*I lift up my eyes to the hills, from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; He will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.*

Psalm 121

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have known sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound teaching, but, having their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, be sober in everything, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.* 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

*A minister observed little Johnny to pray very fervently; but saying from time to time: "Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo." So, the preacher approached the boy after he apparently finished his prayer and said: "Johnny, I was very pleased to see you praying so sincerely, but, why did you keep saying ’Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo?"*

*Little Johnny replied: "Well, pastor, I just took a geography test in school, and I have been praying for the Lord to make Tokyo the Capital of France."*

Never Give Up!

1. Apparently, it was Winston Churchill once said: *“Never, never, never give up.”* At least according to some of the posters I’ve seen on the highways’ billboards, and on some posters I encountered on the internet with the so called *“notable quotations*.” Churchill, however, was definitely not the one who originated that phrase, he only used it in one of his speeches to prove a point he was making. The Scriptures quote the same line many times and are filled with the same form of recommendation to many people in the Bible. While writing to a young Timothy, Apostle Paul uses similar phrase to encourage him to *“be persistent”* in his faith.Similarly did the Apostle John while writing his First Epistle, although he used another word to underline the same sentiment, when he called upon Jesus’ followers to be the *“overcomers.”* (1 John 5:4) The word *“persist”* carries a very powerful meaning. As a verb, in the English language dictionary it is defined as: *“to hold firmly and steadfastly to a purpose, state, or undertaking, despite the obstacles, warnings, or setbacks.”* As an adjective, the same dictionary defines *“persistence”* as: *“refusing to give up or to let go.”* To *“persist”* therefore, indicates that the person is able to act and live fully, despite encountering the problems that may appear in life. It also implies a full acknowledgement of the existence of the problem and one’s attempts to successfully deal with it. Life itself proves to all of us that as humans we will always confront problems and those who try to imply that as Christians we are free from them, simply refuse to accept the truth and the reality of life.

2. In todays’ reading the Apostle Paul reveals where the focus of a Christian life and ministry should be. As people we may hold to the notion that *“successful”* ministry will fill the church we belong to, to a full capacity and maybe even to overflow. Does the *“mega church,”* however, defines a *“successful ministry?”* I doubt this, because the many so-called: *“mega churches,*” for various reasons, eventually ceased to exist. I also heard of the leaders of the *“mega churches”* who were imprisoned because of their sinful acts. So, were these *“churches”* indeed *“successful?”* When Paul writes about being successful, he defines it as being inspired by the Holy Spirit and being *“faithful”* to Jesus Christ. Paul encourages the readers of his letter to remain faithful to the Word of God because the Word of God is not only the flawless and inerrant, but most of all is inspired by God, even if written by the human hands. The Scriptures also are not just a bunch of rules and regulations we can pick and choose from as we want or desire, but it is God’s will, given to us to help us to address the life’s problems as we encounter them, and at the same time to spiritually build and strengthen us up.

3. What is important, however, is to realize that the ways we deal with problems and the ways we solve them often differ and may not be the same for everyone or for all. In that regard the word *“persistence*” indicates the part of finding a solution, but to *“persist”* does not indicate in any way that we are to try to solve the issue at hand in the same way as we already had tried before but it didn’t work. If we keep trying to do the same over and over again, it would only prove our *“insanity”* rather than the ability to truly find a solution. We must *“overcome”* the problems by seeking what *“would*” work and what *“would not*” work. As the Church of Jesus Christ we know that we are the part of the world, but we are not to be *“of this world.”* By *“overcoming”* the world, we are not however, being told to withdraw ourselves from the world in an attempt of solve the problems we encounter, but we are to deal with the problem in a different manner that the world does. By *“persisting”* on finding the solution, we acknowledge the existence of the problem, and we are not, neither should we, run away from it. Consequently, we are not to separate ourselves from the world by enclosing ourselves in the *“ghettos”* or closed *“communities,”* but we are to face the reality, seeking solutions according to Christ’s teaching. Our world is filled with sin, and sinfulness of the society we live in, and we also know that we will always be confronted by sin. Embracing the visions and the solutions just as our society at large does, will sooner or later lead to embracing the sinfulness we witness in the affairs of the world every day. By being *“persistent”* in embracing the teachings of Jesus we will not abandon the Judeo-Christian values which our faith teach us. We cannot escape the fact that we are surrounded by the problems in life, and that the temptations the world offers are always tragic in final consequence, but because we rely on Jesus, we are able to *“overcome”* them.

