



Open Water Ministries

~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

“come just as you are”

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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Worship Music

[Steady My Heart-
Kari Jobe](#)

[You Are For Me-
Kari Jobe](#)

[Here-Kari Jobe](#)

Prayer

Lord, how can I ever thank You enough for the power of Your Word? I am so honored that You would place such a gift in my life. Help me to appreciate it, value it, and give it the kind of reception it deserves. I want to make Your Word a top priority in my life; I want it to feel welcomed, wanted, and deeply loved. Starting today, I open my heart wider than ever before and ask that Your Word come to richly dwell inside me, in Jesus' name. Amen.....

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

Video's / New Information/ Prayer Requests

Matthew 24:36 (AMP)

36 But of that [exact] day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

“ His Promise To Provide”

Charles Stanley

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1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. 2 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 4 And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. 5 So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. 7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. 8 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. 11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. 12 And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. 13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. 14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. 15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. 16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah. 17 And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. 18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? 19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. 20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? 21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. 22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. 24 And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

By Chuck Smith

Let's turn to the First Kings, chapter seventeen.

The seventeenth chapter of First Kings introduces us now to a very interesting character, Elijah the Tishbite, whatever Tishbite means. Now Elijah came from the area of Gilead, which you'd call today TransJordan if you were in Israel; it was across Jordan in the area of Gad. And so he came from the area of Gilead. It is thought that it is possible that Tishbite means that he was not really an Israelite, that he was some other nationality. But that is only a conjecture, we don't know for sure. But he certainly had a very interesting career. And he comes to the apostate northern tribe at really sort of its lowest point when Ahab is the king with his wicked wife Jezebel. And they have just about eliminated the worship of Jehovah.

They have introduced Baal worship to Israel. They have broken down the altars of God. They have slain the prophets of God and they have just about eliminated the worship of God from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. And so at this dark period of history, Elijah comes on the scene with the message of God and the warning of God for the people, and so he's a very interesting character indeed. It is prophesied in Malachi that before Jesus comes again, that Elijah will come and will be turning the hearts of the children to their fathers. And God is going to send Elijah back to the nation Israel to really bring a great revival to Israel before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Now when Zechariah the priest, recorded in Luke chapter one, was in the temple fulfilling his course of ministry, the angel Gabriel stood beside the altar and informed Zechariah that his wife Elisabeth in her old age was to bear a son.

And he said, "And he shall go forth in the spirit and in the power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the children unto their fathers." The key there, I think, is the spirit and the power of Elijah.

We then follow when in the first chapter of John when John the Baptist was fulfilling his ministry, they came to John and they said unto him, "Who gave you the authority to do these things? Are you Elijah?"

And he said, "No."

Are you that other prophet? "No."

Then who are you?

He said, "I'm the voice of one crying in the wilderness saying, Make straight the path of the Lord."

Now John denied that he was Elijah. However, after the death of John the Baptist, Jesus was talking about John and He said, "Of all men born of women there is not risen a greater prophet than John the Baptist: yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11).

The disciples then said to the Lord, how is it then, He's giving John the Baptist this credit for being one of the greatest prophets? He

said, "How is it then that the Bible says Elijah must first come?"

And Jesus said, "Elijah shall first come." In other words, the prophecy of Malachi will be fulfilled. Before Jesus comes again, Elijah will first come. But He said, "if you are able to receive it, this is Elijah," referring to John the Baptist.

Now we realize that there are two aspects of the coming of Jesus Christ. His first coming was to give Himself as God planned as a sacrifice for our sins. His Second Coming is to reign and to establish God's kingdom upon the earth. But there are two aspects to the coming of Christ; and thus, there are two aspects to the prophecy of Elijah being the forerunner. And thus John the Baptist in the spirit and in the power of Elijah was the forerunner at the first coming; but Elijah will return to be the forerunner before Jesus comes again.

John the Baptist was in the spirit and in the power of Elijah. Now Elijah did appear with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. When Jesus went up into the high mountain with His disciples, Peter, James and John, He was transfigured before them, Elijah appeared there on the Mount of Transfiguration with the Lord. No doubt in Revelation, chapter eleven, verse two where it speaks of the Lord sending the two witnesses, His two witnesses unto the nation Israel, that one of the two witnesses will indeed be Elijah and the fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi.

