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Holy Spirit Baptism

Matthew 3:13-4:11

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October 27, 2002

In Matthew 3 John the “wild man” Baptist cries in the wilderness, “One is coming who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

Verse 13 . . . *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.*
[Literally, Jesus “comes”—present tense, like this baptism is still happening.]

John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.” Then he consented [literally “consents” — present tense].

This baptism is archetypical. Matthew makes it clear Jesus didn’t need to be cleansed from sin, yet this baptism “fulfils all righteousness.” Jesus is showing us the way. He *is* the way. If you’re a believer, you’re in Him.

Verse 16 . . . *And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*

This is the Son,
 He hears the voice of the Father,
 and the Spirit descends like a dove.
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

At the end of Matthew Jesus commands, “Baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Some people argue that there are two baptisms: the baptism of salvation and a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 4, “There is one body, one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all.” *One baptism.*

But perhaps it’s experienced in different ways at different times. Just as Jesus didn’t need forgiveness, I doubt He lacked the Holy Spirit. Yet that day He experienced baptism in the Spirit.

On a list of bulletin bloopers I read this announcement: “This afternoon there will be meetings in the north and south ends of the church. Children will be baptized at both ends.”

I actually think that’s an acceptable practice.

Some folks are baptized as infants and then again as adults.

Some folks are baptized with water and have a later experience they call baptism in the Spirit.

I think that’s good, but there is one baptism. To baptize means to immerse. So if people want to pray for you to experience an “immersion in the Holy Spirit,” awesome! Let them! But there is one baptism.

Well, when was it?

- I was baptized as an infant in 1961.
- In the early 70’s I spoke in tongues in my friend Ricky’s bedroom.
- In 1980 I was baptized in Deer Creek just in case I didn’t get wet enough as an infant.
- In 1995 at a conference in Toronto, Canada, I felt the Spirit course through me like fire.

So in case you’re wondering, I’ve been baptized at both ends. Have you? Have you been baptized in the Spirit. And how would you know? What’s the sign of that baptism?

Acts 2: “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire”

Well, you know the story. They’re filled with the Spirit, and this rag-tag group of disciples (having lived in doubt and fear), becomes the Church victorious. We see miracle, mysteries, and great authority. The Church becomes relevant, spectacular, and extremely powerful.

You’ll remember that right after this they provide for each other’s needs. They appoint deacons full of the Spirit to provide bread for the orphans and widows (like Jesus had miraculously provided bread for the masses). They met people’s needs. Bread is number one on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

The Church was relevant . . . bread, signs, and wonders . . . spectacular signs and wonders.

They spoke in the “tongues of men and angels.”
They appeared drunk with the joy of the Spirit.
They healed the sick through prayer.

Then, filled with the Spirit, Peter preached, and 3,000 were converted that very day from kingdoms all over the world. Jesus told them they would receive “power” when the Spirit came upon them. And Jesus told them that He gave them authority. So they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and there was relevance, spectacular miracles, and power.

Tom Long was teaching a confirmation class. He told the children about Pentecost and said, “Pentecost was when the Church was sitting in a group, and the Holy Spirit landed on them like tongues of fire, and then they spoke the Gospel in all the languages of the world!” One little girl looked especially astonished and finally said, “Gosh, Reverend Long, we must have been absent that Sunday.”

Maybe you feel like you were absent that Sunday. You’re thinking . . .

I don’t speak in tongues, and I don’t feel like I’m being blessed with much bread. I don’t see many miracles, and I don’t feel very much power. I thought I was baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but maybe I’m doing something wrong. What’s wrong with me?

That may be a very good question to ask.

1. How’s your prayer life? Perhaps you “don’t have because you haven’t asked.” Jesus said, “The Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask.” Maybe you haven’t *really* asked because you don’t *really* want, like the Gerasenes who had Jesus leave because His power freaked them out.
2. Maybe you haven’t “stepped out in faith.” In one town Jesus said He could do “no mighty works” because of their lack of faith. To walk on water you have to get out of the boat. Maybe you need to step out and see what God will do.
3. Maybe you need to claim the authority Christ gives you — claim your rightful inheritance.

Instead of blessings, health, and prosperity,
you feel like you’re stranded in a desert.
Instead of miracles, signs, and wonders,
you feel like you’ve been trudging through a wasteland.
Instead of walking in victory and the power of the Holy
Ghost, you’re weak and starving for nourishment.

Other people have visions, prophecies, and cool experiences. So you wonder, What’s wrong with me? Is God not pleased with me? Am I His child? Do I have the Spirit?

