

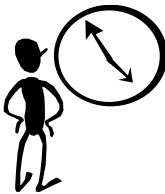
## THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

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### Time of Assembly



#### **Sunday:**

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

#### **Wednesday:**

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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## The Christian's Attributes

By Jefferson David Tant

*"Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins" (II Peter 1:5-9).*

Every profession or career that a man or woman may undertake will have certain attitudes, characteristics, or behavior patterns that will identify what is being done, whether one is a doctor, carpenter, nurse, mother, preacher, janitor, or whatever.

Consider Paul's admonition to Corinth: *"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win"* (I Corinthians 9:24).

This most certainly has an application to those who profess to be Christians, for God has outlined various characteristics that would identify one who aspires to be a Christian, a follower of Christ. So let us briefly consider those matters that Peter mentioned in his letter that will help us to *"run in such a way that you may win."*

### Diligence

What is diligence? Oxford Dictionary says it is *"careful and persistent work or effort."* I believe the words *"diligent"* or *"diligence"* are used some 20 times in the Old and New Testaments.

Can you imagine the disaster that would come if a sur-

geon operating on a patient didn't exercise diligence? The life of his patient depends on the careful work of the doctor. Or what if we took our car to the mechanic for a motor overhaul? We surely would want him to exercise diligence in his work, lest we have an engine failure while driving down the highway at 70 mph.

Now, is there anything more important than our body or our car? Yes — our soul and its eternity. This leaves no room for haphazard or so-so lives as Christians. There are too many who consider themselves to be Christians but display no zeal. Oh, they are not bad people or blatant sinners, they just don't have any zeal. They just more or less "coast along."

Paul wrote to Titus and mentioned, "*Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*" (Titus 2:13-14)

Christians are in a race, and there is only one way to earnestly compete in a race. We must be "zealous." As mentioned earlier, we are told to "*Run in such a way that you may win*" (I Corinthians 9:24). You probably never saw a race where a runner just sauntered along, waving at his grandmother in the stands. No, he was focused on the goal. And that should characterize Christians— focused on the goal.

## Faith

Faith is defined as "moral conviction (of religious truth)." True faith is based on evidence, not on wishful thinking or believing fairy tales. Of the many religions in the world, there is only one that can be proven to rest on absolute proven facts.

For example, there are over 300 prophecies about Jesus Christ, with some written centuries before he was born. How could that be unless God was the author of this? There is no other so-called "god" or religious leader that can equal that in any way, shape, or form. And there are many other prophecies about nations and individuals. Not one has failed.

Where is even one prophecy about Muhammad, Buddha, Zoroaster, the Hindu gods, or whoever else men claim as gods? Where is the evidence that they were messengers of God? There is none.

We remember what happened on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 about the year 33 A.D. Three thousand souls were baptized into Christ after listening to the teaching of the apostles, and the evidence presented convinced them that they had crucified the Son of God, and not only that but that He had been raised from the dead! How do you convince thousands of people about this? You present evidence! The evidence was so strong that 3,000 souls were baptized into Christ that day, and soon the number became 5,000.

True faith is based on solid evidence, not wishful thinking. Time after time the fulfilment of prophecy is mentioned in the New Testament. One example is when Jesus sent the disciples to obtain an animal for him to ride on when he entered Jerusalem.

*“This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ‘Say to the daughter of Zion, “Behold your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden”’” (Matthew 21:4-5).*

Now note what the prophet wrote: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9).* This was written more than 500 years before Christ was born. The Bible is full of such evidence. No other religious book has this evidence— not the Quran, the Upanishads, the Rig Veda, or any other. True faith is based on solid evidence, not fairy tales, "think-so"s, or just good thoughts.

## Moral Excellence

What is “moral excellence?” This is from the Greek word “*arete*,” and carries the meaning of “virtue.” Two commentaries I have cited are noted as they explain moral excellence or virtue.

“Courage or fortitude, to enable you to profess the faith before men, in these times of persecution” [Adam Clarke].

“Courage, manhood, or bravery to live out your profession of faith in the midst of your adversaries” [Brethren New Testament Commentary].

We know that early Christians were often persecuted, imprisoned, and sometimes put to death. But they persevered, knowing that what was waiting for them made whatever persecution they were enduring to be nothing compared to the reward that was waiting for them.

At times there may be goals or rewards for which we strive, and the journey may be difficult, tiring, and wearisome, but we persevere because we are looking towards the reward, and knowing that whatever struggles we face are worth it. And what greater reward is there than heaven? In various nations today Muslim and Hindu persecutions are quite severe, but those who believe in Christ persevere, for they are looking forward to a greater reward than peace with their enemies.

