

LIVING LETTERS

EXPECT GOD TO WRITE HIS LIFE INTO YOUR LIFE

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It is a blessing for me to just bring you the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ. It's an honor for me to behold your life and just to see what God is bringing forth in you and that is the way that God speaks to people. We're going to look at that today. We are going to look at how God writes letters, how He impacts people's lives with His life. In today's message I am going to teach you that God writes, with His life, on your life. He writes into your life with His life and that is how He brings forth a message to people all over the earth. This is a wonderful teaching that has just blessed me so much when I taught it this morning in our local congregation here which we have via the zoom meeting. It was just awesome just to know that God is closely involved in our lives. We are also going to talk about what we can expect from God. What can we expect from Him? What has He promised us? What can we expect from Him?

Let us pray together as we start our service:

Father, thank You so much for Your love and Your grace. Thank You for the kindness wherewith you deal with us, that You love us, that You care for us, that You've got a future for us, that You have a hope for us, that You are truly there and that You embrace us. Thank You that we are safe in Your arms. Amen and amen

One of the greatest things that I have come to know in the Gospel is not on how I hold to God but on how He holds on to me in Jesus Christ. One of the most peaceful things to me is knowing that Jesus Christ has a responsibility to raise me up in the last day and that the Father has given me to Him and that He keeps me. It is the safest place that we can ever be and I want to say that to you. You are kept by God. You have been given to Jesus by the Father.

The scripture says in John chapter 6 that the Father teaches all people. They shall all be taught of God and those who have heard and obeyed the Father are then given to Jesus. Then it is the job of Jesus to raise them up in the last day. So, the Father's promise to you is that His Son, Jesus Christ, will keep you and raise you up in the last day. That is the Father's promise towards you and, in that, you are secure. So many times, you know, you look at Scripture and you look at Gospel teachings and you think to yourself, "Lord, will I even remember all these things?"

Like the other day I listened to one of my teachings and I thought I couldn't believe that I taught that message! It blessed me so much! I've literally forgotten about what I was teaching back some years ago. You forget what you've known and it is good to be reminded of that. And that is how God reminds us. God uses the body of Christ to do that and we are encouraged by Him as He keeps us through Jesus Christ.

So Church, I want to say to you, as we enter into this message know this: YOU ARE KEPT BY JESUS! YOU ARE IN HIS HAND AND NOTHING IS GOING TO PLUCK YOU OUT OF HIS HAND AND THAT IS WHERE WE STAY. WE STAY INSIDE JESUS CHRIST.

So many times, we might think of ourselves and we might look at things that happen in our life and we might say, "I don't know why these bad things are happening to me!" Or you might even look at your behavior and you might say, "These things are not supposed to be in my life! This is not even a fruit that is supposed to be in my life."

You know, as we are in Christ and as the body functions, we remind one another of what God has freely given us. I want to quickly go to 2 Peter chapter 1. At the end of the day, it is all about knowing what God has freely given to us, knowing the promise that God has given us which is Jesus, and resting in Him knowing that He keeps us.

As we think of the one person that fell out of one of those helium balloon ships that they used years ago and he was holding on to the rope. The thing caught fire and the thing was falling. I heard the story from a preacher that told this. Apparently the guy, as well as other people, were holding on to the rope and all of them would fall to the ground but the one guy was just holding and holding and holding. He realized that very quickly that he was able to hold on to the rope and somehow, he got the rope around him and then the rope was holding him. He was not holding on to the rope. So, I want to say to you, "The resurrected Jesus, as a glorified Jesus, is the way wherein God is holding on to you. God holds on to you in the fact that Jesus has been sealed with eternal life. That is how He holds on to you."

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I want to go to 2 Peter chapter 1. Just listen to this:

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;

6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;

7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.

8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from

being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

This is a very powerful passage and so many times we get trapped into making every effort. We will just look at this passage and we will say that Peter said, "Make every

effort to have all these good things in your life and that will be good for you as you enter eternal life. That will bring forth a fruitful life in you.”

