The Soul's Pursuit After God

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon explores the concept of spiritual pursuit, highlighting the need for divine strength to overcome obstacles and hindrances.

Topics: "Spiritual Pursuit", "Seeking God"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the intense pursuit of God by the soul, emphasizing the need for divine inspiration and strength to follow hard after the Lord. He explains how spiritual needs lead to pursuit, focusing on obtaining righteousness, pardon, and grace from God. Philpot highlights the obstacles like unbelief, doubts, carnality, and presumption that hinder the pursuit, but assures that those who earnestly seek God will eventually overtake Him, as evidenced by their intense longings and desires for His presence.

Transcript

Preached at Zoar Chapel, London, on Thursday

Evening, July 27, 1843, by J. C. Philpot

"My soul follows hard after you; your right hand upholds me." Psalm 63:8

Did the question ever arise in your mind, how David composed the Psalms? Of course, the answer would be, "He composed them by divine inspiration." But that is not my meaning. We will put the question in another form. Do you suppose that David wrote his Psalms, as the College Clergy and religious Academics prepare their sermons on a Saturday evening; that is, that he sat down, with his pen in his hand, for the express purpose of composing a Psalm? I do not think. I believe that David composed his Psalms in this way. The Lord led him into some experience, it might have been a mournful, or it might have been a joyful one- he might plunge him into some depths, or he might raise him up to some heights- but which ever it was, the Spirit filled his soul with some deep feelings; and when these had begun to ferment, so to speak, in the Psalmist's soul, he immediately gave them utterance; as he himself says, "While I was musing, the fire burned; then spoke I with my tongue." (Psalm. 39:3.) Thus he seized his pen, and as the Lord the Spirit brought the thoughts into his mind, and dictated the words, he penned them down.

Now that will account for this circumstance, that in David's Psalms notes of mourning are so intermingled with strains of rejoicing, that he is sometimes crying after an absent God, and sometimes enjoying a present Lord; sometimes overwhelmed in the deep waters, and at other times standing on a rock, singing the high praise of his God. And being written in this way, they have become such a manual of Christian experience. The feelings flowing out of a heaven-taught heart; and the words being dictated by the Holy Spirit, they suit the experience of all Christians, more or less, at all times.

Would we then know whether the same God that taught David is teaching us, we have only to compare our experience with that of David as recorded in the Psalms; and then, when laying it side by side with his, we find it to agree, we may, if the Lord the Spirit shine into our heart, gather up some testimony that we are under the same teaching as that highly-favored man of God enjoyed in his soul.

In the words of the text, we find David describing his soul as being engaged in a divine pursuit; he says, "My soul follows hard after you;" and yet that pursuit was not free from difficulties, but one which required all the support of God; he therefore adds, "your right hand upholds me."

I. We will look, then, first, at the pursuit of David's soul after God; and let us see if you and I can trace out in our hearts any similar pursuit from time to time going on within.

Pursuit implies need; that the soul engaged in it is seeking to overtake and obtain some object. Spiritual need, then, lies at the foundation of spiritual pursuit. Were there no object to obtain, there would be no purpose in the pursuit. The spiritual need is the key which unlocks the text, and is the root of the experience contained in it. But whence comes spiritual need? It arises from the quickening work of the Spirit in the soul. Until we are divinely enlightened so see, and spiritually quickened to feel our lost, ruined state, we are satisfied with the things of time and sense; our hearts are in the world; our affections are fixed on the poor perishing vanities that must quickly pass away; and there is not one spiritual longing or heavenly craving in the soul.

But when the Lord sends light and life into the conscience, to show us to ourselves in our true colors, and as the Psalmist says, "to see light in God's light," then spiritual needs immediately commence. The eyes of the understanding are spiritually enlightened to see God, and the heart is divinely quickened to feel that he alone can relieve the needs that the soul labors under and thus there is set before the eyes of the mind, not merely certain objects of anxious pursuit, but the Person also, who alone can give us that which the soul craves to enjoy. "My soul follows hard after you."

But what does it follow hard after God to obtain?