And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

(Next verse . . . There are no chapter divisions in the original text . . .)

Then [immediately, in Mark] Jesus was led [driven, in Mark] up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted [had no food] forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry.

Wow, that's *weird!* He's baptized in the Spirit, and then the Spirit drives Him into the desert where there's nothing to eat. And this is archetypical.

I Corinthians 10:

Israel was baptized in the Red Sea and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Jesus is the new Israel.

The flood came for 40 days, and after 40 days Noah opened the ark and released a dove. Jesus is the new humanity.

We'll see Jesus is soon tempted. He's the new Adam. And we are "hidden in Him." We are "His body." His baptism is our baptism.

So if there's a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, maybe it ought to be: "Wandering in the desert on the verge of starving to death while facing enormous temptation." Then at our charismatic meetings we would say, "Oh, the Spirit is strong in this place, for everyone appears to have the snot kicked out of them!" I think I like speaking in tongues a little better . . .

Some people think the sign of the baptism of the Spirit is speaking without notes . . . or shaking, or looking spacey, or feeling giddy, or abundance and prosperity, or miracles and converts. Well, Jesus had no converts in the wilderness, it appears there were no "miracles" in the wilderness, and He was very close to starving to death for 40 days. Why? Because He was baptized in the Holy Spirit, that is, fire.

The desert is like fire, and we are refined as by fire in the wilderness. Moses teaches Israel, "Worship the Lord your God, and Him alone shall you serve. . . . You shall not tempt or put to the test the Lord your God as you did at Massah in the wilderness" (Deuteronomy 5-6).

Then in Deuteronomy 8: "You shall remember all the ways which the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments, or not. And He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD."

So the desert humbles us . . . our flesh . . . our old heart. It exposes our desires and purifies our desires. And in the desert God feeds us with words from His mouth.

So in the desert, the Word from the mouth of God on which Jesus fed must have been: "This is my beloved son in whom I'm deeply pleased." We don't know if any bystanders at the baptism

saw anything more than a dove. But Jesus fed on the Word of God in the desert, when all else was stripped away. For Jesus, that must have been everything and everybody.

One of the many documented miracles that have occurred in Lourdes, France took place in 1957. A French father took his ten-year-old son, blind from birth, to the shrine. At the shrine, the child begged his father to pray for him. His dad prayed aloud, "Lord, give my boy his sight." Instantly, the boy could see.

He looked around. He saw flowers, trees, green grass, the open sky. Then he looked into his father's face and heard the only voice he had known during ten long years of darkness and loneliness. When he saw his father, do you know what he said? "Oh boy! Everybody's here!" One day you'll look at your Heavenly Father and say that. For He will be "everything to everyone" (I Corinthians 15:28).

In the wilderness of our own poverty we learn to trust the Word of our Father. So the Spirit of God refines us with fire. We're baptized with fire. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." And then the faith is tested by fire.

So if you're asking, "What's wrong with me?" I bet you need more faith. That is, I bet you're a sinner. For "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." Faith grows in the desert by the power of the Holy Spirit. Maybe God's dealing with *sin* in your life. But let's see . . . Was there sin in Jesus' life? No. Had He done something wrong? He never sinned. Next verse . . .

And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

The dragon tries to tame the Wild Man. He corrupts a good desire. He builds a doubt and then offers a deal. "You have a desire for food . . . maybe God's not really your Father . . . I'll make you a deal . . ."

The devil says, "If you're 'beloved of God,' 'Son of God,' 'child of God,' then shouldn't there be some bread? some signs and wonders? some converts? some miracle, mystery, and authority? some relevancy, spectacle and power? Maybe you're doing something *wrong*. What's *wrong* with you?" Sound familiar?

“If God *really* loves you, if you’re *really* a believer, how do you explain the desert? You call that living? You’re irrelevant, unspectacular, and weak.”

Henri Nouwen wrote:

Jesus’ first temptation was to be relevant: to turn stones into bread. Oh, how often have I wished I could do that! . . . The second temptation to which Jesus was exposed was precisely the temptation to do something spectacular, something that could win him great applause. “Throw yourself from the parapet of the temple and let the angels catch you and carry you in their arms.” But Jesus refused to be a stunt man. . . .

You all know what the third temptation of Jesus was. It was the temptation of power. “I will give you all the kingdoms of this world in their splendor.”

Well, gosh, is there anything *wrong* with relevance, spectacle, and power? Is there anything *wrong* with bread? with angels catching Jesus? with receiving the nations as an inheritance (Psalm 2)? Is there anything *wrong* with feeding the world, signs and wonders, and global evangelization?

