

# A Good Soldier For The Lord

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of raising up a faithful generation for God, focusing on the need for undistracted devotion to the Lord, willingness to suffer hardship, and being available for God's use. It highlights the example of Paul's burden for the next generation, the significance of grace and truth through Jesus Christ, and the call to be like a 'donkey' available for the Lord's use despite shortcomings.*

**Scripture:** 2 Timothy 2:2, John 1:17, Psalms 51:6, Acts 5:1, Hebrews 10:29, Hebrews 10:29, Hebrews 12:1, Matthew 21:1

**Topics:** "Faithful Generation", "Availability for God's Use"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of raising up a faithful generation for God, focusing on the need for undistracted devotion to the Lord, willingness to suffer hardship, and being available for God's use. It highlights the example of Paul's burden for the next generation, the significance of grace and truth through Jesus Christ, and the call to be like a 'donkey' available for the Lord's use despite shortcomings.

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## Transcript

Paul had a great burden when he came to the end of his life. He had served the Lord for about 37 years. And he writes in 2 Timothy 2 We already saw verse 21, how we can once again become a golden vessel if we have become earthen vessels.

But in the first verses of that chapter He is writing to Timothy. Timothy must have been about 20-25 years younger to him. It was another generation.

And Paul was burdened that another generation must rise up to be faithful to God. There are many older brothers who have served in the church for many years. The time has come for people who are 20-25 years younger than us, now to do the work.

That was the burden Paul had. And it is to such people that Paul is writing and the Holy Spirit is writing. That you must be golden vessels.

And he tells Timothy, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He is not telling, nowhere does he tell Timothy to seek for the gift of healing or miracles or any such thing. That is what so many people are seeking today and they end up going after money.

Paul told Timothy to run away from all that. But be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. What he wanted Timothy to learn is how to get more and more grace from God.

I believe that is what all of us in CFC need to learn. There was no grace in the world till Jesus Christ came. In the Old Testament they had mercy but no grace.

The Lord revealed himself in mercy to sinners. But there was no grace. The Bible says Moses only brought the law but Jesus brought grace.

I must show you that verse in John chapter 1. Many of you know that. But we have a young generation growing up in our midst who do not know these verses. And I want to say to all of you elder brothers.

When you preach in your church, don't say, oh I already preached that 20 years ago. Or I preached that 10 years ago. There are children who have grown up who never heard you say that 20 years ago.

And 10 years ago they were too small to understand what you were saying. So you have to repeat it. You have to repeat what you said 10 years ago.

For the new generation. For the new generation. And so listen to this verse.

John chapter 1. 17. The law was given through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. There was no grace till Jesus came.

But what about truth? In the Bible, in the New Testament when it speaks about truth, it is speaking about reality. There is a truth in the mind as a truth in the life. Truth in the mind is there in the Old Testament also.

But this truth is truth in your life. Which is what David says in Psalm 51. It is very important to understand that.

In Psalm 51, when David sinned, he was a hypocrite. He is writing hymns on the outside and privately he is sinning with women. He never did that in the first 30 years of his life.

Do you know at what age David sinned with Bathsheba? When he was 52 years old. When he was below 30, he was running around in the caves and all that. He never sinned with any woman.

And he wrote so many wonderful psalms. But when he became rich and he got a lot of honor and everybody respected him. That's the time when he began to sin with women.

He says here, he confessed his sin. He says here, he confessed his sin. He says here in verse 6, Lord, you desire truth in the innermost being.

That is the truth which Jesus brought. Not truth in the mind. Truth in the mind even Adam had.

To understand things in the mind. But truth in the innermost being. Nobody in the Old Testament could have.

That means that my inner life is exactly like my outer life. That is the meaning of truth in the innermost being. There are many believers sitting in CFC churches who don't have truth in their innermost being.

That is because they don't get grace from God. David realized it. Lord, I'm a hypocrite.

I'm saying so many things about God. But in my innermost being, I don't have that light. I don't have that truth in my innermost being.

I'm living a different type of life in my home and a different type of life before people. And that is how it was with all Old Testament people. You see the great prophet Elijah.