1. The first thing that the soul "follows hard after" God to obtain is righteousness. The first teaching of the Spirit in the conscience is to convince us of our own unrighteousness; that we are sinners in the sight of a holy God; and to make us feel that unless we have a righteousness in which we can stand accepted before a pure and a holy God, we can never see Christ in glory. Now when a man begins to feel his need of righteousness; when his sins and iniquities are opened up to him, and laid as a burden upon his conscience; when he knows that he has to do with a God that cannot be mocked, and whose justice cannot "clear the guilty," he feels that he must have a righteousness which at present he has not, or perish in his sins.

And most people, in order to obtain this righteousness, seek it by "the works of the law." Like the Jews of old; "being ignorant of God's righteousness, they go about to establish their own righteousness, not

submitting themselves to the righteousness of God." The Lord having certain purposes to answer, allows them to set off in this vain pursuit. And what success have they? What does this vain pursuit do for them? For every step which they think they have taken forward, they find that they have slipped two backward; so that instead of obtaining this righteousness, they have only found a deeper discovery of their own heart, and are more and more convinced that in themselves, that is, in their "flesh, dwells no good thing" and that all their "righteousness are as filthy rags.

Now when a man is brought experimentally, in the feelings of his soul, to groan under the weight and burden of sin laid upon his conscience, the Lord the Spirit, sooner or later, enlightens his eyes to see and brings into his soul a feeling apprehension of Christ's glorious righteousness. The reason why so many stumble at the imputed righteousness of Christ is, because they have never seen their sins in the light of God's holy law, have never felt condemned before him, have never had the deep corruptions of their heart turned up from the bottom, so as to loathe themselves in dust and ashes. Men therefore mock and scorn at imputed righteousness, because they are so deeply enamored with their own. But when a man is brought to stand on the brink of eternal ruin, with but one step between him and death; when he is brought to see and feel that he is nothing, and has nothing in himself but sin and guilt; when the Lord begins to set before his eyes, and bring into his heart a feeling apprehension of Christ's glorious righteousness; when he shows him the dignity of Christ's person, and that his righteousness is that of the God-Man, he is anxious to stretch forth the hand of faith, and "lay hold of eternal life." Then the soul "follows hard after" God, that it may obtain this righteousness, and stand accepted and complete in the Beloved.

2. Again. In following "hard after the Lord," the quickened soul follows hard after pardon. None of God's people can live or die happily without the manifested pardon of their sins and they cannot be satisfied without receiving it from God's own lips. It is not merely having some loose, floating ideas about it; it is not taking it up as a doctrine, or learning it from the experience of others; but every child of God must sooner or later feel the pardon of sin manifested in his conscience. And when he feels guilty and condemned, then he follows hard after pardon, the manifested forgiveness of his sins, through the blood of sprinkling applied to his conscience. But if a man never knew what it was to follow hard after God, nor the many difficulties he has to press through before he can obtain it, he has never had pardon yet manifested in his soul.

3. Grace is another thing which the soul "follows hard after" God to obtain. Grace only suits those who are altogether guilty and filthy. Grace is completely opposed to works in all its shapes and bearings. Thus no one can really want to taste the sweetness and enjoy the preciousness of manifested grace, who has not "seen an end of all perfection" in the creature, and that "God's law is exceeding broad;" and is brought to know and feel in the conscience that his good works would damn him equally with his bad works. When grace is thus opened up to the soul, when it sees that grace flows only through the Savior's blood; that grace superabounds over all the aboundings of sin; that "grace" heals all backslidings, covers all transgressions, lifts up out of darkness, pardons iniquity, and is just the very remedy for all the maladies which we groan under; when grace, in the sweetness and blessedness of it, is thus spiritually opened up, there is a following hard after it in order to lay hold of and enjoy the happy and peaceful effects of it in soul experience.

But let us look at the expression YOU- "My soul followed hard after you." Not only does the quickened soul follow hard after the blessings which God has to give, but the great and ardent object of its pursuit is God himself, the giver. The Lord has made himself in some measure manifestly known; he has discovered to the soul the dignity of his Person, with the beauty and loveliness of his countenance; and thus he has

secretly drawn up the affections unto himself, and the soul desires to know him, and him only. In following then, hard after the Lord, it is that it may obtain possession of him, that it may, as the Apostles, says, "win him;" that is, clasp him in the arms of faith, and embrace him with spiritual affection, so as to be mutually loved and embraced by him.