So Elijah is a very interesting character because he is interwoven. This is the beginning of his career but he showed up on the Mount of Transfiguration and he's going to show up once more before Jesus comes again. Now because of the prophecy that Elijah will first come, that is why the Jews at every Passover when they celebrate Passover they always set the empty chair and leave the door open. They're waiting for Elijah to come. The door is open. He's welcome and they've got the chair set for him at the table and it is a sign of their anticipation of the Messiah's return. But they know before He returns, or their anticipation of the Messiah, they are not really looking for Him to return, but their anticipation of the Messiah and the chair set for Elijah before the return.

So very interesting character and now we get into the study of this fellow Elijah who came into Israel at this dark period of their history when there is such a great spiritual decline.

And he comes in very dramatically, with a dramatic announcement and then he disappears. He came to Ahab, the wicked king and he said,

As the LORD God lives, before whom I stand, there is not going to be dew or rain for these years, until I say so (1Ki 17:1).

And then he took off. And he was gone for three-and-a-half years. And for three-and-a-half years, there was a drought, not a drop of rain, no dew from heaven until the land became very dry and parch.

Now he took off first of all over to the brook Cherith, which is back towards Gilead, from which he had come. And the Lord instructed him to go to the brook and drink of its water and the Lord said, "I'll feed you there." And God commissioned a couple of ravens to bring him food to eat every day, actually in the morning and in the evening. They brought him bread and they brought him meat. And so he was there by the brook Cherith, morning and evening the ravens would show up with this food and he was just staying there until the brook dried up because of the lack of rain.

And so the Lord then commanded him to get to Zarephath, over near Zidon. So it would be in the area of the Lebanon today. Zidon is about ten miles north from Accho. And there is a widow woman there, the Lord said, "And she will take care of you."

So he went and he came to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, he saw this widow woman and she was gathering sticks (1Ki 17:10):

Now in the more primitive cultures, the ladies go out and gather sticks for their fires. You can go down to Guatemala and see the ladies today out gathering sticks for their fires and all. And over in Israel in the primitive culture, and it still does exist in many areas there, the ladies out gathering sticks and they of course, cook over the open fires and it's quite interesting.

And so she was gathering these sticks and he said to her, "Would you bring me a drink of water?"

And so while she was going to get him a drink of water, he said, "Oh, while you're bringing me the water, how about bringing me some bread, too?"

And so she poured out her heart. She said, "I'm sorry, sir. I don't have any bread. In fact, I'm gathering a couple sticks now to build a fire and I have just a little oil and a little flour left, enough to make a couple of pieces of bread for my son and we're going to eat those and then we're just going to die. I'm just— we're depleted. We have no flour, no oil."

So Elijah said, "First make me some bread. And then make it for you and your son. And according to the Lord and the word of the Lord, the flour shall not cease nor the oil until this whole drought is over."

And so the widow lady went in and she made Elijah some bread and she found out that there was still flour left in the barrel, still oil. And she kept feeding him. And during this whole period of the drought, the flour did not fail, nor the oil, it was always enough to make just one more.

It's really a miracle indeed and there is no taking away from the miraculous aspect of it, how that God supplied miraculously. But it is interesting the prophet said, "Make it for me first, and then for yourself." There is sort of a spiritual kind of a thing here, as far as giving to God the firstfruits of our lives. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these other things will be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Now if I twist this priority, and I start seeking first other things, then my life will be so involved in seeking other things that I don't have time for God. But if I seek first my relationship with God, then all of my other relationships come into balance. They all just work on in. You see, my life exists on two plains—the vertical axis upon which my life revolves, and the horizontal plain, this outer area, my relationship with other people. Now if the vertical axis of my life is correct, if my relationship with God is what it should be, then the horizontal plain of my life is in balance. My relationship with those around me is in balance and I am living a well-balanced life if the vertical axis is correct, if my relationship with God is all that it should be.