In front of people, he could bring fire down from heaven. And then in his private life, he was sitting and saying, Lord, I'm so discouraged. Please take away my life.

I don't want to live. Very next day, you read that in 1 Kings 18 and 19 chapter. One day he brings fire from heaven.

Next day, he's discouraged and saying, Lord, I want to die. The best people in the Old Testament could not have truth in the innermost being. But Jesus came so that we can have truth in the innermost being.

So remember that. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. That if you receive everything that Jesus Christ comes to give you, you receive the grace that the Lord gives you.

Listen to this good news. Your inner life will be exactly like your outer life. It won't be painted.

There are so many nowadays, they make ornaments only painted to look like gold. It's not real gold. You put it in the fire, you discover it is not gold.

Inside is some cheap metal. Outside it is like gold. That's the condition of many believers.

Or sometimes they put laminate on some cheap wood. Ordinary plywood or some cheap wood. And they put some laminate, it looks like teak.

Most Christians I have met are laminated Christians. You take a screwdriver and scratch that laminate, you see what is inside. You take a screwdriver and scratch that laminate, you see what is inside.

And you scratch some believers, irritate them a little bit, you will discover what is inside. It is all on the outside. We must not be like that.

Are you fed up of being like that? Do you want to just appear to be a golden vessel on the outside and mud pot inside? Or do you want to be gold all the way through to the middle? Truth has come through Jesus Christ. Maybe you never understood that verse till today, understand it today. Truth that David did not have.

He said, Lord, you desire truth in the innermost being, not on the outside. I don't have it. Please give it to me.

He could not get it. God said no. My spirit cannot dwell inside human beings.

And until my Holy Spirit dwells inside human beings, they will never have truth in their innermost being. Why can't God's Spirit dwell in human beings? their sin is not cleansed. Their sin could be cleansed only after Jesus died on the cross and rose up and went to heaven.

That is why he told his disciples, when I go to heaven, I will send the Holy Spirit. When I stand before my father, all your sins can be cleansed. Then even the least of you believers will experience what even John the Baptist could not experience.

What is that? It is not head knowledge. Those people had a lot of head knowledge. But truth in the innermost being.

Do you long for that? If you really long for it, God will meet with you. Many born again believers are happy with living a double life. One life in front of others, pretending to be very spiritual, and privately at home with their wife, another life.

This was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. Never forget this. In the New Testament, the first sin that God judged was not murder, it was not adultery, it was not love of money.

Do you know what it was? It was not having truth in the innermost being. Ananias and Sapphira pretended that they are giving everything to God. You read in Acts chapter 5, and Peter stopped him.

Ananias, why are you telling a lie to the Holy Spirit? Why are you pretending to be, coming to the church and pretending to be spiritual? Do you know what happened to him? He died. Three hours later, his wife comes in, and Peter gives her a chance to speak the truth. I don't have time to show it to you, you read it in Acts 5. Peter gave her a chance to speak the truth.

She could have said, No Peter, we sold it for more, but we brought only a little bit of the money. She would have lived. She would have lived because she had truth in the innermost being.

But she said, yes, that is how much we sold it for. Peter said, you lie. She died.

Somebody asked me, Brother Zach, why doesn't God punish people like that today? I said, there will be hardly anybody left in the church if God punishes people like that today. Only 2-3 people will be left. Why can't we all have truth in the innermost being? When I was born again, in the beginning, I really had truth in the innermost being.

But over a period of time, I began to backslide. The more I was serving God, I became proud that I was serving God. This is all in the years before CFC started.

When I was 29-30 years old, 4-5 years before CFC started. I was preaching, but it was not true in my inner life. I was tired of my life.

I said, Lord, I don't want to continue like this. I know you desire truth in the innermost being and I don't have it. But I want it.

But I did not know how to get it. Finally, I got so fed up, I said, best is I stop preaching. This is 1974, nearly 40 years ago.

I was preaching in a Baptist church those days. The Lord asked me a question. Okay, you have been fooling all these people about preaching holiness, but it is not there in your life.

Now this Sunday, are you willing to stand up there and tell the whole church, I am a hypocrite. I remember that date very well. January 12, 1975.