Yes! Absolutely *yes!* If those things proceed from a lack of faith in the love of God, *yes*.

And *no*, absolutely *no*, if they’re a product of faith in the love of God. (The Word of God now in flesh appearing).

Jesus put His faith in His Father’s Word of love. “You are my beloved Son.” And Jesus is the Word. He is the Father’s Word of love for us. He is the bread of life. He is the manna in the wilderness, so intimate we eat His flesh and drink His blood.

[Nouwen] One thing is clear to me: the temptation of power is greatest when intimacy is a threat. Much Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead. Many Christian empire-builders have been people unable to give and receive love.

“People unable to receive love”: that is, receive Jesus. When we don’t trust that Jesus is enough, we make church about something else: bread, spectacle, and power.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky tells a story about Jesus coming back during the Inquisition in Seville, Spain. He loves people and heals people, and the Grand Inquisitor throws Him in prison. He rebukes Christ for neglecting Satan’s three temptations. He calls them miracle, mystery, and authority. The Grand Inquisitor tells Jesus, “We’ve corrected your work and founded the church on miracle, mystery, and authority.” Relevant bread, great spectacle, and the authority to tell people exactly what to do.

You know, when we make the church about bread, spectacle, and power, instead of Jesus—who is God’s Word of love (the Gospel)—the church must be doing the work of the Evil One for him. And when we do that, we lose sight of the Bread of Life, the Savior who catches us when we fall from the temple—the law. We lose the power of God unto salvation, which is the cross of Christ.

(Is it any wonder that the church is growing fastest and best in the wilderness? . . . China, Sudan . . .)

If God is gracious, He leads us back into the wilderness, where we learn to love the Giver more than the gifts He gives.

But the Grand Inquisitor tells Jesus, “People are incapable of love and faith like that . . . incapable of freely given, faithful love like that.”

Actually, he’s right.

Israel can’t do it,
Noah can’t do it,
Adam can’t do it,
but Jesus does.

Jesus trusts His Father’s Word above all else. And Jesus delights in His Father’s love more than bread, miracles, and all the world.

When I was baptized, I was baptized into Jesus (Galatians 3:27). Gosh, then when *was* I baptized? Well, I really believe I experienced baptism in 1961 as an infant, and also in the 1970’s when I spoke in tongues, and also in 1980 when I was immersed in Deer Creek, and also in 1995 when I felt the fire in Toronto.

But when was I *really* baptized? *Really?* Well, that was about 27 A.D. in the Jordan River by a guy named John. For there is one baptism, and there is one body, and that is Christ’s body. Our lives are “hidden in Him,” said the Apostle Paul, so the Father’s song of love was sung over *me* as well as over Christ.

And what is the *sign* of my baptism? Well, I may “speak in tongues of men and angels,” I may have prophetic powers, I may preach to the nations of the world, but if there’s a sign of my baptism, it’s this: *Faith* . . . in God’s living Word of love.

Romans 8:15: “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” [“Daddy!”] it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God”

The sign is that even in the wilderness (*especially* in the wilderness) I cry out to God. And that’s not just me; it’s Jesus in me in the wilderness.

And we still ought to ask, “Why does Jesus need to be in the wilderness? He’s done nothing wrong.” Well . . .

- He’s there for the love of you!

- And He's there to defeat the Evil One. For at His weakest point Jesus has faith in God's Word of love. "You are my beloved son." Scripture says we the church "proclaim the manifold wisdom of God in the heavenly places." And we are the body of Christ now in this wilderness world.

Sometimes you wonder, "Lord, what's the point of this wilderness? No one is watching. No one sees." Satan and his demons see. And your faith is destroying them.

- Satan and his demons see, and God the Father sees. God sees, and now I'm getting to my point . . .

In the wilderness God the Father at last gets what He has longed for.

What he longed for when Adam and Eve fell to the temper . . .

What he longed for as Noah floated on the water, only to get drunk and immoral with his sons . . .

What He longed for when He baptized Israel in the sea, but they grumbled and complained in the wilderness.

In Jesus—the second Adam, the new humanity, the new Israel—in the wilderness, the Father got a Son who trusted in His love above all else.

We're tempted to think He wants "tongues of men and angels," "prophecies," the "understanding of all mysteries," and faith to "move mountains." But it's all worthless without love.

We're tempted to think He wants miracles, mystery, and authority, that He wants relevance, spectacle, and power. But He's a Daddy who already *has* all those things. What He wants most is *faith* . . . in His Word of love.

