Mt. Everest started to come down when I realized what's required to actually ascend Everest. For starters, you need a pretty impressive resume of high altitude climbing, of which I have none. And then you need about \$80,000 to pay for the equipment and then the trip, which I didn't have \$80,000 needless to say. Then you need two to three months of time to give to the exercise and I didn't think I had two to three months of time either. So you could see my aspirations and intentions start to descend down the face of Mt. Everest as I realized, "I don't think I'm going to climb this."

My hopes were really dashed when I learned this statistic, at least at the time of writing of this book several years ago. One in four people died when trying to ascend Mt. Everest! It was a little bit of statistic that gave me a dose of medicine as I thought about trying to climb Everest. And if that wasn't disincentive enough then you read and learn about how it is that someone might die on Everest: a rogue storm that comes out of nowhere and descends on the face of the mountain, and literally flings you off the side of the mountain to your death. You are just launched into Tibet and gone forever—some rogue storm that just comes out of nowhere! Or you're making your way through what are called the Coombu ice falls, which are several football fields in length, steep and icy, and there are these gigantic, building-like ice towers that stretch hundreds of feet up in the air, that have been known to shake loose for no apparent reasons and like a gigantic building that's lost its way, come crashing down on the top of climbers. Or, what's even more chilling, you've just taken a water break or food break, and you decide to start climbing again, and you take your first step onto the icy face of a slope only to

loose your balance, and you fall on your back but you begin to slide because you had unhooked yourself from the rope, and you forgot to get re-hooked, and you begin to slide several thousand feet on your back, off the side of the mountain.

So, as I started learning about this, I thought, "I'm never going to climb Mt. Everest." I'm just going to stay in the Midwest. I began thinking, "Why does anyone want to climb Mt. Everest? Why does anyone want to do that crazy thing?" Then John Krakow gave me an insight into the psychology of this that would drive someone to want to climb Everest. He made this very interesting comment in the book. He says this, "The incumbent hazards of climbing Everest lent the activity a seriousness of purpose that was sorely missing from the rest of my life." Do you hear that? The incumbent hazards, the sheer danger of it, lent the activity a seriousness of purpose. It was sorely missing from the rest of my humdrum, suburban life filled with wasting time and trivialities, and superficialities, and getting up to do the same routines over and over again, where things don't seem to matter really all that much. And thus there is no seriousness of purpose. But not so, Krakow says, where you're at 29,000 feet. When you are at 29,000 feet all the details count. In fact they're life or death! The way you get your crampon on your spikes onto your boot is life or death. The way you get your gloves secured on your hands is critical because if your hand gets exposed at 29,000 for even a short amount of time, the whole thing goes frostbite and amputation. How you take in oxygen or fail to take in oxygen is critical. Your body can start to meltdown at that altitude. How you keep your goggles on your face or not on your face is critical if you want to avoid going blind through the UV rays that come flying in at 29,000 feet. The incumbent hazards of ascending Mt. Everest give the whole exercise and activity a seriousness of purpose that is sorely missing from the rest of our lives.

### **Ascending the Everest of Christian life**

Friends, I think the Christian life is a lot like ascending Everest, except the Christian life is harder, and in the Christian life, the stakes are higher. The Christian life is harder, that is, it doesn't require just two or three months of your time, or \$80,000, or some climbing experience. The Christian life requires your whole life, and it requires the whole duration of your life—not a phase of your life—but the entirety of your life. It's harder. And the stakes are higher in the Christian life. What's the worst thing that can happen to you when you're ascending Mt. Everest? You slide off the face of the mountain to your death somewhere in Tibet never to be seen again. That's the worst thing that can happen to you. But think of what Jesus said to his disciples, "Don't fear him who can kill the body," Jesus said. Don't fear them. "Fear him who can cast your soul into outer darkness." That's what gentle Jesus, meek and mild, said to his disciples. What's the worst that can happen to you? You slide off the mountain to your death. What's the worst thing that can happen to you in the Christian life? You can fail to persevere in the faith. That's the worst thing that can happen!

