

TEAR IT UP Norman Vincent Peale still exercises his unique ministry in New York City. In his earlier days, as success came, there was a swelling tide of criticism of the message he preached. It came, sadly, from theologians, church leaders and ministers — men, presumably, incapable of recognizing that the Holy Spirit works through an astounding variety of earthen vessels. Eventually Dr. Peale felt that he must resign from the Christian ministry. In the midst of this personal crisis, his father became ill. He rushed to his side, saying nothing, of course, of his decision to leave the church he served. Some days later, his father died. Again, Peale made the journey to his old home. In his pocket was the resignation, already written, waiting to be posted. When he reached his destination, his stepmother drew him aside. "Your father left a message for you," she said. "Something's wrong with Norman. I can read him like a book. Tell Norman I've read every word he has written. What he says is in harmony with the basic truths of Christianity. Tell Norman, 'Put your trust in Jesus Christ and never quit.'" In a few moments, in another room, Dr. Peale took the letter of resignation and handed it to his wife. "Tear it up," he said. Together they watched the small pieces of paper fluttering into a basket. Never quit! "I love one that perseveres in dry duty," said John Wesley. So too, does God! "He that shall endure to the end," declared Jesus, "the same shall be saved." Waiting for the Lord is the secret of walking without fainting.

These are difficult days. There is no shame in being exhausted. But it is a shame to stay that way when God wants to give us so much — a true perspective, a disciplined passion, a stubborn perseverance. He is waiting for us to wait on Him!

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:2

“When you're running down the street in flames, you don't call on the Bank of America.”

Richard Pryor (1940-)
responding to a question on his belief in God

THE UNDERWATER GOD From a sermon by Dr. Bruce Theileman -- "In the Hebrides Islands they have a lovely legend about a god who lived beneath the sea. And the great desire of this god who lived beneath the sea was to have a little baby boy — human baby. So

he was always trying to catch little babies that might be in boats passing along the surface of the sea from island to island. And so the people always clutched their children close when in their boats.

"On one occasion, he almost got a boat. He was surging behind it, this sea-god, when the boat reached shore. And they lifted the little boy who was in it out onto the shore just as this god approached in a great wave. And they hurried away with the boy. At least they thought they'd gotten away except the sea-god managed to send just one little wavelet into the heart of that little child. And as that god, momentarily frustrated, settled back down to his palace beneath the waves, he was heard to say, "He will return to me for I have put a part of myself into his heart."

"Years later, the people of the village were astonished one day to see a strong, young man go down to the beach and get in a rowboat and begin to row out into the sea -- but not toward another island. And they called out to him, 'There is no island that way.' But on he rowed. And as they watched, when he had gotten a good distance, he stood up and dived into the sea to the god who had put a part of himself into that boy's heart.

"When we were made, God put a bit of himself, a bit of eternity, a bit of the Kingdom of Heaven right inside of us and it cries out for him."