But then he ends this by explaining what takes place in the lives of those who don't have these good fruits because they are nearsighted and they have forgotten that they were cleansed of their sins. So many times, we are nearsighted. We look at what is true for now around us and we are not looking at the future at the resurrected Jesus as what the glorified Jesus means and what that promises us. And as we forget what is in the future, this hope we have in Christ, as we forget that we find that we cannot bear fruit now.

It's very amazing! Fruit bearing today doesn't have a lot to do with what you do today as pertaining to good works. Fruit bearing today, has a lot to do with what you today expect about tomorrow or what expectation you have way in the future how all those things work. When we know that Jesus Christ is Lord, we find that He keeps us. He holds us and He holds us even inside fruit. That is why the Bible says “Don't get back into legalism. Stay in the Gospel of Grace lest you not have fruit. Let us not forget that we have been cleansed. You have been cleansed. You are clean. You are forgiven. You have already received a power that has destroyed and shattered the hold of sin and death on you. You've already received that. Let us not forget what we have received.

The other day I needed a certain tool to do a certain job on my car. I thought, “That is quite an expensive tool. I need to go and buy it just to do this certain job. I went and got the tool and when I came home, I saw, in my garage, the very thing that I just went and bought. Well, I could at least return it but it sometimes happens that you've already possess what you need but you forget what you've got. And that is what these messages are about on Sundays. This is what the church is about. This is what fellowship is about. It is all about simply reminding one another of what we have freely received in Jesus Christ.

The moment we hear the message of grace, the grace brings forth fruit in us. That's how God does it. What God does is He takes His life and writes it on our lives. His life and His Spirit, His life is the ink and our lives, we are is the paper. That is how God writes a letter to all of humanity that can be read by all people.

Before we get into **2Corinthians 3**, I want to give a little bit of background and what was happening there. The Apostle Paul started a church in Corinth. And after he started the church, he stayed there for a while and then he left. This church obviously had some Jews and also a lot of Gentiles and the focus was definitely Gentiles.

This church started to get involved in things that they are not supposed to be involved with. They started to get involved in sexual immorality and all those kinds of things and Paul, then, wrote them a letter and that is first Corinthians. He wrote them a letter correcting them on their behavior and told them what they should do and how they should have behaved. He also told them that they should know that they are the temple of God and just knowing who they are. He reminds them a lot of who they are and he

also talks to them from the perspective of perfection. He tells them that they are complete... they lack nothing. Yet he was to correct them on many things in their lives.

After that letter, Paul visited them. That visit did not go very well. He left and wrote a second letter to the Corinthians which we don't have today. That letter was a heavy letter, harsh rebuke and so forth and then now we find the third letter that he wrote to the Corinthians is what we have today as 2 Corinthians. In this letter he still didn't completely let go of the issues at hand. After Paul rebuked them, they didn't want to accept him anymore. They said that he did not have the credentials of a true apostle. And this happened after certain people came in and said that Paul is what you call a loose cannon. He was not sent out by a certain group of people. He was not part of the original apostles.

Then some of these apostles, other apostles, came in. They were very wealthy. They were rich. They had a lot of money. They also had an eloquent way of teaching which Paul apparently didn't have. His presence, when he would be among people and when he would talk, wouldn't be that impressive. He wasn't that good of a speaker it seems or as charismatic. Maybe his words weren't that eloquent. Maybe he used difficult words. Who knows? I mean we can just speculate about that. But then there came others more charismatic, more eloquent people that could influence the people and they had a great effect on them. This church in Corinth then threw money at them and blessed them and all those kinds of things and saw them as the true apostles. Then they said to Paul, "Where's your credentials? Where's your letter of commendation? Who has sent you? We cannot listen to you!"