So, it ought to be true of us as believers and as a church, that our lives, as individuals, as families and as churches, are characterized by a seriousness of purpose because we recognize the incumbent hazards of it all. We recognize we don't war against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers of this present evil age. This is warfare! This is a conflict that we are engaged in. There are incumbent hazards that ought to energize our corporate life and our individual lives with a seriousness of purpose. And yet, when we look out onto the church landscape, at the evangelical church and other church traditions, or when we look in our own lives, we often don't see the seriousness of purpose that the Christian faith really calls for, do

we? What we should look like are high altitude climbers, with that kind of focus and seriousness of purpose. What we should look like as a church is a team of high altitude climbers, all roped together, helping one another ascend up the steep face of the Everest of Christian life to arrive at the summit. And yet, all too often, don't we and don't our churches look like a group of tourists in north Oak Park, on a sunny spring day with their headphones on, strolling around sort of aimlessly and endlessly taking in the Frank Lloyd Wright architecture? Why are we just strolling around in the Christian life? Why? Because there are no incumbent hazards! There is nothing much at stake, and it's not perceived to be hard. It's perceived to be a walk in the park and thus there is no seriousness of purpose. If there is one thing to be said of evangelical Christianity, is that it lacks on the whole, a seriousness of purpose.

### **The Big "IF" in verse 23**

But the passage this morning before us in Colossians, underscores that we ought to have a seriousness of purpose in Christian living. Why? Because of the big "If" in verse 23! If you have your bible in front of you, turn to Colossians chapter one. As I was sharing the passage with someone earlier in the week, they said, "O yes, absolutely, that is a pretty sober passage. I circled in my bible that big 'if.' I circled it, put a big circle around that big 'if' in verse 23." You see the big "if"? That underscores the incumbent hazard in the Christian life—"if you continue in your faith." What is he saying? All of this is coming to you, on the Day of Judgment where you will stand before the Lord, blameless, without blemish, holy in the sight and free from accusation—all that is coming in your direction. The consummation of salvation, the consummation of what Jesus Christ has done in your life by redeeming you, and reconciling you, and overcoming your enmity, as we read about in verse 21. He has set you on a trajectory to be in front of him on the Day of Judgment, as he says in verse 22. Look at that. "Holy in his sight without blemish and free from accusation." All this, to quote a game show, all this can be yours (verse 23) *if you continue in your faith.*

So what are we talking about this morning? We're talking about how does a Christian ascend to the summit of the Everest of the Christian life. How does that happen? And what is the passage teaching? The answer to that question or subject or topic is, continuing in your faith is the way you ascend to the summit of the Christian life—you must continue in your faith. So this morning's passage teaches about the necessity of perseverance. Last week we looked at the supremacy of Jesus Christ in verses 15-20. This morning we are looking at the necessity of perseverance. Jesus is glorious and beautiful and supreme, and to be embraced and enjoyed, and hid under, and sought protection in, and walked with day after day after day. But the response and the requirement, what is incumbent upon us is that we continue on in the faith.

So this morning's passage is a message about the necessity of perseverance in the Christian life. But before we look at what is required of us, its good to rehearse as Paul does, its good to rehearse what God has done, and what is doing, and what God will do, to get us to the summit, to the peak, to the finish line, to change the imagery, of the Christian life. What has God done? He rehearses it for us in verses 21 and 22. We've already seen some of this in Colossians. It's good to rehearse again as Paul does, what it is that God does to get us to the summit of the Christian life.