The Lord said, stand up in the church where you are preaching and tell everybody you are a hypocrite. You are preaching what you are not practicing. I said, yes Lord, I will do that today.

That day, God met with me. Same day, He filled me with the Holy Spirit and turned my life around. Six months after that, CFC was born in my house.

Do you know how the first church was born? On the day of Pentecost, through the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Do you know how CFC was born nearly 38 years ago? Through the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It was not born through any teaching.

It was born when we were filled with the Holy Spirit and the truth became real in the inner part. My great fear is that now so many of us know so much about truth in our head. We can explain victory over sin.

We can explain new covenant. We can even explain humility, brokenness, everything. But you may not have truth in the innermost being.

That is the good news that you don't have to look like a painted gold vessel like a gold vessel through and through. You scratch, scratch, scratch it is still gold. You go right to the other side it is gold all the way through.

No, all of you who are sitting here I want to ask you a question. Is that true in your life today? If people here can look into your private life the way you speak to your husband or wife at home the type of things you are thinking about when you are on your own what you are thinking about when you lie down in your bed at night when you are at the computer what type of things you are looking at and you young people the way you speak to your parents and you parents what you are teaching your children whether you are disciplining them or not Can you let everybody here look into your private life or are there things in your private life your home life that you don't want other people to see but you are still giving people an impression that you are very holy you are like Ananias you are like Sapphira you need to pray like David Lord you desire truth in the innermost being and here is the good news Moses could only bring the law and made the Jewish people very clever but Jesus Christ brought grace and truth in the innermost being and he brought it through the Holy Spirit that is why the Holy Spirit is called the spirit of grace in Hebrews 10.29 and he is called the spirit of truth in John 15 and John 16 who can bring that grace and truth into your life the Holy Spirit that is what made those apostles different that is what made them realize that Jesus is living I believe the greatest need in all of humanity in all of our CFC believers is to be filled with the Holy Spirit the spirit of grace the spirit of truth we are not to live just on mercy mercy, mercy, mercy that is old covenant it is good mercy means forgiveness forgiveness, forgiveness, forgiveness grace is more than that grace can help us to be overcomers and give us truth in the innermost being so Paul tells Timothy he is thinking of the next generation so I have also started thinking a lot about the next generation in CFC I am not saying I am going to die very soon I pray that I will live till Jesus comes that is a good prayer for all of us to pray I can't tell God to do it but I say Lord that is what I want you know one thing about prayer I will tell you something be like a little child real small child what all things a 2 year old child will ask his father dad I want a real elephant no toy elephant, real elephant no toy plane and all give me a real aeroplane what all we can ask God if I am like a child but you can ask God for anything if you will say this as the last sentence but not as I will but as thou will if you can say that as the last sentence you can ask God for elephants and aeroplanes and anything I come to God like a little child I ask for some fantastic things Lord I want to live till Jesus comes but not as I will all of you must pray like that why not live till Jesus comes so many such a great need for believers on this earth but if God says no you are not going to live till Jesus comes no I am going to take you away then praise the Lord I accept it where did I learn this from from Paul I will tell you how Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4 we must read the Bible carefully see what Paul says about himself now read the Bible slowly and carefully and I want you to read 1 Thessalonians 5 sorry chapter 4 verse 16 and 17 just read it slowly and what do you learn from that the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God and all those who have died in Christ will rise first and Paul says we who are alive we will be caught up so Paul says you ask Paul