When you trust Him in the wilderness (which happens through the work of His Spirit), you give Him the gift for which He came and died: a child in His image returning His own faithful love to Himself.

Some of you have been in the wilderness for a long time. You're fasting; you're hungry for bread (something to feed you) . . .

- Some are hungry for a mate, for a child.
- Some are hungry for an experience: a word, a sign, a feeling.
- Some are hungry for some power, some life: hungry for God.
- Some of you are in the desert feeling barren, almost dead. But in that wilderness you've said, "Jesus, I chose to believe in you. I give myself to you."

Yet you *wonder*, because it's the desert. "God, what am I doing wrong?" I think this is His answer to you: "*Nothing. Nothing*, except thinking you're doing something wrong. *Nothing*, for you, my beloved child, are ministering to me . . . faithful love in my image." It's what the Good Father most earnestly desires.

Graham Cooke is a prophetic ministry leader in England. He tells about a man at a conference in the north of England. It seemed that God kept having Graham look at this man. Finally, Graham prayed, "Lord, what about him?" He heard the Lord say, "Gray, he's suicidal. He wants to die. His wife left him, the Christian company for which he worked fired him, he's sick, he hasn't got any money, and all of his friends have deserted him."

Graham prayed, "Lord, what has he done?" He heard back, "What makes you think he's done anything?" Graham said, "I apologize, Father. What are the issues?" And the Lord told him, "All these things have happened to him because I baptized him in the Holy Spirit. I want you to give him a message."

Graham went over, put his hand on the man's shoulder, and said, "Joe, the Lord says He will come to you in the night watch not many days from now, and He will sing a song over you. Not only will it save your life, but it will save the lives of thousands of others. It will be a classic song of Heaven."

Three nights later Joe said God came to his bedroom. He sang this song over him, and Joe wrote it down. (In a moment Bill will sing it.) The Father sang, "I will always love you . . . I will always love you." It sounds like, "Look, my beloved Son in whom I'm deeply pleased."

Matthew 4:11: *Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him.*

Maybe you just need the angels to come minister to you. But better than angels, you get The Angel of Yahweh—the Messenger of God, the Word of God's love—Jesus.

He is bread for the hungry.
He rescues those who fall.
He conquers the nations with the love of God, for
He descended into the wilderness that we call Hell.

And when we were faithless, he remained faithful.

He died and was raised that you would be forgiven, that He could live in you, and that you would hear the Father's song of love over you: "I will always love you."

On the night that our Lord was betrayed he took bread. Having given thanks, He broke it saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way after supper He took the cup and said, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me."

“Lord Jesus, I thank you that you suffered and died for me. I thank you that you have forgiven my sins, that you have paid for them with your body and your blood. I invite you, Lord Jesus, to enter me and make your home in me, and to live your life through me.

“Lord Jesus, I ask you to baptize me with everything that you’ve got for me, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.”

If you come to His table, it’s a public declaration that you have put your faith in the Word of Love named Jesus the Christ from God the Father. You not only put your faith in Him; you ingest Him into your life like a starving man ingests bread in the wilderness. Believe the Gospel. Step on the head of the Evil One. In Jesus’ name, amen.

[“I Will Always Love You,” by Joe King]

I loved you long before you met me
And then you gave your life for me
But should one day you turn and walk away
I will always love you, I will always love you
I will always love you, Yes I will, I always will

My love will never cease to hold you
But should I have a change of heart
It is because my heart has ceased to be
I will always love you, I will always love you
I will always love you, Yes I will, I always will

When all around you seems in darkness
When you have come right to the depths
Look into so deep, I am deeper still
I will always love you, I will always love you
I will always love you, Yes I will, I always will

And when the day has almost ended
When evening comes and draws you in
When there is no one else to comfort you
I will always love you, I will always love you
I will always love you, Yes I will, I always will

Here are my arms for you to hold you
Here are my wounds where you can hide
Here are the tears that I have cried for you
I will always love you, I will always love you
I will always love you, Yes I will, I always will

My love is constant as the sunrise
As changeless as the stars at night
My child, as sure as the returning light

I will always love you, I will always love you
I will always love you, Yes I will
I will always love you, I will always love you
I will always love you, Yes I will
I will always love you, I will always love you
Yes I will, I always will

“In Jesus you have made us the Israel of God. We even sing the same songs that have been sung for thousands of years. You are the same Lord. Lord God, we are saying to you that we want to follow you wherever you take us, in Jesus. Amen.”

A lot of times the gifts of the Spirit are like Disney Land. I love taking my kids to Disney Land, but we don't go there all the time. They absolutely love going to Disney Land. It's a great ride! But it's a gift for them.

