

## Active Duty

Joe Slater

Facebook and other social media platforms contain endless junk and foolishness, but every now and then you can find something worthwhile. I saw a Facebook meme portraying a man speaking to his wife while he held an envelope in one hand and the letter it had enclosed in the other. With a look of consternation he said, “It’s from our church . . . we’ve been called up for active duty.”

In the armed forces you can be in the reserves. You understand that if the need arises, you can be called to active duty. Until then, however, you carry on with life as any civilian would do. You may be required to show up for duty a few weekends each year, but that’s the extent of it.

The Lord’s church is His army, and it has no reserves. Every soldier is expected to “*put on the whole armor of God*” and engage in spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:11). Assembling regularly with the other troops is but one aspect of duty, but it is a vital one!

The Facebook meme concluded with this admonition from Jeff Carr, the man who posted it:

### “Don’t tell me your excuses . . .

- Tell it to your brethren who are discouraged by your absence.
- Tell it to the visitors who wonder why the members don’t support their own meeting.
- Tell it to the lost who wonder if the gospel or the Lord’s church is worth it.
- Tell it to those who have the same reasons as you for not attending, but come anyway.
- Tell it to the Lord who came to this earth and died for you.”

**Soldier of the cross, fall in!**

## An Old Piece of Furniture

A popular hobby among crafters and do-it-yourselfers is furniture restoration; with current social media platforms, “furniture flipping” has drawn even more interest. There is something intriguing about taking an old, worn-out chair or table, which would be considered useless junk, and bringing it back to life, thus making it useful, attractive, and functional again.

In much the same way, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is like furniture restoration. First, the old furniture has become worn, damaged, or stained from years of use or abuse. After years of living separated from God, people become spiritually corrupt, and their life stained with sin.

After the old furniture is rescued by the restorer, work begins to strip off the old, damaged finish, preparing it for the new. When the repentant sinner comes to God through Christ, the old is stripped away and the new spiritual person emerges. The bible says, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In most cases, the restored furnishing is placed back into service and becomes a useful piece of furniture again. The person who has confessed Jesus (Romans 10:9-10) and has been baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27), now finds himself reconciled to God and in His service. However, for the restored furniture to remain useful, it must be cared for and maintained. In the same way, the Christian must take care of their spiritual self by consistent worship, contact with God’s word, fellowship, and good works in service to the Master Restorer.

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

**Sin doesn’t cease to be sin just because people give it a neutral name.**

—Rob Redden

## Be Patient

The Chinese Bamboo tree shows no appreciable growth for its first four years. Then, in the fifth year, it shoots up some 50 to 90 feet into the air. This amazing illustration from the natural world shows the value of patience. Sometimes progress seems unbearably slow. We might be close to giving up. But then, just as our hope is fading, our eyes are opened afresh to the wonderful power of God to keep His promises!

There were those about whom Peter wrote in his second epistle who were mocking God’s word, saying, “*Where is the promise of His coming?*” (2 Peter 3:3). They contended that all things continued as they had from the beginning—that God had never interjected Himself into the affairs of man. Peter reminded them of the cataclysmic events which occurred in the days of Noah when God destroyed the world of the ungodly by means of a world-wide flood. It is in that context that Peter describes the patience of God, saying, “*But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:8–9). The patience of God is intended to lead us to repentance. Just because the present universe remains even after all these centuries is no indication of a lack of resolve on His part. God will keep His promise. The “*day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up*” (2 Peter 3:10). Because He will come suddenly and without warning, we should “*regard the patience of the Lord as salvation*” (v. 15).

God said, “*My word which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it*” (Isaiah 55:11). God never lies (Hebrews 6:18). We can rest assured in the promise of Christ’s return. James used the illustration of a farmer waiting for the produce of the soil as an example of our need to be patient, saying, “*strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near*” (James 5:8). We should not expect that an infinite, eternal God should be constrained to operate on our timetable. While we eagerly await His return (Hebrews 9:28), we join in the sentiments of the apostle John who prayed, “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*” (Revelation 22:20).

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)