Now, there is something in the expression "HARD," which demands a little attention. It does not say merely, "my soul follows after you," but "hard after you," which implies the intensity of the pursuit. It is not merely a simple following, but a following with eagerness and ardor. And the expression also shows that the object sought after is very difficult to be overtaken. It is not a slothful pursuit that will attain the object desired; it is not a mere wishing after something that will bring down the desired blessing; but the pursuit in which the soul is engaged is a most intense and eager one.

There is also implied in the expression that the object retires, so to speak, as we pursue it; that it is not only overtaken with great difficulty, but that the Lord, the object of the soul's pursuit, so withdraws himself, as we advance towards him, that it requires all the intensity, and I was going to say, agony of the soul to pursue, and if possible to overtake and gain in him all that it longs to enjoy.

But how does the soul thus "follow hard" after the Lord? Chiefly in longings, breathings, earnest cries, and intense pantings after him. The Psalmist has expressed this in one short sentence, and a most emphatic and beautiful one it is- "As the deer pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God!" He there represents the hunted stag panting and thirsting after one refreshing draught from the water-brooks- panting, as David himself once panted by the well of Bethlehem; when he uttered that poignant desire, "O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem that is at the gate!" Thus it is by the panting and longing of the soul after God in intense desire and vehement longings of the soul to enjoy his presence, that this "following hard" after the Lord is chiefly manifested. And God's people know this experimentally. How many times do they stretch themselves on their beds, and pant after the Lord, as though the last breath were going out of their body! How often as they are engaged in the daily pursuits of life is there a cry going up out of their heart after the Lord, pleading with him, and telling him that they cannot be satisfied without his manifested presence. How often perhaps, when for some time you have felt cold and dead, a sudden spirit of grace and supplication has come into your hearts, that has vented and breathed itself forth in cries to the Lord. And thus your souls has gone forth with the most intense desire to enjoy the sweet manifestations of his Person and testimonies of his covenant love.

"My soul follows hard after you." The Lord (we would speak with reverence) does not allow himself at first to be overtaken. The more the soul follows after him, the more he seems to withdraw himself, and thus he draws it more earnestly in the pursuit. He means to be overtaken in the end- it is his own blessed work in the conscience to kindle earnest desires and longings after himself; and therefore he puts strength into the soul, and "makes the feet like hind's feet" to run and continue the chase. But in order to whet the ardent desire, to kindle to greater intensity the rising eagerness, the Lord will not allow himself to be overtaken until after a long and arduous pursuit.

This is sweetly set forth in the Song of Solomon, (5:2-8.) We find there the Lord coming to his bride; but she is unwilling to open to him until he puts his hand in by the hole of the door. She would not rise at his first knocking, and therefore he is obliged to touch her heart. But "when she opened to her Beloved, he was gone;" and no sooner does he withdraw himself, than she pursues after him; but she cannot find him; he hides himself from her view, draws her round and round the walls of the city, until at length she overtakes, and finds him whom her soul loves. This sweetly sets forth how the Lord draws on the longing

soul after himself. Could we immediately obtain the object of our pursuit, we would not half so much enjoy it when attained. Could we with a wish bring the Lord down into the soul, it would be but the lazy wish of the sluggard, who "desires, and has not." But when the Lord can only be obtained by an arduous pursuit, every faculty of the soul is engaged in panting after his manifested presence; and this was the experience of the Psalmist, when he cried, "My soul follows hard after you."

II. But we observe, secondly, that there are certain obstacles and impediments in the way of this arduous pursuit; and therefore the Psalmist adds, "your right hand upholds me."

These words imply our need of divine strength, in order that the soul may not merely commence, but also be strengthened to keep up the pursuit. We soon grow faint and weary after the heart has been a little drawn forth to the Lord; and like Abraham, "when the Lord left off communing with him," we "return to our place." This strength is from time to time mysteriously communicated. Perhaps after the soul has been going forth in earnest pantings and intense longings after God's manifested presence, a deadness and coldness comes over the mind, as though we had neither a God to find, nor a heart to seek him. In order, then, that we may not utterly faint by the way, there is a continual reviving of God's work in the soul, enabling it to follow hard after him. And this is implied in the expression, "your right hand upholds me." Just in the same way as the Lord strengthened Elijah to run before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel (1 Kings 18:46), a race he could not have performed unless the Lord had girded him with strength, so we can only "run with patience the race that is set before us," and follow hard after the Lord, as he blessedly and secretly communicates strength to our souls.