But the greatest gift for me, the father, is when they just trust me, particularly that I love them. And then when this world says they're not worth crap, they wouldn't believe it. And that's a picture of somebody else's love. And I think the greatest gift you give Him is faith, particularly in the wilderness.

In Jesus' name, may you give the Father His gift. Amen.

Further Reading

And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

-Matthew 3:16-17

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. . . . And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

-Acts 2:1-3, 38

"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

-Luke 11:13

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

-Ephesians 4:4-7

And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized"

-Mark 10:39b

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry.

-Matthew 4:1-2

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to dance." We must not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

-I Corinthians 10:1-13

Jesus' first temptation was to be relevant: to turn stones into bread. Oh, how often have I wished I could do that! . . . The second temptation to which Jesus was exposed was precisely the temptation to do something spectacular, something that could win him great applause. "Throw yourself from the parapet of the temple and let the angels catch you and carry you in their arms." But Jesus refused to be a stunt man. . . .

You all know what the third temptation of Jesus was. It was the temptation of power. "I will give you all the kingdoms of this world in their splendor," the demon said to Jesus. When I ask myself the main reason for so many people having left the church during the past decades in France, Germany, Holland, and also in Canada and America, the word "power" easily comes to mind. One of the greatest ironies of the history of Christianity is that its leaders constantly gave in to the temptation of power—political power, military power, economic power, or moral and spiritual power—even though they continued to speak in the name of Jesus, who did not cling to his divine power but emptied himself and became as we are. . . .

One thing is clear to me: the temptation of power is greatest when intimacy is a threat. Much Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead. Many Christian empire-builders have been people unable to give and receive love.

-Henri Nouwen, In the Name of Jesus

“ ‘The wise and dreaded spirit of self-destruction and non-existence,’ the old man went on, ‘spoke to You in the desert and we learn from the books that he tried to tempt You. . . . ‘And now, do You see those stones in this parched and barren desert? Turn them into loaves of bread and men will follow You like cattle, grateful and docile, although constantly fearful lest You withdraw Your hand and they lose Your loaves.’ But You did not want to deprive man of freedom and You rejected this suggestion, for, You thought, what sort of freedom would they have if their obedience was bought with bread? . . .

“ ‘There are three forces These forces are miracle, mystery, and authority. But You rejected the first, the second, and the third of these forces and set up Your rejection as an example to men. When the wise and dreaded spirit placed You on the pinnacle of the temple and said, ‘If You would know whether You are the Son of God then cast Yourself down, for it is written: The angels shall hold Him up lest He fall and bruise Himself; and You shall know then whether You are the Son of God and shall prove how great is Your faith in Your Father,’ You heard him out, then rejected his advice, withstood the temptation, and did not plunge from the pinnacle. Oh, of course, You acted proudly and magnificently; indeed, You acted like God, but can You expect as much of men, of that weak, undisciplined, and wretched tribe, who are certainly no gods? . . .

“ ‘Didn’t You know that whenever man rejects miracles he rejects God, because he seeks not so much God as miracles? And since man cannot live without miracles, he will provide himself with miracles of his own making.

“ ‘You did not come down from the cross when they shouted, taunting and challenging You, ‘Come down from the cross and we will believe that You are He.’ You did not come down, again because You did not want to bring man to You by miracles, because You wanted their freely given love rather than the servile rapture of slaves subdued forever by a display of power. . . .

“ ‘We have corrected Your work and have now founded it on *miracle, mystery, and authority*. . . . Why have You come to interfere with our work? And why do You look at me silently with those gentle eyes of Yours? Be angry with me. I do not want Your love, because I do not love You myself. . . . Exactly eight centuries ago we accepted from him what You had rejected with indignation, the last gift he offered You—all the kingdom of earth. We accepted Rome and Caesar’s sword from *him*, and we proclaimed ourselves the sole rulers of the earth, although to this day we have not yet succeeded in bringing our work to final completion. . . . Had You accepted Caesar’s purple, You would have founded a universal empire and given men everlasting peace. For who can rule men if not one who holds both their consciences and their bread? So we took Caesar’s sword and, by taking it, we rejected You and followed *him*.’”

-The Grand Inquisitor rebuking Jesus in The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoevsky

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

-Romans 8:14-17

It is, strictly speaking, not man but God who perseveres. Perseverance may be defined as *that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of divine grace that is begun in the heart, is continued and brought to completion*. It is because God never forsakes His work that believers continue to stand to the very end.

-Louis Berkhof