Now, I think that is one of the most painful things that can ever happen to a preacher. When the very people that he has led to the Lord, to whom he gave his life, that he didn't ask for any money, that he worked with his hands, that he was in poverty for them, not willing to be of any burden to them, especially if these people were even wealthy people. So, they were even wealthy people. They had money. They weren't like some of the people out in the villages there that were really poor, didn't have anything. This church in Corinth were well off. They had enough and they could have cared for Paul but they didn't. But when the other people came that made a demand on that, they cared for them and shunned Paul.

We find here in this second letter that he's basically expressing forgiveness and so forth and he is just touching a little bit on some of the things that he mentioned in the previous letter as well. And this is what he is saying. He is talking a little bit of being ministers of the New Covenant and also that he wasn't in it for the money and all those kinds of things. They had to forgive the guy that did wrong whom they then gave over to the devil which was mentioned in the previous letter. He then starts chapter 3 this way:

1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you?

So, what he is basically saying is this. In the previous two chapters he was starting to tell them how much he cares for them and what he did for them. Then he says, "Am I starting now to commend myself?" He says, "No!"

He talks about himself now and says, "Are we, as apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, do I need a letter of commendation from you? Or do I need you to write a letter to other people and tell them that I can preach there if they should allow me." He says, "No, I don't need any of that now."

Now listen to this. He says, ***2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone.***

So, what he says is that the church in Corinth had a very powerful conversion when Paul started it there. There was great signs and wonders. Many people were touched. It was a powerful thing that took place in Corinth. They were really full. They were in need of no gift at all. He says the only thing that was outstanding in the church of Corinth was not knowledge of any sort. It was just the return of Jesus Christ and bodily glorification. That was all that was outstanding.

In the meantime, people came in there and started to preach a law message. They started to bring a message that was leading them to forget who they truly were. They then started to see all manner of the fruit of the flesh break forth in their lives and Paul had to remind them again. But Paul doesn't draw on the weakness or some of the rotten things, the wrong things, that happened. He focuses on the good that happened when they started the church. We can almost call it a mega revival. It was an outbreak of the power of God. He calls on that and he says that he needs no letter of recommendation neither to them or from them because they, themselves, are a letter that was written in their own hearts.

Paul is saying that the church in Corinth is a letter that God wrote on Paul's heart. He says, "And he was now telling this what God did in Corinth, that was written on his heart to all people. And so many people have come to hear or have the letter that was written on his heart by what God did in Corinth. They had that read to them as Paul testified on what the Christ was doing in Corinth without the law, without the Ten Commandments, without the letters that were engraved on stones, as a result of the New Covenant, the New Testament that was ministered to them.

So what Paul is saying is, "I preached Christ to you. I knew nothing but Jesus Christ and Him as the crucified One. What it means if you say, "Jesus Christ crucified", it means, "I know Him not as a political leader of Israel." That's what it means. When you say, "I know Christ and Him crucified", you are saying, "I know Jesus not as Israel's political leader but as the One that is bringing life for all people. That is the Messiah over sin and death but not a political figure that is a political leader for a certain group of people."

So, Paul comes and he knows nothing but Christ and Him crucified. He preaches the Gospel. He preaches the resurrection. People believed. Their lives are changed. This

massive, powerful thing that took place there was then written on his heart. His whole heart, his life, was so impacted! It impacted Paul and he then went to other places and testified of what God has done there. In that way, God was writing a letter to other people. This letter was not in the form of the scripture. It was in the form of God writing His life into the lives of the people in Corinth.

This is what Paul is talking about. He is saying,

3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some (other) people (He is basically mocking a little bit there), **letters of recommendation to you or from you?**

2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts (So it says, "You were our letter and it is also written on our hearts), **known and read by everyone.**

Now some people use this scripture to say that everybody is saved. I don't know how they get to that. It is just completely, completely out of context.

3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

What is he saying here? He says, and this is a very, very powerful thing. Should we understand this we will really hear God's message from each person by what God is doing in that person's life. We will read the letter of Christ, the letter of the Resurrected Jesus, boldly, every day without even reading Bible so much.

Listen to this. Let me read it again. I want you to get this.