The writer of Hebrews encourages us: *“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).*

## Knowledge

Knowledge is a fundamental aspect of life in this world. We must have knowledge of what is good to eat, how to take care of our bodies, how to relate to fellow humans, and how to be able to work and earn a living. The world is nothing without knowledge.

Knowledge is an absolute must with respect to God and His Word. *“So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free’”* (John 8:32).

I’m afraid too many who consider themselves Christians do not spend much time studying the Bible. As one young woman said, “I don’t have to read my Bible. My priest tells me what it says.” Well, what if the priest is mistaken? What if he is a false teacher? The Bible warns us that there will be many false teachers in the world. In fact, we can go back many thousands of years and hear the words of a false teacher who brought much trouble into the world.

We remember the conversation Mother Eve had with Satan, who was disguised as a snake when she was encouraged to eat the forbidden fruit. *“The woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die!’”* (Genesis 3:2-4) What he said sounded good, so she ate. And we know what happened then. It was not good.

Many passages warn about false teachers, including the following in II Peter 2:1: *“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.”*

After being driven out of Thessalonica by the Jews, Paul and Silas came to Berea and began teaching there. Notice what was said about the people from that city: *“Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so”* (Acts 17:11).

How does a student graduate from high school or college? They study the textbooks! I don’t think a student would be very successful if all he or she did was listen to the teacher during class time. It takes more effort than that.

What did the Bereans do? They examined the Scriptures daily. Consider the apostle Paul’s admonition to his son in the Gospel, Timothy: *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth”* II Timothy 2:15).

Your Bible needs to be more than a decoration on the coffee table that you pick up to bring to church with you. It needs to be opened and considered on a regular basis.

## Self-Control

Some can be really focused on controlling others but lack self-control for themselves. Self-control, or temperance in the KJV, refers to the matter of having mastery or control over all our sinful inclinations and appetites.

Satan is very smart and knows how to tempt us. There are countless ways that man can be tempted, thus it is important for us to be deeply grounded in our faith, as well as in our knowledge of the Scriptures that identify what sin is and tell us how to avoid it.

One great promise that God has given us is found in I Corinthians 10:13: *“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”*

That’s God’s promise, and God keeps his promises. There is no validity in saying, after we sin, “I couldn’t help it.” A comedian from a previous generation was well-known for his claim that “The devil made me do it.” That was Flip Wilson. No, Satan has no control over us without our consent.

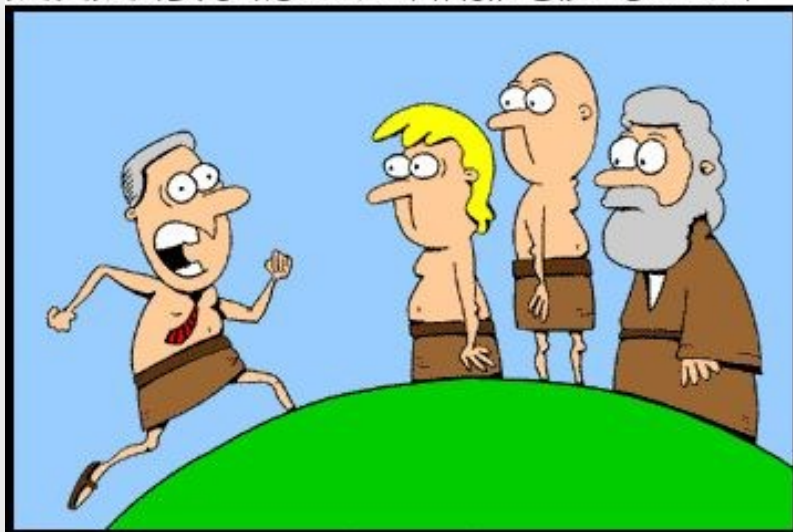
If you have a weakness for alcohol, don’t go into a bar, and don’t go out to a party where you know beer will be in abundant supply. If you have a weakness for sexual

immorality, obviously you don’t need to go to a strip club or scan through the pictures in Playboy Magazine. We each know what our weaknesses are, and must exercise good sense to avoid putting ourselves in places where we can be tempted. That’s just good common sense.

Furthermore, we need to pray about this matter, as Christ taught in what we call “The Lord’s Prayer” in Matthew 6:13: *“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”*

**(To Be Continued next week)**

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Thanks to Nick Hengeveld (See Job 1)

08-13-1998

**JOB, JOB, I WAS IN THE I.T. DEPARTMENT WHEN A CHALDEAN BACKHOE CUT THROUGH OUR DS3 AND THE AC WENT OUT AND ALL OF OUR SERVER HARD DRIVES MELTED DOWN AND I AM THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS ESCAPED TO TELL YOU**