



"Experience shows that if you lack a coherent set of beliefs and principles, you will flounder."
—Margaret Thatcher

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Entrance Exam

The popular belief is "Believe on the Lord [Jesus Christ](#), and you will be saved" ([Acts 16:31](#)). While this is true enough in its own right, it leaves out a great deal of biblical instruction about what [God](#) wants us to do with our lives between [baptism](#) and our glorious entrance into His Kingdom. Other just-as-true scriptures tell us that we have to meet His expectations, His standards, which are high and rigorous. And rightfully so, as the rewards are stunning! Jesus tells us in [Matthew 13:43](#), "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (see [Romans 8:17](#)).

Only a relative few can meet His standards because they are complex, extensive, and demanding. This fact is one reason "many are called, but few are chosen" ([Matthew 22:14](#)). For God's called, they are easy to understand but difficult in terms of execution, even with the help of His Spirit in us. For instance, note the instruction of the apostle Peter:

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your [faith](#) virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge [self-control](#), to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness

brotherly [kindness](#), and to brotherly kindness [love](#). . . . Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble. ([II Peter 1:5-7](#), 10; see [Galatians 5:22-23](#))

That is a significant challenge!

So, it is good to review these things on occasion, to examine ourselves, to determine whether we are still standing tall, albeit humbly, before God, continuing to grow in His righteousness. We will do this by noting the passages in which God tells us what kind of person He will—or will not—allow to enter His Kingdom. They will make up a kind of entrance exam against which we can evaluate ourselves.

To Nicodemus, Jesus says, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the [kingdom of God](#)" ([John 3:5](#)). Belief, [repentance](#), baptism, and receipt of the Holy Spirit are requirements for salvation. With God's special calling and the gift of His Spirit, He sets us apart to come to know His way and plan, and eventually, to undergo complete regeneration at His coming (see [Titus 3:5](#); [Matthew 19:28](#)). All along the way, we must put on the New Man, the character of our Lord (see [Ephesians 4:17-24](#); [Colossians 3:10-17](#)).

Further, Jesus teaches in [Luke 6:20](#): "Blessed are you poor: for yours is the kingdom of God." If His statement refers to those who are financially needy, it would mean that all the poor of [the world](#) would receive a free pass into God's Kingdom! However, this is not the case. He is speaking directly to His disciples, then and now.

[Matthew 5:3](#) contains a parallel saying: "Blessed are the [poor in spirit](#), for theirs is the [kingdom of heaven](#)." When used this way, "poor" means that, in comparison to God, we reckon that we are spiritually impoverished, without resources. We are weak, powerless, and spiritually bankrupt. Being poor in spirit is the attitudinal launching point for all the characteristics of love and godliness that please the Father. When we are poor in spirit, we recognize our spiritual need, which causes us to draw close to Him.

Jesus also tells His disciples in [Mark 10:15](#): "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." Little children are teachable and eager to learn, mild, humble, and free from obstinance and preconceived notions. Christ is looking for the ability to accept freely and eagerly what God teaches. [Acts 17:11](#) judges the Bereans to be noble because they searched the Scriptures daily, not to prove Paul's teachings were wrong, but to determine the truth of what they had heard and if they themselves were aligned with them.

Christ lays out another point of examination in [Luke 9:62](#): "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." He is not dispensing farming advice. However, farming is hard work, too difficult for some, and so they find an easier, more enjoyable way of earning a living. Similarly, some whom God has called find the difficulties of the Christian life—one of self-sacrifice—too challenging, and they turn back and lose their reward.

The prime illustration of this turning back is Lot's wife. She looked back, probably longingly, at a way of life in Sodom that God was about to destroy, rebelling against the explicit instruction in [Genesis 19:17](#) not to look back. This has a firm application for us today, those living at the end of the age. As He said about Sodom, God has promised to destroy the corrupt world we live in. We must keep our eyes on our magnificent goal, move toward it, and endure.

However, our path often brings us into tribulation, that is, circumstances that seem to want to squeeze, crush, and break us. Standing up to one such experience is not easy, yet the Bible says that we can expect *many* tribulations! Luke writes in [Acts 14:22](#) that Paul and [Barnabas](#) told new converts, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

This warning was among the last things Jesus also told His disciples before His arrest: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me [you may have peace](#). In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" ([John 16:33](#)). These difficult circumstances "perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle" us ([I Peter 5:10](#)). The same apostle writes that God called us to this sometimes harsh life "because Christ also suffered

for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow in His steps" ([I Peter 2:21](#)). He, too, was made "perfect through sufferings" ([Hebrews 2:10](#)). If we wish to be like Him, we have to overcome as He did.

[Patience](#) or endurance goes hand in glove with tribulation and is just as necessary for entrance to the Kingdom. Paul writes in [II Thessalonians 1:4-5](#):

[W]e ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer . . .

The writer of Hebrews concurs: "For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise" ([Hebrews 10:36](#)).

Our everyday battle is against corruption of all sorts. Paul writes in [Ephesians 5:5](#): "For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (many other disqualifying sinful practices are listed in [I Corinthians 6:9-10](#); [15:50](#); [Galatians 5:19-21](#); [Revelation 21:7-8](#); [22:14-15](#)). He exhorts us in [I Timothy 6:11](#), "But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness."

The apostle James puts our purpose in a nutshell: "Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" ([James 2:5](#)). We are selected and approved by God specifically to develop our faith in Him and love for Him, and we do this by striving to meet the high standards God sets throughout His Word for those who will enter His Kingdom.

Trying to meet all of God's standards—in essence, to be like Christ—is neither simple nor easy. It can result in an arduous, painful life, as His did. Thank God for His grace and help in time of need ([Hebrews 4:16](#))! Yet, if we make a sincere effort to overcome and grow, we have this sure promise:

". . . if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" ([II Peter 1:11](#)).

- Mike Fuhrer

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Assurance \(Part One\): Self Examination](#)

by Martin G. Collins

The foundational way of life as outlined by Jesus Christ is not much followed in mainstream Christianity. We are only Christ's if we have God's Holy Spirit living in us, and we live according to the Spirit's prompts. There is no such thing as a secular Christian. Salvation is an ongoing work of God, obligating us to walk in the Spirit and not according to the flesh. If we walk in the Spirit, we will be not captivated by the lusts of the flesh. From the onset of our calling, we have been charged to bear spiritual fruit, being metaphorical branches of the vine, which is Christ. If we produce the fruit of the Spirit, we will maintain a sound mind, enabling us to acquire a new godly nature and character. We must mortify our past nature, realizing that all sin is abject failure and a fast track to death. As God's called-out ones, we need to reckon ourselves dead to the pulls of carnality. Sadly, we are guilty of sinning against God's Law every day, but if we willfully sin, rejecting the prompts of His Holy Spirit, we are, in effect, committing the unpardonable sin on an installment plan. Only those led by God's Holy Spirit are truly children of God. If we are not led by God's Spirit, we are pathetic slaves of sin. If we abide in Christ's words, we are His disciples. If we grow in the Spirit, allowing our character to be transformed from the inside out, we will be siblings and heirs of Christ, becoming full members of the family of God.

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[The Berean Example](#)

by Staff

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