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2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone.

3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, (So the church in Corinth was a letter from Christ) **the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God** (So, God basically wrote a letter about the ministry that He did through Paul and the people that ministered there at that time. This letter was written in his heart but it was by the Holy Spirit in what was happening in the lives of the people in Corinth and then all people could see it.), **not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.**

4 Such confidence we have through Christ before God.

5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. What he is saying is what God says, about our ministry, is written in your life. So, people can see what God did through us by what God did in you.

So that letter has two messages. It's a message of the wonderful thing that God did in the church in Corinth as well as a confirmation of what God did through the apostles.

Let's read on. This letter is written by the Spirit, It is not of the letter but of the Spirit for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Paul was saying, “The results in your life was not because of me bringing you the law. The results that other people can see and what they can testify of, in what happened to you, is not because I brought you the law but because of the power of Jesus Christ, the Spirit. I would like to read this to you from 2 Corinthians chapter 3.

Before I read that, let me just quickly summarize what I want to say. What I am saying is that Jesus Christ wrote a letter in what He did in the lives of the Corinthians. The way Jesus wrote this letter was very simple. It was by bringing the life of Jesus forth in the church in Corinth. This was a letter of commendation basically about Paul but also a letter written and known of all people on the new covenant. It was a message to all people, not a law, but a message to all people and we will get more into that. Let us now read from The Message.

2 Corinthians 3:1-3

Does it sound like we’re patting ourselves on the back, insisting on our credentials, asserting our authority? Well, we’re not. Neither do we need letters of endorsement, either to you or from you. You yourselves are all the endorsement we need. Your very lives are a letter that anyone can read by just looking at you. Christ himself wrote it—not with ink, but with God’s living Spirit; not chiseled into stone, but carved into human lives—and we publish it.

So, the church in Corinth is Jesus’ letter. We don’t have one letter here written by Jesus. Jesus was on the earth for three years in ministry. We don’t have one piece of writing that He wrote. Nothing. We have what Peter wrote, what Paul wrote, what James did, what Luke did. We had what John did but we don’t have any writing that Jesus did. Nothing... nothing... nothing!

Wouldn’t it have been wonderful if we could have had a letter that was written by Jesus to His disciples! I’m not talking about a super spiritual interpretation now, saying, “No, no, no. The whole Bible is God’s letter.” I’m not talking about that. I’m talking about something Jesus wrote. We don’t have that. But here we see that Jesus did write and we can read it. Let me read it again. This is exciting because Jesus is still writing today. So you can have a letter from Jesus today, written by Jesus personally, not even then on paper that you read later. You can read a letter that Jesus writes today. You can read it today which He will write today... not old news. You can even see how He’s writing it, being in the presence of Jesus while He writes that. Imagine you could have been where Jesus was while He was writing a letter, seeing His handwriting, seeing exactly what He wrote And then, after He wrote that and signed it, He gives it to you and says, “Read My daughter, Read My son.” Wouldn’t that be special? Well, I want to tell you that is happening today. But what we’re seeking for on how it happens and how He writes is what we need to look at. We need to look at what the true ink is.

Here he says, "You are God's letter. **Christ himself wrote it—not with ink, but with God's living Spirit; not chiseled into stone, but carved into human lives—and we publish it.**

4-6 We couldn't be more sure of ourselves in this—that you, written by Christ himself for God, are our letter of recommendation. He says, "What God has done in you is a letter to all people on what God has done and on our ministry." That is what he says.

We wouldn't think of writing this kind of letter about ourselves. Only God can write such a letter. His letter authorizes us to help carry out this new plan of action. The plan wasn't written out with ink on paper, with pages and pages of legal footnotes(What God had in plan was written out in the lives of the Corinthian church, not with laws), **killing your spirit. It's written with Spirit on spirit, his life on our lives!**That's how God writes. Isn't that absolutely amazing! It's absolutely amazing! The way God writes is by Christ, by His Spirit.

Now, what is the Spirit?