1. But unbelief will sometimes dampen this arduous and anxious pursuit. Unbelief, when the power of it is felt, seems absolutely to unnerve a man's limbs, and to paralyze every spiritual faculty. When he would run, unbelief hamstrings him, so that he cannot "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Now the Lord in upholding him with his "right hand," secretly weakens the power of unbelief, by kindling and communicating faith. Thus, as his soul finds the power of unbelief sensibly weakened, and the power of faith sensibly increased, he is enabled to press anxiously on, and follow after the Lord.

2. Sometimes doubts and fears, and heavy despondency lie as a burden on the soul, and keep it back from pursuing this arduous chase. Doubts whether the heart is altogether right with God; killing fears as to whether he will receive us when we draw near; painful apprehensions and suspicions as to whether our religion be God's word in the soul- these things lying as weights and burdens on a man's soul, check and impede him in running the race set before him. The Apostle therefore says, "Let us lay aside every weight." (Heb. 12:1.) These weights lie heavy on the shoulders, and keep the soul from following "hard after the Lord;" no, under these weights and burdens it would sink, did not the right hand of the Lord uphold it; but he secretly communicates strength, so that these burdens do not altogether press it down; and enables it, in spite of all its weights, to run patiently and perseveringly on.

3. But carnality, worldliness, and earthly affections will at times also dampen the soul's earnest pursuit after God. Heavenly things lose their savor; spiritual affections are not sensibly felt; and the heart grows cold Godwards, and warm earthward. The Lord seems to be at a distance; the world and worldly things fill the thoughts, and almost banish spiritual feelings from the mind. The Lord, then, must again revive his work in the soul, and bring it out of this carnality, deadness, hardness, and carelessness; he must stir it up again and again into desires after him. But directly he leaves us to ourselves, we relapse into our formal carnal state. Only so long as he keeps us near him, do we overcome this wretched carnality; and when he

leaves us to ourselves, our hands hang down, and we sink again into our former deadness and worldliness.

4. Sometimes presumption, vain confidence, and fleshly security act as hindrances, so that the soul is unable to follow "hard after the Lord." When this feeling of carnal security comes over a man's mind, he is not anxious about his eternal state, his soul is not looking to God; and secure of reaching "the world to come," the world present lays such a fast hold on him, as to bury him in its cares and pursuits, and take away his heart from following after the Lord.

All these things, then, conspire, as so many hindrances; and the soul is often so encumbered and entangled by them, that it is not able to follow "hard after the Lord." But God will not leave a man here; he will not allow him to be altogether swallowed up in the things of time and sense. He stirs up his mind, and by stirring it up, he more and more engages him in this pursuit after himself.

Sometimes, for instance, he sends heavy afflictions; and when these fall upon a man they show him where he has been; they are often blessed to lay bare his secret backslidings from God; and to open up to him how he has been content with only a name to live, how he has been secure in a form of godliness, while his heart was not alive to God, nor eagerly pursuing after the power and savor which he once felt. When affliction, then, embitters to him the things of time and sense, he begins to look out for solid comfort; and he finds none but in the Lord, for everything else is full of labor and sorrow. But the Lord has been provoked by his backsliding conduct to withdraw himself, so that the soul cannot find him, though it can find solid satisfaction nowhere else. This stirs it up only the more earnestly to follow after the Lord as the only source of true consolation.

But again. Temptations coming suddenly into the mind, and sweeping away all false evidences, removing vain hopes, and laying bare the corruptions of the heart, will often at first plunge the soul down into the depths of creature helplessness. But the Lord mysteriously works by these very temptations, that we may follow "hard after him;" for when we are thus tempted and exercised in our minds, we need immediate relief. It is like a patient afflicted with an acute disease, or like a man with a fractured limb; he needs to send for the doctor at once- it will not do to wait until tomorrow; he must come immediately, for the case admits of no delay. And so, in the case of powerful temptations, when Satan attacks the soul with all the malice and craft of hell, it does not do to wait until tomorrow, or the day after; the relief must be immediate; the case is pressing, and the remedy must be at hand. Thus powerful temptations are overruled to make us follow "hard after God."