Paul are you going to be alive when Jesus comes you ask Paul are you going to be the dead in Christ or those who are alive he says that was his faith when he wrote scripture do you believe that was inspired by the Holy Spirit inspired by the Holy Spirit Paul says I am one of those who is going to be alive when Jesus comes I am one of those who is going to be alive inspired by the Holy Spirit that's the faith he had but about 12 years later after 12 years he writes in 2 Timothy 4 when Paul wrote that he was about 55 now then he wrote it 67 when he is 67 years old he writes 2 Timothy 4 there he says 1 Timothy 4 verse 6 the last part the time of my departure has come 1 Timothy 4 verse 6 oh sorry I am sorry 2 Timothy 4 verse 6 2 Timothy 4 verse 6 the time of my departure has come the Lord told him you are not going to live till I come yeah when the Lord says that then we can say okay Lord then I am ready to go so we must always have that hope but but while we are alive Paul had this burden to train another generation for God that is very important in all of our churches and some elders don't like to train another generation for God they want to sit there like Maharajas forever but I tell them how do you train your children do you train your children to live in your house forever do you keep them in your house 40-50 years old you don't let them get married sit in your house you don't do that as soon as they come somewhere 25-30 years old we must get them married and send them out to the God of your family and we want them to start another generation we must have the same burden in the church that we must raise up another generation of people who love the Lord who are faithful to the Lord who will run away from youthful lust who will run away from immorality who will run away from the love of money who will run away from all idolatry and who will pursue righteousness and faith and love and peace and with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart that was Paul's burden and so he tells in 2 Timothy 2 verse 2 the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses you must entrust it to other faithful people who will be able to teach others also whatever you heard from me Timothy please preach the same thing to other people that's what he is telling him people ask me this question brother Zach what we hear you preach in the sermon can we preach that also yes 2 Timothy 2 verse 2 same thing you heard from me please preach to other people only thing don't do it for your honor do it so that another generation will rise up to be faithful to the Lord I am not preaching for my honor I have never preached for honor or money I preach so that people will live a godly life and if that is what your burden is you can preach everything that I preach exactly like I preach in fact I tell people please don't bore people with useless sermons if you don't have a word one day please listen to some message of mine and at least preach that there is nothing wrong in that if you are seeking the glory of God what you heard from me the same thing preach to others to faithful people and those people must go and preach to other people that is how Paul taught Timothy to do it see chapter 3 again he says the same thing chapter 3 verse 10 he says you followed my teaching you followed my conduct my purpose my faith patience love perseverance and you have seen all that and verse 14 you must in your life continue in the things that you learned and here is a very important phrase that I keep on emphasizing nowadays verse 14 the last part remember from whom you learned these truths from whom did you learn these truths was it from a hypocrite or was it from someone who was living what he preached I hear sometimes even some CFC believers saying oh brother that television evangelist who preaches on Christian television that Tamil preacher that English preacher what good message they preach what nice thoughts they give from the word of God I say okay tell me do you know anything about how he lives do you know have you ever met him do you know how he lives in his private life do you know anything about his attitude to money do you know how many crores of rupees these American men and women preachers collect from poor people there they build big houses for themselves and buy airplanes and cars and all for themselves they don't only buy cars they buy airplanes for themselves this is the man you are listening to this is the woman you are listening to you are saying oh what a nice message remember from whom you learnt them remember this knowing from whom you learnt them do you know anything about how that

preacher's children are living his children may be divorced they may be back slidden living for the world he himself may be divorced and remarried but you don't know all that you say oh what a wonderful message do you know what type of church he has built you go there you will find he has not even built one church he is just a preacher remember this phrase knowing from whom you have learnt I will tell you honestly I would rather learn things from mother Teresa than from all these American preachers she at least lived a good life even if her doctrines were a few wrong but at least I know how she cared for the poor she did not take money from people to buy airplanes for herself remember this phrase knowing from whom you learnt it don't just be taken up with some people who preach great messages there are some famous preachers wandering around Tamil Nadu also preach to big crowds and you know that in those big crowds of thousands of people there are a lot of unconverted people hundreds and hundreds of unconverted people how can they take a bucket and collect money from them you don't think there is anything wrong in that see what the bible says how the early Christians served the lord see the third episode of john third episode of john the early Christians preachers see their example verse 7 they went out for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ taking nothing from the unbelievers that is how those people served the lord they said we will not take one rupee from any unbeliever if i starve i will starve but i will not take money from an unbeliever but today all these preachers television preachers public preachers they all collect money from unbelievers you have learnt truth from them you have learnt truth from people who disobey the word of god know from whom you have learnt truth the truth may be good supposing a man full of leprosy or very infectious diseases in his hand picks up a beautiful apple from a basket and gives it to you will you take it and eat it why not it is a good apple say nice apple i will say no there is infection in that man's hand i am not worried whether the apple is good you just need to touch it for the germs to go to the apple we are very careful when it comes to food but many christians are careless when it comes to receiving god's word remember this phrase from whom did you learn it that is what paul is telling timothy don't just see whether those other preachers are great preachers those days also there were people like that they were saying we can preach better than paul yeah paul says they may be better preachers than me know from whom you learnt these truths lets turn back to 2nd timothy chapter 2 he says if you want to raise up another generation for god not only you must know from whom you learnt these truths 2nd timothy 2 verse 3 you must be just like me to suffer hardship as a good soldier of jesus christ you know paul they called him a heretic and a false teacher you know that even towards the end of his life they said this fellow is a cult leader that was part of the hardship paul suffered Acts of the apostles chapter 24 paul is giving his testimony he is standing before a king called felix and he is giving his testimony verse 14 he says i admit that according to the way which other people call a cult i am serving god Acts of the apostles 24 14 according to which other people call a cult i am serving god others call him a false teacher do you know that they called paul a false teacher do you know that they called when paul preached for 30 years at the age of 60 they called him a heretic He says, let them call me a false teacher, but I'll tell you what my false teaching is. Number one, verse 14, I believe everything written in the law and the prophets.