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit... So, the way Christ writes is by the Spirit. The Lord, the fact that the man Jesus was raised from the dead, that believed, writes in our hearts. The lordship of Christ is what writes in our hearts. The lordship of Christ is where God writes in us.

When I look at Helena and I see how the Good News message and her belief and her trust upon the resurrected Christ results into Christ writing a life, His life, into her, I'm reading God's letter to me... what His plan is, what He has come to do. I read His letter. I can see His letter being written in her every day.

Now I look at my children... I spoke to my youngest two days ago for about an hour and twenty minutes, just about the Gospel, the Good News. And I see how he was here in our house and then he is out of the house and how he now grabs the Gospel more for himself and make it his own. He's on his own now. He's not living on his dad's faith. He's believing and grabbing ahold for himself. I can see how Christ, the Lordship of Jesus, writes life into his life and that is a letter to me of God's faithfulness, of God's plan, of His love, of His kindness. I don't have to go and study the scriptures to try and see what God is saying to me. I can behold His life and see the living letter being written every day by the Christ Himself. That puts Jesus' writings and the letter God wrote two thousand years or three thousand years, four thousand years, closer to me than what it was.

These writings that we have here, as valuable as what it is, as true as what it is, as much as what I honor it and preach from it every day of my life is distant in the sense that it was words that were written down about the letter that God wrote in the Galatians, in the people in Ephesus, in the people in Philippi, in Rome, about Rome. Acts is a beautiful letter that was written by Christ and then documented by Luke. But that writing does not end. We have a document which we call a Bible, New Testament

writings, especially the book of Acts, the letters of Paul and so forth, especially Acts, which talks about how Christ was writing a letter in the people there... God's letter! This letter was set up by the apostles and it was read by all men and we are still reading it today. We're reading about their lives today. We're reading the life that God wrote in them today.

Somebody send me a WhatsApp saying, "The Gospel has brought forth this in my life or that forth in my life," that kind of a thing. People's generosity... those kinds of things.

I look at that. I look at how people change. Like the one lady in our Web Church. Her dog bit the child in the face and he had to have operations and everything. Her faith in Christ and how she continues to believe and how the Web Church leaders help her this interaction and love and all of that is a living letter written by Christ, which I read every day. It encourages me.

It brings the closeness of God right to me and I want to tell you, "Behold your wife. Behold your husband. Behold what God is doing through the Good News message. Behold what He is doing in your very life and read the living letter that Christ is writing. When I say, "Christ", I am not just talking about a Man. I'm talking about the Spirit, the Resurrection power of Christ right in you today.

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom(liberation from the law)

18 And we all, who with unveiled faces(We all beholding the resurrected Jesus) **contemplate** (we see) **the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his**(the very same image) **image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.**

Let me explain what I'm trying to say here:

You know that you are a letter from the resurrected Christ or from the fact that the Man Jesus is now the Christ. From this Man you are a letter the result of our ministry written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. Now the Lord is the Spirit.

So, you were written by the fact that Jesus rules over sin and death. When you believed in the physical resurrection, when you believed that He was physically raised, when you believed that the grave was empty, when you believed that He is seated at the right hand of God, when you believe that your hope is bodily resurrection, we found that the power of this resurrection changed your life. That changing of life is a letter read of all men, published by Paul. That's what he is saying and I want to tell you as you today believe that the lordship of Christ, His authority, writes into your life a letter that says, "I'm free from the message of condemnation, written on stones. I am a new person." The new creation letter is being written, read of all people. And how this letter is being written is that we are transformed into the image of ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

The way God writes the letter is by writing His life into your life. That is we are being changed into the image with ever increasing glory. So, what is happening is God is

writing in your life as you are beholding the resurrected Jesus, as you are mindful of the glorified Jesus... Not mindful of Trump or Biden. Your life will stink if you're mindful of that, man. You will irritate yourself with negativity. You will destroy your own life in the sense of bringing torture, turmoil, anxiety and fear to yourself. I cannot think of that.