## **What has God done to get us to the top?**

The first thing he does is he reconciles us through the cross, verse 21: “Once you were alienated from God, and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death.” You see what God has done first of all? God has gotten you to base camp if you are a Christian. He has gotten you to base camp to begin the ascent of the Christian life. And the way in which he got you to base camp is by reconciling you through Jesus Christ’s death on the cross. As verse 14 says, by redeeming you, by forgiving all of your sins; whereas verse 21 says by overcoming the alienation that stood between you and God Almighty—the alienation. And the alienation was owing to the enmity. See what Paul is saying here? The enmity is in your mind. So if you are a Christian, this was true of you before you became a Christian. You had an enmity; you were in combat, so to speak. You may not have even been fully aware of it but you were at war with God Almighty and thus were alienated from him. And you were at war with him in your mind because of what you were doing in your life. This is the surprising thing in verse 21—alienated from God and you were enemies in your minds. Why is one an enemy in their mind toward God? Because of your evil behavior! Isn’t that interesting? Yes, evil behavior is the overflow of a mind at enmity with God. But and evil life engenders and encourages a mind that in at enmity with God, or, as Paul says in Romans 1, a mind that wants to suppress the truth in unrighteousness. This is the psychology of unbelief that Paul is describing here. And God in his grace has overcome that through the gospel. That’s what God has done. He has brought us to base camp to begin the ascent by overcoming the enmity, and by reconciling us through the death of his son.

The other thing he does to ensure that we attain to the summit is, he is going to present us before his glorious presence, faultless and without blemish, holy, blameless. That’s the second thing he says in verse 22. “Now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.” Stunning, isn’t it? Paul is envisioning here a courtroom scene; it’s the scene of the Last Judgment, the scene of the final day where we will all stand before God to give an account. And Paul is saying what God has undertaken through the gospel, is not only reconciliation of you when you were alienated and enemies, he has undertaken to present you on that final day—that climactic day—he’s undertaken by his grace to present you holy, not characterized by evil deeds. And without blemish, not with enmity in the mind and free from accusation, even though God has so much he could accuse us of. So this is what God has done. He has reconciled us. And this is what God has committed to do—presenting us before his presence without accusation, faultless, so that we can hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your master.”

A third thing God is doing to see that we ascend to the summit of the Everest of the Christian life, that is not explicitly referenced in this passage and these verses, but is talked about throughout the New Testament and the letters of Paul and elsewhere, it is, he is shielding us in the present. He is shielding us, protecting us, he is preserving us. We read in the first chapter of 1 Peter, the apostle Peter is celebrating saying, “Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” That’s what he has done! He has caused us to be born again to a living hope just like Paul is talking about. He has caused us to be reconciled. Then Peter goes on, “caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance which is imperishable and unfading, and kept in heaven for you.” So that’s where we’re headed. And then he adds this, “who are being preserved through faith for

salvation ready to be revealed in the Last time. Being preserved through faith, that's the other thing God is doing.

God calls us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling but he is the one who is in us enabling, causing us to will and to work according to his good pleasure. So you see here, friends, as we look at the necessity of perseverance for us, it's good to put it in the gospel context we find it in, which is all that God has done, all that God is doing, and all that God will do to see to it that, as Jesus says, "none of the sheep that you've given me have I lost." Not one! This is what God has done, this is what God is doing and will do to keep us. But that doesn't minimize or exclude our response. It implies our response, and that response is in verse 23. God will present us before his presence holy, without blemish, and free from accusation if you continue in your faith. The necessity of perseverance in the Christian life: this is a biblical teaching. This is a consistent biblical teaching that we need to persevere in the Christian faith.