4. To *“persist,”* in the way the Apostle Paul indicates, means that as Christians we will not be defeated by the devil, and sin will not destroy or conquer us, because through the guidance of the Holy Spirit we will be fully aware of what that sin is and what it offers, so, we will not embrace it. With Christ we are able to conquer all the obstacles the life throws at us. The Scriptures promises this to us in the words of Jesus who said: *“I am with you always, until the end of the age.”* As the Church of Jesus Christ then, we must focus on His promises and on His teachings, and this is important, especially today, when many Christians have forgotten to focus on Jesus and instead focus rather on the *“human enlightenment’s”* interpretation of Jesus’ message. Trying to be good in the world of darkness is not easy and without God’s help is actually impossible. Yet, we must remember that Jesus promised to be with us, even if the devil whispers to our *“other”* ear: *“Did God really said so?”* Just as he did it to Evein the Garden of Eden, as shown in Genesis 3:1 where it is written: *“Did God really say: ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”* The Bible, on many occasions shows us God always keeping His promises. We clearly see this in His promise to Abram in lead him and his descendants to the *“Promised Land”* and the promise of salvation to the world through the descendants of Abraham. We see this in God leading the Hebrews out of the bondage of the slavery in Egypt, in preserving Daniel in the lion’s den, in offering back hope to Apostle Peter, in bringing Jesus back to life and in sending us the Holy Spirit.

5. The human history only adds to this biblical truth. Those who did *“persist”* and accepted God’s promise, no matter how difficult was the task they have faced, saw their future becoming triumphal and victorious. In 1970’s I became familiar with a story of a young girl, Joni Eareckson, who broke her spine and was left a quadriplegic. Many years later, in the book she wrote, Joni recalled how devastating it was and how much she despaired at first when the accident left her immobilized. It was because of her *“persistence”* in her faith God has given her strength to *“overcame”* a despair and offered her victory in life. She heard Jesus’ promise, she accepted it, and overcoming her disability, she became an artist, a painter, an author of many inspirational books, a motivational speaker, and a great champion for the people with disabilities, well known all over the world. On July 3, 2025, she wrote on her Facebook: *“Friends, Ken Tada and I are celebrating another year of God’s faithfulness in our marriage - 43 years to be exact! And every year, I feel compelled to share it with you… not because it’s about us, but because it’s about God’s grace!”* All this was possible, because she *“kept”* her faith and while never giving up, persisted on keeping her relationship with Jesus.

6. This is exactly what Paul writes to Timothy about and what he also tells us. Our faith is not just *“any faith,”* for after all, there are many people who do not accept Jesus Christ but also keep their faith. No, our faith is very unique and does not rely on some dead and a long gone *“deity,”* but our faith places us in the hands of the One and Only *“Risen Savior,”* Jesus Christ. It is not any faith, but faith in Jesus Christ that causes us to believe in Him. Today, we hear a lot about cooperation with the people of different religions to achieve the so called *“justice,”* according to the calls from the proponents of the *“social gospel,”* and this might be true in regards to that ideology, but Paul is plain. The only one and true faith is faith in Jesus Christ as our Only One Lord and Savior, the One who is the only *“Way.”* The reality dictates that Mohammed is dead, Budda s dead, all other *“world deities”* worshipped by various cultures are dead, but Jesus Christ is the only risen and alive. I may respect other people’s views and what they believe, but I also know that I am saved only because of my Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for me on the cross of Calvary.

7. Our faith allows us to see God and to be in His presence always and everywhere. It is possible only because He is our *“Living Savior”* and that is what our faith provides us with and what we know. It is our faith that assures us that God has a plan for all of us and that this plan includes the final victory over the forces of evil. It is our faith that allows God to work in and through us so, we may be able to withstand the attacks of Satan who never sleeps and never stops working on undermining God. Only because of our faith in Jesus Christ and because of His presence in our lives, we never, never give up, even when we experience some moments of weakness. Weakness is a natural occurrence, and weakness is not something we may avoid, no matter how *“strong”* we may feel we are. We will however *“overcome”* our *“moments of weakness”* when in faith and with the help of the ever present Jesus Christ, we will *“persist”* on following and focusing on Him. This however is possible only when, and because, we have faith and we implicitly trust Him who is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

8. What God assures us of, and the Scriptures teach, is that the world as we know today will cease to exist. Satan will eventually be finally defeated, and the sin no longer temp us. The Scriptures also assure us that because we know Jesus and His Word, as Christ’s followers, we are able to overcome all of the problems life may throw at us. We may withstand all of the difficulties, all of the disappointments and all of the distresses we encounter in life, simply because we are the followers of Jesus, the ones who *“persisted*” and remained *“faithful,”* truly relying on Him and on His Word. Only because we fully embraced Jesus we are able to achieve the final victory over whatever obstacles in life we may face. We have the promise of God’s presence as well as His promise to fight the battle with the devil on our behalf, so we may achieve the final victory. Our faith assures us of this, and it is the same faith that allows us to accept Him as our Savior, permitting Him to interfere in our life. Because of our acceptance of Jesus as our Savior and our Lord, by doing so, through this faith, we live in God’s presence, with God’s power and within the framework of God’s plan of salvation.