Sometimes the Lord lays a man on the bed of sickness, and brings death, the king of terrors, before his soul in all his ghastliness. And the heart being made honest before God, and alive in his fear, he begins to examine his religion, to overhaul his evidences, and to look back on the way in which the Lord has led him from the first. But in so doing he looks not only at the Lord's dealings with him, but how he has requited the Lord; he calls to mind his idolatries and spiritual adulteries, his continual backslidings, his vile ingratitude, with all the baseness and rebelliousness which his soul has been guilty of. All these things are brought to light in his conscience, and laid upon it; and he must now have the Lord himself to speak peace to his soul. Death stares him in the face; his sins rise up to view in clouds; and his conscience bears testimony against him. He must now have the Lord himself to acquit him; he must have his blood sprinkled upon his conscience; he must have his righteousness revealed; and his love and manifested presence sensibly felt. But to obtain this, his soul "follows hard" after the Lord. These mercies being delayed, he is made to see and feel more and more the solemn reality of his state; and under the teachings of the Spirit, he wonders

how he could go dreaming on through so long a period, without panting more after the immediate presence of the Lord. Thus, through these painful exercises, his soul follows hard after the Lord, as though he would take no denial.

Now the man that thus follows hard after the Lord, knows what he needs; he is not undecided as to what vital godliness is; he is not resting on refuges that thousands shelter themselves in. He has a determinate object, and no one can put him off from that object. He cannot be flattered into a belief that he has what his conscience tells him he has not; nor is he to be persuaded that he has the enjoyment of what he needs, when all within is one mournful, solitary blank. Thus, whatever darkness of soul a living man may be plunged into; however he may be harassed through the workings of Satan's temptations; whatever he may feel of the sinfulness of his corrupt nature; and whatever carnality of mind he may seem to sink into, so as sometimes to appear to himself, or even to others, to have scarcely a spark of grace in his soul, yet in his worst state, in his darkest hours, in his most confused and self-condemning moments, the child of God, taught by the Spirit, will differ from every one else on the face of the earth.

Nothing but God can really satisfy his panting soul; nothing but the Lord's smiles, and the manifestations of his presence can comfort his heart; and to all others he says, "miserable comforters are you." He can take up with no hope but what the Lord communicates to his soul; nor rest in any other testimony but that which he receives from God's own lips.

Thus, the child of God, in whatever state he may be, carries certain marks which distinguish him from the dead professor of the highest doctrine, and from the lowest groveler in Arminianism. The grand distinguishing mark of a living soul is this, that he alone either is in the enjoyment of the Lord's presence, or is panting after the manifestation of it; that he alone is either happy in God, or restless and dissatisfied without him. I do not mean to say, that a living man always feels unhappy when he is without the manifested presence of God; for sometimes he seems to have not one spark of feeling in his heart at all, and there is no more going out after the Lord than if there were no God, no heaven, no hell, or as if we had no immortal soul to be saved or lost. Such a deathlike stupor, such a complete paralysis, such a benumbing torpor seems to creep over the soul, that it seems at times as if it were altogether dead Godwards.

But the Lord from time to time revives his own blessed work. In the midst of all this deathliness, he brings a secret testimony into the conscience- and thus, by the teachings of the Spirit, in the midst of all this worldliness that the soul gets buried under, and all the carnality it may be overwhelmed by; there is an inward feeling of self-condemnation. In the midst of the world, or in company perhaps, a secret groan bursts from the soul, an inward pang of self-loathing is felt on account of its carnality, and a secret desire goes forth to the Lord that he would come down into the heart, and bless it with his presence.

But there are special seasons when the soul "follows hard after" the Lord. We are unable to produce them, and we are unable to recall them. We can no more kindle in our own soul a holy panting after God, than we can make a world. We can no more create a spiritual desire, than we can create a new sun, and fix him in the sky. We may indeed take up the word of God, and try to peruse its pages; but we can find no comfort from it; it is all a dead letter. We may fall on our knees, and utter words; but we have no power to cause the heart to go with them. We may come to hear the word preached; and as we come through the streets, perhaps a secret sigh may go forth that the Lord would bless it to our souls- but when we have gotten to Chapel, and are sitting to hear, Satan may come down, like a foul bird of the air, and spread his baneful and blighting wings over the soul, so as to fill it with the miserable feelings that dwell in his own

infernal mind.