However, if the vertical axis of my life is not correct, if my relationship with God isn't all that it should be, then the horizontal plain of my life is also going to be out of kilter. And I find myself on this crazy topsy-turvy kind of an experience, where I'm always trying to balance my life. And I'm spending all my time trying to get my life into balance and things in the proper focus. And I just never can seem to quite make it. Just about the time I get up here to try and balance this side, then I come overboard this way, you know. And I'm constantly working to get my life into balance, never seeming to be able to do it. My relationships are all messed up.

Now if I spend my time in just trying to balance my life, I am only treating the symptoms. It's like trying to treat a brain tumor with aspirin. You know, just to sort of deaden the pain so you don't feel it so bad and you don't feel these headaches quite so severely. But you're only treating symptoms; you're not getting to the heart of the problem. Now any doctor who only treats symptoms is a quack. Stay away from him. You want a doctor that's going to find out what the cause is that's creating the symptoms. "Why are you getting dizzy? Why do you have this severe pressure in the head?" You want something more than aspirin. Now people are so often treating only the symptoms, the relationship, and trying to get this relationship to work. "No, I've got to work on this and I've got to work on that. And oh, this is all messed up now, you know." And we're so busy in the horizontal plain trying to get it in balance when in reality the solution is very simple. Get the vertical axis correct. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

Elijah said, "Make me first the cake." Now had she gone in to make first of all the cake for herself and her son, that'd have been it. The barrel would have been empty of flour, the oil would have been gone; they would have died. "Make me first the cake and then for you and your son." Put the Lord first. Get your priorities correct and God will take care of you. God will take care of the other aspects of your life. So the most important relationship that I have in all this world is my relationship with God and nothing should get before it. And if I'm going to work on any relationship at all, I should be working on this relationship with God above every other relationship, because if this gets correct, then the others are all going to fall into balance. If this relationship with God is out of kilter, then there is no way I'm going to be able to balance my life. It will always be in this crazy topsy-turvy way. There is no way you can have a well-balanced life until your life is centered in God. And that is the vertical axis upon which your life is rotating. And until then it's always going to be out of balance, out of kilter.

So Elijah set forth really a principle for this gal for God to work. Put God first and God will take care of you. He'll take care of the seconds and the thirds and the fourths. But it's priority and it's simple and it's basic, and yet it's one of the most important truths that you need to learn in your whole experience of life, is that your relationship with God must supersede every other relationship. Make sure that you have a right relationship with God because that will see you through everything else.

So the little woman did what Elijah said and God took care.

Verse sixteen,

The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah. Now it came to pass, that the son of this woman became very sick; and actually he was so sick, he quit breathing. And so she said to Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Are you come to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son (1Ki 17:16-18)?

Now it is interesting that she was sort of thinking that the death of her son was somehow related to her own sin.

And Elijah said unto her, Give me your son. And he took him out of her bosom, and he carried him up into a loft, [where he stayed in a loft there next to her house,] and he laid him on his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, have you brought this evil upon this woman that I'm staying with in slaying her son? And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul or consciousness come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came to him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down to his mother and presented him to her: and he said, Look, your son is living. And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and the word of the LORD is in your mouth in truth (1Ki 17:19-24).

A.W. Tozer; Jesus, Author of Our Faith; AND OTHER ESSAYS ON FAITH; COMPILED AND EDITED BY GERALD B. SMITH
Aiden Wilson Tozer (April 21, 1897 - May 12, 1963) was an American Protestant pastor, preacher, author, magazine editor, Bible conference speaker, and spiritual mentor. For his work, he received two honorary doctorates. Among the more than forty books that he authored, at least two are regarded as Christian classics: *The Pursuit of God* and *The Knowledge of the Holy*. His books impress on the reader the possibility and necessity for a deeper relationship with God. Living a simple and non-materialistic lifestyle, he and his wife, Ada Cecelia Pfautz, never owned a car, preferring bus and train travel. Even after becoming a well-known Christian author, Tozer signed away much of his royalties to those who were in need. Prayer was of vital personal importance for Tozer. "His preaching as well as his writings were but extensions of his prayer life", comments his biographer, James L. Snyder in the book, *In Pursuit of God: The Life Of A.W. Tozer*. "He had the ability to make his listeners face themselves in the light of what God was saying to them", writes Snyder. Tozer himself produced the works: *Let My People Go*; *Man : the Dwelling Place of God*; *Paths to Power*; *The Divine Conquest*
The Knowledge of the Holy, (1961) New York: Harper & Row, ISBN 0-06-068412-7; *The Pursuit of God*, (1957) Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, ISBN 0-87509-522-4; *The Root of the Righteous*; There are also many compilations of sermons and other writings which were edited and published by Christian Publications, Inc., after Tozer's death. Although the books were published posthumously, authorship is attributed to A. W. Tozer. [Wikipedia](#)