### **The Call to Perseverance**

So, Hebrews 3:14: We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly to the end the confidence we had at first. Or Romans 11:22, the apostle Paul says to the Romans, "consider therefore, the kindness and sternness of God." Sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you will also be cut off. Or in Galatians 6:9, "let us not become weary in doing well, for in the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Or Jesus saying to his disciples in Mark 13:13, "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." Or Revelation of St. John, chapter 2 and 3, in the seven letters to the seven churches referred to there, it's the same message in each one of the letters, just articulated in different ways with different critiques of the churches. Revelation 2, in the letter to the church in Smyrna, here's what Jesus says, "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you. And you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." So you see throughout the New Testament the consistent call to perseverance—the perseverance of the saints, the necessity to continue on in the faith. What Paul is saying here is, first of all, that yes, we need to continue on in our faith. Do you see that? You are to continue on in your faith. We're to continue on in the act of believing. For what is implied in this passage as well is that we're to continue on in *the* faith. And in fact, the original just has the article in front of faith. You're to continue in "te piste," *the* faith. And so what Paul is saying here is not only that we're to continue in the act of believing, we're also to persevere in the Christian faith. That is, we are to persevere in our commitment to the orthodox, historic, Christian faith. And this makes good sense as Paul writes to the Colossians because false teachers have come in evidently, and are leading some of the Colossians astray, causing them to deviate from what they have received from Paul. Colossians 2:6--causing them to deviate from what they have received, the doctrine, the teaching, the faith they have received in Christ Jesus. So Paul says, friends, you need to continue on in *the* faith.

And so it is crucial, folks, it is crucial that we guard our own hearts and minds as we're thinking about what we are exposing ourselves to in terms of teaching and exposure. The call is a call to continue in our faith. The call is also a call to continue in the orthodox faith. So there is a warning here, there is a warning to be aware of, and to be circumspect about, and to be intentional with regard to what it is that you expose yourself to in terms of teaching, what it is that you are imbibing in terms of doctrine and teaching. There is a call to persevere in *the* faith.

And the challenge for the evangelical church, for folks like many of us, is that we can spot heresy down the street, but its heterodoxy, its orthodoxy that is just slightly skewed and bent and refracted so it looks funny—that's a little bit more subtle and hard to see. Yet, nevertheless we can imbibe heterodox teaching. And what that begins to do is to cause a drift in our own theology and practices and our own Christian living—adrift! We can't see it but we might be drifting.

When I was a freshman in high school my dad took us on a vacation to the Bahamas. He rented a little dingy, a little runabout boat that we can speed around in the ocean, have a big time on it. It was my turn to take the little twelve foot dingy out for a cruise by myself. So I revved up the engine and I dashed out of the harbor out into the open ocean, and I'm cruising along having a big time, and all of a sudden, vroom, vroom, poof, engine's dead. There I am, a ninth grader, bobbing around in this little twelve foot dingy in the ocean. Now when you are a ninth grader, and your boat has just stalled in the middle of the ocean, the temptation, at least my temptation, is to do what? To fix the engine, right? So I popped the lid off the engine, and I'm inside working on the gas, spark plug—you can tell I didn't know what I was doing, I didn't know what to call these things. I'm tinkering around with the engine, checking the fuel gauge and making sure its getting fuel into the pump and checking the ignition and the throttle, and all this sort of stuff. An hour had gone by, and there I was, drifting in this dingy out in the ocean until I hear brrrrrrrrrrrr, and it's a rescue boat coming for me with my dad in the front of the bow of that rescue boat! His boat pulls up to this boat and let me tell you, he had that fatherly look on his face like that one where you know you've really done something wrong. It's not that one where he wants to kill you. It's that one that you can tell your dad is really scared for you. And it brings up that kind of protective fear of a father. He chastised me something fierce! Do you know what he chastised me about? Not that the boat stalled but that I didn't throw over the anchor right where I stalled. He said to me, "A few more hours Todd, you would have drifted beyond sight, and it would have been evening. And then a few after that you and your dead body and this boat would have washed up on the shore in Africa." Yes, I have not forgotten that chastisement."