And thus we know by painful experience that it is out of our power to kindle this panting after God. But we know also, at times, that the Lord is pleased to work in us breathings after himself. It may be, when we walk up and down our room, sit by our fireside, or are engaged in our daily labor, that our soul will be panting after the Lord; there will be a going up toward him, and a telling him, that nothing on earth, and nothing in heaven can satisfy us but himself. There is a secret turning away from our relations and friends, and everything else, to go only after God; and thus the renewed soul pants again and again after his manifested presence.

Now, my friends, if you know these things experimentally; if you know what it is, time after time, as the Lord works in you to "follow hard after" him; and yet, with all your following, find little else but obstacles and difficulties, feel burdens placed upon your shoulders, and impediments continually presented in your path, you have the experience of David; you are in the path which many of God's saints have trod before you. And the Holy Spirit has left upon special record this, and other parts of David's experience, for the comfort and encouragement of those who have the same Spirit, and are called to walk in the same footsteps. Thus it not only shows that the soul must have tasted something of the goodness of God, but that in this following hard after him, it has but one object in pursuit, but one desire- to obtain.

When a man is diligently engaged, early and late, in his business, does it not show he has an object on which his heart is fixed? In whatever pursuit a man is engaged, does not his anxiety clearly show that he earnestly desires to overtake the object he pursues? When a man, then, can honestly say, "my soul follows hard after you," it shows that he experiences an earnestness and intensity of pursuit after God. There is perhaps some one here who is grievously perplexed and harassed in his mind to know whether the Lord has really visited his soul; and he says, Are my sins pardoned? Do I stand accepted in the Beloved? Am I an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ? Has the blessed Spirit begun a work in my soul, has he indeed quickened me into spiritual life?" There would be no following hard after the Lord, my friend, unless God had done something for your soul; there would be no panting after his love, and desire to realize it, unless you had tasted something of it; there would be no desire to feel the efficacy of atoning blood to purge your conscience from sin, unless you had seen and felt in a measure the vileness of your sins, and had seen by faith the fountain once opened; nor would there be a longing cry and sigh to the Lord that he would reveal himself in your soul, unless you had seen some beauty in the Lord Jesus, and felt in your heart that nothing but his presence could really content and satisfy you.

If, then, you really and experimentally know what it is, in the secret pantings of your soul, to be following hard after the Lord, let me speak this for your comfort, you are sure to overtake him. The Lord has not kindled this panting in your soul to disappoint you; he has not made you feel your misery and wretchedness here to give you a foretaste of misery and wretchedness hereafter; he has not made you to feel out of love with your own righteousness, that you may be disappointed in receiving Christ's righteousness; but, on the contrary, when he makes you to fall out of love with yourself, it is to make you fall in love with him. He has disappointed your false hopes only that he may implant in your soul a "good hope through grace." Your very thirst after him, your anxious desire to overtake him, is a pledge and a sure foretaste that you will obtain him, and clasp him in your arms as all your salvation and all your desire.

But if a man can go on for weeks, months, and years, in a profession of religion, satisfied without the Lord's presence; without either having urgent needs, or longing to have those needs, gratified; if his soul never pants after the Lord, or is never satisfied with manifestations of the Lord's favor, I would not stand in

that man's religion for a thousand worlds; for however high his assurance may rise, his religion is not worth having, for it has neither life nor power. The man who can thus go on for months without any ardent longings, earnest pantings, or fervent cries after the Lord, shows that he is dead in a profession; that he is satisfied with the mere husks, and knows not the savory kernel; that he is content with being thought well of men, without seeking and craving after the valid testimonies and inward approbation of God in the conscience.

But it is not what we think of ourselves, it is what the Lord thinks of us; "for not he who approves himself is commended, but whom the Lord commends;" still less is it what others think, for their opinion, good or bad, will affect us but little. We shall not be judged by man's opinion, but stand at the bar of God. And if he is pleased to drop in some testimony to the conscience, and assure us of our saving interest in the Son of his love, we shall care little either to court the smiles or to fear the frowns of men; but having tasted the riches of his grace, we shall be satisfied with it, and require nothing further for time or eternity.

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