I HAVE FOUND THERE IS an entirely new way to shock complacent Christians in our churches today. These twentieth century Christians go into shock when I say that it is an error to assume that being saved is to be automatically ready for heaven. Very few people in our churches are willing to consider what the Bible actually teaches about discipline and chastening in preparing us for our heavenly home. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews gave definite instruction to those who were children of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ:

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. ... God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. ... Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. (Heb 12:8-14) Now, I know I will have to explain what I mean about our daily Christian lives being in preparation for an eternity in the heavenly realms. First, let us see if we are in agreement about the most important proclamation we can make concerning faith.

There is no doubt about it. First in importance concerning faith is the good news—the truth that every man and woman in our lost world may have God's gifts of forgiveness and eternal life through believing faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is not possible to overstate the importance of this basic truth in the Christian gospel. It has been proclaimed often. Paul gave this stark, simple instruction concerning salvation to the jailer at Philippi: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household" (Act 16:31). As Christian believers (I am assuming you are a believer), you and I know how we have been changed and regenerated and assured of eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning death. On the other hand, where this good news of salvation by faith is not known, religion becomes an actual bondage. If Christianity is known only as a religious institution, it may well become merely a legalistic system of religion, and the hope of eternal life becomes a delusion.

God's objective is our holiness

I have said this much about the reality and assurance of our salvation through Jesus Christ to counter the shock you may feel when I add that God wants to fully prepare you in your daily Christian life so that you will be ready indeed for heaven. Perhaps it is a good thing for you if you are shocked. It is my observation that many Christians are so cosmopolitan, so worldly-wise, so self-assured that they are past being shocked by anything! Probably your first question as you come out of shock will be, "Have you forgotten the dying thief? Did not our Lord tell him his faith had made him ready for paradise?" Let me share something with you. No one could love the Christian gospel and witness it to others without an understanding that the God of all grace has surely made a necessary provision for those who may trust Jesus in the final hours of life. We admit our humanness. We do not have God's wisdom and discernment. Only God is all-knowing and all-powerful. He is full of grace and truth. We can trust Him to be faithful and right in all of His dealings with us.

Remember that most believers have been found of the Lord and received His love and grace at an earlier time in their lives. Many testify to faith extending back to their childhood. Thus, they have been in God's household for a long time, and He has been trying to do something special within their beings day after day, year after year. His purpose has been to bring many sons—and daughters, too—to glory (Heb 1:10). Now, if we are truly sons and daughters by faith, we will respond to the wise discipline and the necessary rebukes aimed at bringing us to the full measure of spiritual stature. God's motives are loving. Our heavenly Father disciplines us for our own good, "that we may share in His holiness." I have known people who seemed to be terrified by God's loving desire that we should reflect His own holiness and goodness. As God's faithful children, we should be attracted to holiness, for holiness is God-likeness—likeness to God! God encourages every Christian believer to follow after holiness. Holiness is to be our constant ambition—not as holy as God is holy, but holy because God is holy. We know who we are and God knows who He is. He does not ask us to be God, and He does not ask us to produce the holiness that only He Himself knows. Only God is holy absolutely; all other beings can be holy only in relative degrees. The angels in heaven do not possess God's holiness. They are created beings and they are contented to reflect the glory of God. That is their holiness. Holiness is not terrifying. Actually, it is amazing and wonderful that God should promise us the privilege of sharing in His nature. It is impossible for any person to be as holy as God is holy. It is encouraging that God "knows how we are formed" (Psa 103:14). He remembers we were made of dust. So He tells us what is in His being as He thinks of us: "Be holy because I am your God and I am holy! It is My desire that you grow in grace and in the knowledge of Me. I want you to be more like Jesus, My eternal Son, every day you live!" Our Lord endeavors to prepare us for our eternal fellowship with the saints, the martyrs, the heroes of the faith who suffered through fire and flood and blood and tears when they were God's pilgrims on this earth. Do not try to short-circuit God's plans for your discipleship and spiritual maturing here. If you and I were already prepared for heaven in that moment of our conversion, God would have taken us there instantly!