Drift, drift imperceptibly! You've got to continue in *the* faith. Be on the lookout, friends, for theological drift in your life, the life of your kids, the life of this church, the life of your life group, the life of your neighbors. Be on the lookout for theological drift. "Continue in your faith." That's what this passage is calling us to. Paul provides two words to explain how it is that we continue in the faith. The first word is, we must get well grounded in the faith. This is the point of what he says in verse 23, "if you continue in your faith, established and firm." We must get well grounded in the Christian faith. That's the irony! How is it that you continue in the faith? You get grounded in the faith, that's how you continue on. It's kinda paradoxical, isn't it? How do you keep ascending the mountain? You pour a big foundation of concrete and let it settle, and you dive into it. That's how you continue on in the faith—established and firm. It's architectural imagery, its building imagery—established and firm. He is talking about the laying of a foundation that's established. And he is talking about a foundation settling into place and getting firm—established and firm. It's a conception of the Christian life and the Christian faith. It views the Christian faith as a dwelling place, as a house with a foundation and a substructure, as it were. And the Christian is, from Paul's perspective, to go into that house of faith and get established and firm, and stay in there in that dwelling called the Christian faith. Now this is challenging to do in our day and age in these postmodern times because of some postmodern conceptions of truth that are more dynamic, more open ended, and therefore more provisional,

and more fluid. Those conceptions of truth impact Christian conceptions of spirituality. Evangelical postmodern conceptions of spirituality, some of them where the Christian faith is conceived of far less as a building that one goes into to inhabit, but more as a path that one gets on and journeys and seeks out, and continues to discover, to explore, because its open ended, provisional, and it winds and it twists, and you're not sure where its going to go. These days if you go to churches around the country and you get their worship bulletins, you probably won't see the Christian faith with the icon of the building on it. Will you? That's passé! Many churches now put up the image and the metaphor of the path, the journey. And there could be good place for that. John Bunyan's Pilgrim Progress is, after all, about the pilgrimage of the Christian faith, and its one sense that's a very biblical and appropriate image. But when it comes to the conception of truth in the Christian faith, that's a different category! I think Paul's conception here of the Christian faith as a foundation that's laid, to be firm, and you're to go into it to inhabit and dwell in it, cuts against the grain of some—I'm trying to say this with qualification and carefully—some postmodern Christian forms of spirituality and conceptions of the Christian life. And so I think the charge for us in light of what Paul is saying is, friends, brothers and sisters, to get ourselves well grounded in the faith. How deep is your foundation in the Christian faith? How thick is the cement of the foundation of your Christian faith? Is it deep? Is it thick? Is it firm? Is it solid? And how about your children? Or, young people, how deep, and solid and firm is the foundation of your faith?

### **Getting Well Grounded**

It's crucial that we as individuals be building into the lives of our children and students a deep commitment to the Christian faith, training and grounding them in the A-B-Cs and the D-E-Fs and every other letter of the alphabet of the Christian faith, so that we're not settling for the superficial stuff. Training our children and training our students, much less with ourselves. There is so much frothy Christian goo that can be imbibed, and it's not going to do anything. It's like a handful of Doritos in terms of nourishment. O, that we as families and individuals and as a church would be discipling our young people with intentionality, rigor and vigor so that it would be said of every one of our young people—this is our vision! This is what I see for you and what I hope that we as a church see for you, that you would all be like little Timothies. Remember what Paul said to Timothy? From infancy, you have known the Holy Scriptures that can make you wise for salvation. O that that would be our vision for discipleship here at Calvary, and your vision for discipling your own self and those in your family. Rigorous, intentional, established and firm, rock solid foundation! And why does it matter?—so that, as Paul says in the second phrase, you're not moved. You're not knocked off base from the hope held out in the gospel.