That is another word for the Bible of those days. Those 39 books was called the Bible. They called me a false teacher, I'll tell you what it is.

I believe everything written in the Bible. Number two, I believe verse 15, there will be a resurrection of the righteous people and of the wicked people. And because I want to be in the resurrection of the righteous, verse 16, I keep my conscience free from any disturbance.

I keep my conscience pure before God and before men. That means if I hurt somebody, I immediately ask forgiveness. If my conscience convicts me that I have sinned against God, I immediately ask God

forgiveness.

That is what I practice and that is what I teach others. I believe the whole Bible. If your conscience convicts you, ask forgiveness immediately and ask forgiveness from others.

Then you will be ready for the resurrection. If you want to call that a false teaching, you can call it what you like. Don't worry about what people say.

If you are willing, chapter 2 verse 2 Timothy 2 verse 3, to suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Supposing you join the army and you tell the army, see I don't want any bullets to hit me anywhere, but I want to be in the army. I don't want any bullets to hit me in the war.

Then they will say you should join the circus, not army. There nobody will fire bullets at you. Army means so many people will be getting bullets all over, you have to run and hide.

Army means so many people will be getting bullets all over, you have to run and hide. So if you want to be a Christian and you say no I don't like anybody speaking bad about me. Brother go and join the circus, be a clown in the circus, they will always speak nicely about you.

Don't seek to be a disciple of Jesus. They call the master prince of devils, what will they call you? We want to raise another generation that they are soldiers, not people going on a picnic. I want to be a soldier of Jesus Christ till the end of my life.

A fearless soldier. Not afraid of what people say about me. Not afraid of the devil.

Not afraid of anything. I want to be a soldier. You know the type of people we must raise in our churches? Soldiers, men and women.

Not to fight with people. We fight with the devil. A soldier who is not afraid of hardship.

Who is not, verse 4, who is not always getting entangled in the worldly things. We are not going to raise a good generation for the future if we don't teach them to use the world but don't bury yourself in the world. You know the bible says we must use the things in the world but not get so occupied with it that our whole mind is in that.

When I was a very young Christian, 22 years old, younger than many of you, the Lord gave me a verse which I have never forgotten. I want to share it with you. 1 Corinthians 7 and verse 30 and 31.

If you weep, you should be like a person who is not weeping. There are certain things that happen in the world, we have to weep. But we can't spend all our time weeping.

We have got to serve the Lord. If you rejoice in something, you got a promotion or you made some money, fine. If you don't like that, don't spend all your time rejoicing in that.

Okay, you bought something, verse 30. Don't get so occupied with that house you bought or that scooter you bought. And verse 31, you have to live in the world, you have to use it but don't become so occupied with that.

And this one phrase, verse 35, last part. I want you to have an undistracted devotion to the Lord. When I was 22 years old, I wrote it in the front of my Bible.

You must have an undistracted devotion to Jesus Christ. Nothing must drive you away from that. Those days I was working in the Navy.