As believers and disciples, we are satisfied to know that the mysterious quality of God's holy person sets Him apart from all others and all else throughout His entire universe. God exists in Himself. His holy nature is such that we cannot comprehend Him with our minds. God's holy nature is unique. He is of a substance not shared by any other being. Hence, God can be known only as He reveals Himself. There is absolutely no other way for us to know Him.

Today we may enjoy God's presence; In Old Testament times, whenever this utterly holy God revealed Himself in some way to humankind, terror and amazement were the reaction. People saw themselves as guilty and unclean by contrast. Early in the Revelation, the final book of the Bible, the apostle John describes the overwhelming nature of his encounter with the Lord of glory. He says, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead" (Rev 1:17). John was a man, a person born into a sinful world. But he was a believer and an apostle. At the time, he was in exile "because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 1:9). But when the risen, glorified Lord Jesus appeared to him on Patmos, John sank down in abject humility and fear. Jesus at once reassured him, stooping to place a nail-pierced hand on the prostrate apostle. "Do not be afraid," Jesus said to John. "I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades." Then Jesus proceeded to give His apostle a writing assignment: "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now, and what will take place later." I notice particularly that the Lord did not condemn John. He knew that John's weakness was the reaction to revealed divine strength. He knew that John's sense of unworthiness was the instant reaction to absolute holiness. Along with John, every redeemed human being needs the humility of spirit that can only be brought about by the manifest presence of God.

This mysterious yet gracious Presence is the air of life eternal. It is the music of existence, the poetry of the Christian life. It is the beauty and wonder of being one of Christ's own—a sinner born again, regenerated, created anew to bring glory to God. To know this Presence is the most desirable state imaginable for anyone. To live surrounded by this sense of God is not only beautiful and desirable, but it is imperative! Know that our living Lord is unspeakably pure. He is sinless, spotless, immaculate, stainless. In His person is an absolute fullness of purity that our words can never express. This fact alone changes our entire human and moral situation and outlook. We can always be sure of the most important of all positives: God is God and God is right. He is in control. Because He is God He will never change!

I repeat: God is right—always. That statement is the basis of all we are thinking about God.

Holiness takes time _____

When the eternal God Himself invites us to prepare ourselves to be with Him throughout the future ages, we can only bow in delight and gratitude, murmuring, "Oh, Lord, may your will be done in this poor, unworthy life!" I can only hope that you are wise enough, desirous enough and spiritual enough to face up to the truth that everyday is another day of spiritual preparation, another day of testing and discipline with our heavenly destination in mind. For as I hope you have already seen, full qualification for eternity is not instant or automatic or painless. I hope, too, that you may begin to understand in this context why our evangelical churches are in such a mess. It has become popular to preach a painless Christianity and automatic saintliness. It has become a part of our "instant" culture. "Just pour a little water on it, stir mildly, pick up a gospel tract, and you are on your Christian way." Lo, we are told, this is Bible Christianity. It is nothing of the sort! To depend upon that kind of a formula is to experience only the outer fringe, the edge of what Christianity really is. We must be committed to all that it means to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. There must be a new birth from above; otherwise we are in religious bondage and legalism and delusion—or worse! But when the wonder of regeneration has taken place in our lives, then comes the lifetime of preparation with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. God has told us that heaven and the glories of the heavenly kingdom are more than humans can ever dream or imagine. It will be neither an exhibition of the commonplace nor a democracy for the spiritually mediocre. Why should we try to be detractors of God's gracious and rewarding plan of discipleship? God has high plans for all of His redeemed ones. It is inherent in His infinite being that His motives are love and goodness. His plans for us come out of His eternal and creative wisdom and power. Beyond that is His knowledge and regard for the astonishing potential that lies resident in human nature, long asleep in sin but awakened by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Yes, God is preparing us by making us disciples of Christ. A disciple is one who is in training. Being a disciple of Christ brings us to the day-by-day realities of such terms as discipline, rebuke, correction, hardship. Those are not pleasant words. To be admonished and instructed, to be punished and reprov'd, to be trained and corrected—no one chooses these things because they are neither pleasant nor entertaining. But they are in God's plan for our spiritual maturity.