I cannot think of the news flashes that say that the stock market's going to crash with 30 percent in the next month. I cannot think of that. Do you want that written in your life? No!

As we behold the glorified Jesus and what God has promised, Christ, with ever-increasing glory change our lives into the image of what we behold which is the ink wherein He writes which is the letter that is written for everyone to read, including yourself.

As we are encouraging one another with this message, we find that we regularly, every day, read the writings of Christ. Every day, when I look at Helena and we talk about the Gospel, every day when I talk with my kids about the Gospel ...

Yesterday and the day before, a friend of mine, just on short notice, called me and said, "Bertie, you know we've never been on a motorbike trip together and I'm leaving in the morning just for like a two day. You just sleep one night. Let's go and take like 300 kilometers on the dirt road here. We went and whenever we sat we would have a lot to say about the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus, and I could read the letter that Christ is actively writing. It is the ever-increasing glory written into my friend, Andre's life. I can see how he looks at business, what he thinks of business, what he thinks of this world, it's politics and all those kinds of things from the perspective of Christ. How he's set free, how he's not controlled by those things, how his life is born from the rulership of Christ. How he loves and cares. How this kindness is in this man. I see the letter of Christ. I see His Lordship and it encourages me as I read Bible, the living Bible, in my friend's life.

I want to end off by saying this: It has been a pleasure to read Christ's letter in your life. Your messages of encouragement that you've sent towards me, thank you for that. Your testimonies that you send to us saying, "This has changed my life! That has changed my life." For those of you that don't even mention that but I can see how Christ changed your life and how ever-increasing glory is written in your life. Your generosity, your kindness, your stick-to-itiveness when it comes to the Gospel. How in the midst of turmoil, the Gospel stands. I'm thinking of my one friend who has a farm. When the Covid just came there was like an outbreak on his farm and I could see with him and his wife how, in the midst of the most difficult times, how they believe that God is good.

You know big business like that can just close. The government can just close it down and closing it down for a certain time is devastating. It is not what the person would want but, in that time, I could see how they believe that God is good, God is a God of love, God is a God of kindness, it's not by my works, it's not by what I do right or wrong, I rest in Christ. He has always brought us through. He brings us through. We rest in Him. Eternal life is ours. Our life is not born from politics and all these kinds of things. I could see that in their lives. It is the letter of Christ written, read by all men, a living

epistle, a living letter, read daily, encouraging us. God is not stuck in a letter that was written 2,000 years ago and the bible is the only place where we can 'read bible'. No, we read living Bible as we see the Grace message bring forth fruit, as we see the message of the resurrection bring forth fruit in people's lives. Glory to God!

I think that is also why I was such a pain when it came to politics and people's Facebook pages and people just getting so much into the politics on their pages because I want to read Bible. I don't want to read a new version of Fox or a new version of CNN. No, no, no! I want to read "Living Bible". I want to read the living epistles.

That's what I want to read. I don't want to read fear. I don't want to read anxiety. I want to read what Christ does in you. So focus on Christ so that we can read what Christ wants to tell us. I focus on Christ so that you can read His letter through me, today. Hallelujah!

You are so loved by God! You are His living epistle. You are His message as you behold the Resurrected Christ.

Let me end off in **Colossians 3:**

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Discover your life... which is Christ. As you behold Him, you find Christ writing God's living epistle in you, His letter of commendation for the ministries that has brought you the good news as well as His letter written on the hearts which is the end goal for trade right now in your life. As we are seeing effortless fruit, Godly life by resurrection power, confirming also a letter that Christ IS risen from the dead and that we have the hope of eternal life. Amen and amen.

Thank you so much that you have slotted in. Thank you so much for the love you have expressed towards each other, the letter that I can read how you care for one another. Thank you for that. Thank you for looking at the finished work of Jesus and allowing Him to write in you, And I thank the Father and I thank Christ. I thank You, Jesus, for continuing to write Your living letters today. Amen

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