What is the foundation that we're building when we're discipling people, or when we're discipling ourselves in the Word of God? What is the foundation? The foundation is the hope of the gospel. What, friends, is the first thing to go when adversity strikes?—your life? The first thing to go, the first casualty, the first thing that's under threat is hope. It's hope! I was talking with a brother after last week's services, who's going through some deep, deep, deep waters, and he says to me, "I'm having trouble with hope, I'm having trouble persevering, I'm having trouble hanging on." Hope is the first thing to go when the waters of adversity come. And friends, as we learn from the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, when the hurricanes of adversity come, it is too late to build up the levees and lay the solid foundation. It's too late when the hurricanes of adversity come. We've got to prepare ahead of time. We've got to be

well grounded, solid and firm so that we're not moved out, moved away from the hope of the gospel when adversity comes. And I see it as one of the joys of being a pastor—that you get to see how people in your congregation persevere through adversity. You can see the folks that are established and firm and how they're persevering. You can see it in the way they talk about the adversity, the way they're responding, the way they can give grace to others, prays to God. They're rooted and established, they are well grounded in the faith and they can persevere through adversity.

So, getting well grounded in the faith and not moving away from the hope of the gospel is what the writers of the Hebrews said to those to whom he was writing in chapter 10, and remember the Hebrews were going through all sorts of persecution and suffering. They were getting their property plundered, ostracized, harassed. And the writer then says, really just an echo of what we're hearing Paul says in this passage, verse 10:35, do not throw away your confidence. That is, don't throw away your hope when hardship comes. Or, in Paul's terminology, don't be moved off the foundation of hope when the hardship washes up on your life. Don't throw away your confidence. It will be richly rewarded. Hebrews 10:36, you need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. Friends, that's exactly what Paul is talking about. We need to persevere so that when we have done the will of God, we will receive what he has promised. We need to continue on in the faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope help out in the gospel. This passage teaches us about the necessity of perseverance.

## **Conclusion**

The intended effect of this passage in your life and my life is that it should inject in our lives a seriousness of purpose as we undertake living out the Christian life, a seriousness of purpose. This is serious business, continuing on the faith is serious business. And we're to do so, not with fear and fretting, but with faith and confidence and with great trust in God who is at work in us. Remember the gospel context of perseverance, what God has done, God is doing and what God will do, so that day by day as you wake up, day by day you're re-appropriating the gospel afresh. You are rehearsing in your heart and mind what God has done for me, what God is doing for me, and what God will do for me. As you rehearse the gospel in you mind and heart day by day, you will find yourself continuing to take those steps on the face of Mt. Everest of your Christian life.

The last charge, the last application or exhortation is, in order to persevere, we need each other. The solo alpine nest, the solo climber is very rare in high altitude climbing. The solo climber should be even rarer in the Christian church and Christian life. We need each other. We need to be like good climbers, roped to each other so that if one person slips and starts to slide, five or six of us are pulled, but the person doesn't slide off the face of Mt. Everest, but is held by the bond, by the link, by the relationship. And we also need to be in each other's lives so that we can cross-check, what climbers call cross-checking. You come out of your tent in the morning, and you think you've got your boots on right, you think you've got everything you need, you think you've got your gloves on right, you think you're oxygen tank is correctly put on and the hose works, but you need a brother or a sister to come along and check you out. And you need to open yourself and say, "Check me out." This kind of cross-checking, where we are speaking into each other's lives, "Yes, you're doing well. That all looks good! Uh, you know, your cramp-

on actually seems to be a little funky over there. And if you actually step on that ice, you could slip and stumble and slide forever!" We need to be in each other's lives to cross-check.

Some of us were talking about New Year's resolutions this past week and one of our seasoned saints of this church said this, "'I'm turning eighty-five this month, and I want to finish well.'" That's the guy who understands the Christian life. That you can walk sixty years with the Lord Jesus, and just like on Everest, you can stumble on the last hundred yards—the Hillary steps is what its called on Everest—and the whole thing is for naught! This brother says, "I want to finish well." It's a Pauline perspective. I pray it would be our perspective so we can say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith." God can by his grace enable us to say it, our responsibility is to embrace his gospel and have him so work in our lives that we will be able to say with Paul one day when we go home to be with the Lord, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have ascended to the Son, I have kept the faith."

**Amen**