What will be our response?

In times of testing and hardship, I have heard Christians cry in their discouragement, "How can I believe that God loves me?" The fact is, God loves us to such a degree that He will use every necessary means to mature us until we reach "unity in the faith" and attain "to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). A critic may cringe and charge that God is breaking our spirits, that we will be worth nothing as a result, that we will wear only a sad, hang-dog look for eternity. Oh, no! That is not true. What God plans is to bring us into accord with the wisdom and power and holiness that flow eternally from His throne. God's loving motive is to bring us into total harmony with Himself so that moral power and holy use fullness become our sin this world and in the world to come. This has been a message from my heart about down-to-earth preparation that will result in readiness for heaven's joys. Let me therefore conclude with a simple, down-to-earth illustration—the example of a newborn baby brought suddenly into the confusion of our noisy world. Is the little fellow "ready" for this world in which he must live? When the time of his birth neared, the doctor told the parents-to-be, "The baby is ready!" So, as the baby was born, it could have been said in the biological sense that he was "ready." But what do you really think? You must know that the baby is not really ready at all! From the first little whack he gets to make him cry and get his breath right on for the next eighteenth or twenty years, that baby and child and young man will need to learn much about his

environment. He will need to mature day by day. In the broader social and human sense, he is not ready for this world until years have passed and he has completed his formal education. So it is with the Christian believer who has confessed his or her faith in Jesus Christ. Oh, yes, he or she is forgiven and "saved." But is he, is she automatically prepared for heaven and all of the eternal glories above? To say yes is to be ridiculous. You might as well say that you can pick up a newborn baby, prop him up in the chair of the nation's President or Prime Minister, and whisper in his ear that he is ready to govern. My mind returns frequently to some of the old Christian saints who often prayed in their faith, "O God, we know this world is only a dressing room for the heaven to come!" They were very close to the truth in their vision of what God has planned for His children.

In summary: Down here the orchestra merely rehearses; over there we will give the concert. Here, we ready our garments of righteousness; over there we will wear them at the wedding of the Lamb.

A.W. Tozer

"Christianity today is man-centered, not God-centered. God is made to wait patiently, even respectfully, on the whims of men. The image of God currently popular is that of a distracted Father, struggling in heartbroken desperation to get people to accept a Savior of whom they feel no need and in whom they have very little interest. To persuade these self-sufficient souls to respond to His generous offers God will do almost anything, even using salesmanship methods and talking down to them in the chummiest way imaginable. This view of things is, of course, a kind of religious romanticism which, while it often uses flattering and sometimes embarrassing terms in praise of God, manages nevertheless to make man the star of the show."

Oswald Chambers; . . . separated to the gospel of God. . . —Romans 1:1

Our calling is not primarily to be holy men and women, but to be proclaimers of the gospel of God. The one all-important thing is that the gospel of God should be recognized as the abiding reality. Reality is not human goodness, or holiness, or heaven, or hell— it is redemption. The need to perceive this is the most vital need of the Christian worker today. As workers, we have to get used to the revelation that redemption is the only reality. Personal holiness is an effect of redemption, not the cause of it. If we place our faith in human goodness we will go under when testing comes.

Oswald Chambers ~~~ [My Utmost for His Highest]

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 514-517)

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