But in the midst of my work, I said, Lord I am devoted to you first of all. I find so many young people today who don't have that undistracted devotion to the Lord. So many of their worldly friends make them think about movies and cinemas and all types of other things.

And more stylish dresses and painting their faces and all that. What is most important when Jesus comes? Undistracted devotion to Christ. You can't become a servant of God in one year or two years.

It takes many years for God to make you a faithful servant. So start when you are young. And take seriously all the things you hear in the church.

And remember this phrase. Undistracted devotion to the Lord. It means in the midst of all your work, your eyes are fixed on Jesus.

I heard a story of a little 10 year old boy who was playing a violin in a big auditorium. And he played it so beautifully. And all the people sat and clapped when he finished one hour of this playing.

The newspaper reporters came and asked him, how you played so well? He said, my violin teacher was sitting over there in the balcony. And I was not looking at the people here. As I was playing, I was looking at him.

Was he nodding his head? Or was he saying, no not like that? For one hour, I was only looking at him. I learned something from that story. I said, Lord, that's how I want to live my life.

I have a teacher in heaven. Everything good I have learned in my life, I have learned only from him. There are thousands of people watching my life.

I'm not interested in what they are thinking of me. I see my master. When I preach, I see Jesus listening to me.

When I live my life at home, I'm conscious that Jesus is watching me. And I want to please him. My dear young people, older people, it will take time for you to remember that always.

But work towards it. Lord, this is the meaning of let us run the race looking unto Jesus. Hebrews 12 verse 1 and 2 Let us run the race looking unto Jesus.

That we will be always looking at him. That is how we must run this race. That is how we must endure until the end.

Remember from whom you have learned these truths. Be a good soldier. Be willing to suffer hardship.

The Lord needs you. I'll say one more thing in closing. Towards the end of Jesus' life, he wanted to gather his children together.

He wanted to ride into Jerusalem before the crucifixion. And he had decided that he is going to ride on a donkey. So he told his disciples, Go into that town.

And then you will find a donkey tied there. Go and bring him to me. Matthew 21 There is a great lesson here.

Jesus told his disciples, Verse 2 Go to the village opposite. You will find a donkey there with a colt. Untie the donkey and bring him to me.

You will find a donkey tied there with a colt. Untie the donkey and bring him to me. Do you know that in those days, kings used to ride on horses.

Riding on a donkey is a shameful thing. But Jesus came as a servant. So he got a donkey.

Listen to this. This is the word that spoke to me. If anyone asks you what you are doing, Say, the Lord has need of this donkey.

That really blessed my heart. I said, Lord, you needed a donkey? I volunteer. I am ready.

I am available. I may be as stupid as a donkey. But you have need of me.

You can ride on me. And what honor that donkey got. It says, when he came on that donkey, people were throwing their coats and all on the ground.

Verse 7 That stupid donkey must have thought, what a big person I am. People are throwing their coats in front of me. They were not honoring the donkey.

They were honoring Jesus. Because as soon as Jesus got off that donkey, Because as soon as Jesus got off that donkey, No one was honoring that donkey. No one cared for that donkey.

Remember that. If people give you some honor, You are still a donkey. Jesus is being honored.

But, the Lord needs you. The Lord has need of you. That really blessed my heart.

When I was a young Christian, I read that. I said, Lord, you needed a donkey. Those days, I didn't know much of the Bible.

I was so encouraged, the Lord needs even a donkey. I say that for the encouragement of some of you who say, I am not so spiritual. I am sure you got little more intelligence than me.

I am sure you got more intelligence than a donkey. The Lord needs you. He needs every one of you.

Children, older people, Those who have made a mess of your life, The Lord will forgive you. He will forgive your past completely. He says, I will not remember your past life.

I need you. I don't need all the clever people. I am not looking for lions and tigers.

Donkeys. Say, Lord, I am available. Let's pray.

Let's bow our heads before God. Will you say to the Lord? Lord, I am ready. I have made many mistakes in my life.

Please forgive me. Please blot it all out in the blood of Jesus. I am available to you.

Please take me. Even though I am very foolish. Please take me and do something with my life.

And I say to you, the Lord says, I will take you. I will use you. I need you.

Say, thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.

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