



~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

"come just as you are"

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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Worship Music

[I Surrender-Hillsong](#)

[Jesus Culture Album-
several songs](#)

Prayer

Lord, help me not to get so brain-heavy with facts, knowledge, and information that I forget I must have more than brain power. I am asking You to help me focus on my spiritual side and to stay equipped with the spiritual weapons You have provided for me, for I know that knowledge alone is not enough to keep the devil under my feet. Today I choose to pick up those weapons and to walk in the whole armor of God. Lead me and guide me in Your will for me and plans. Give me peace 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.

" Direction Without Doubt "

Charles Stanley

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1 AFTER MANY days, the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth. 2 So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria. 3 And Ahab called Obadiah, who was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly; 4 For when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.) 5 And Ahab said to Obadiah, Go into the land to all the fountains of water and to all the brooks; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, that we lose none of the beasts. 6 So they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went one way and Obadiah went another way, each by himself. 7 As Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him. He recognized him and fell on his face and said, Are you my lord Elijah? 8 He answered him, It is I. Go tell your lord, Behold, Elijah is here. 9 And he said, What sin have I committed, that you would deliver your servant into the hands of Ahab to be slain? 10 As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you. And when they said, He is not here, he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they had not found you. 11 And now you say, Go tell your lord, Behold, Elijah is here. 12 And as soon as I have gone out from you, the Spirit of the Lord will carry you I know not where; so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared and revered the Lord from my youth. 13 Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water? 14 And now you say, Go tell your lord, Behold, Elijah is here; and he will kill me. 15 Elijah said, As the Lord of hosts lives, before Whom I stand, I will surely show myself to Ahab today. 16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. 17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, Are you he who troubles Israel? 18 Elijah replied, I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, by forsaking the commandments of the Lord and by following the Baals. 19 Therefore send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of [the goddess] Asherah, who eat at [Queen] Jezebel's table. 20 So Ahab sent to all the Israelites and assembled the prophets at Mount Carmel. 21 Elijah came near to all the people and said, How long will you halt and limp between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him! But if Baal, then follow him. And the people did not answer him a word. 22 Then Elijah said to the people, I, I only, remain a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. 23 Let two bulls be given us; let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood but put no fire to it. I will dress the other bull, lay it on the wood, and put no fire to it. 24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the One Who answers by fire, let Him be God. And all the people answered, It is well spoken. 25 Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, Choose one bull for yourselves and dress it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it. 26 So they took the bull given them, dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, O Baal, hear and answer us! But there was no voice; no one answered. And they leaped upon or limped about the altar they had made. 27 At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened. 28 And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with knives and lances until the blood gushed out upon them. 29 Midday passed, and they played the part of prophets until the time for offering the evening sacrifice, but there was no voice, no answer, no one who paid attention. 30 Then Elijah said to all the people, Come near to me. And all the people came near him. And he repaired the [old] altar of the Lord that had been broken down [by Jezebel]. 31 Then Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be your name. 32 And with the stones Elijah built an altar in the name [and self-revelation] of the Lord. He made a trench about the altar as great as would contain two measures of seed. 33 He put the wood in order and cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood and said, Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and the wood. 34 And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. 35 The water ran round about the altar, and he filled the trench also with water. 36 At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and that I have done all these things at Your word. 37 Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You, the Lord, are God, and have turned their hearts back [to You]. 38 Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust, and also licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God! 40 And Elijah said, Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one escape. They seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and [as God's law required] slew them there. 41 And Elijah said to Ahab, Go up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of abundance of rain. 42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he bowed himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees 43 And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up and looked and said, There is nothing. Elijah said, Go again seven times. 44 And at the seventh time the servant said, A cloud as small as a man's hand is arising out of the sea. And Elijah said, Go up, say to Ahab, Hitch your chariot and go down, lest the rain stop you. 45 In a little while, the heavens were black with wind-swept clouds, and there was a great rain. And Ahab went to Jezreel. 46 The hand of the Lord was on Elijah. He girded up his loins and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel [nearly twenty miles].

Chapter 18

So our introduction to Elijah.

Now it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show yourself to Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth (1Ki 18:1).

Now this is very important to the further part of the story. "The word of the Lord came to Elijah saying, Go show yourself to Ahab. I'm going to send rain upon the earth." So he has the promise of God that rain is going to come. Now later on, we're going to find Elijah up on Mount Carmel praying, bowing himself and praying God send rain and sending his servant out towards the Mediterranean to see if there were any clouds coming. And he sends his servant out seven times but his prayer and sending his servant out looking for a cloud is related to his first verse where the Lord promised, "I will send rain." In other words, the prayer was premised upon the fact that he had heard from the Lord and received the promise of God.

Prayers that are based upon God's promises and God's word, you can be sure are going to be answered. So here's the promise of God. He heard the word of the Lord and on the basis of the hearing ear came the prayer. We'll get to that a little later. I just want you to make note of that at this point and we'll come back to it.

So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. And in the area of Samaria, [the Northern Kingdom,] there was a horrible famine (1Ki 18:2). Because they've been now for three years without rain.

And so Ahab had called Obadiah, who was the governor over his house, (Now [a little personal note on] Obadiah, he was a man who really feared God: And during the time that Jezebel was cutting off all of the prophets of God, this [fellow] Obadiah took a hundred prophets, and he hid them in [two] caves, fifty in each cave, and he brought them food and he fed them.) (1Ki 18:3-4)

And took care of them as they were hiding from Jezebel, who had of course, ordered all of the prophets of God slain.

And Ahab said to Obadiah, Now you go this way through the land and see if you can find any pools of water, where there might be some green grass around them so that we can feed our mules and horses and keep them alive, that we don't lose all of our animals (1Ki 18:5).

And you go this way through the land and I'll go this way through the land and we'll meet again and we'll find all of the pools of water that we can, where there might be some green grass to keep at least a few of our animals alive.

So, as Obadiah was going out looking, Elijah came to meet him. And Obadiah knew Elijah and he fell on his face and he said, "Aren't you my lord Elijah?"

And Elijah said, "I am. Go and tell your lord, King Ahab that I am here."

And he said, "Hey, what have I done to hurt you, man? You want me to go tell Ahab you're here and as soon as I do, then the Spirit of the Lord will probably catch you off someplace else. And you know how he has been after you, been looking for you all over the place. There's no place he hasn't searched for you. And I go and say, 'Come on over here, Elijah's going to meet you.' And then I bring him over here and the Lord has carted you off someplace else. He's going to kill me.

"Now look, I'm a family man and I don't mean you any harm. Why would you ask me to do something like that?"

And Elijah said, "I will surely be here and I will meet him." And so he told him again, "Now go and tell your lord, Behold, Elijah's here." So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and he told Ahab, "Elijah's over here."

So Ahab came and [it is interesting] Ahab said unto him, Are you the one that has troubled Israel (1Ki 18:17)?

You know, it is interesting to me that people live such wicked lives and then when the fruit of their wickedness comes, they want to then blame God for the calamities in their lives.

Years ago when I was in Tucson we had a lady come to visit our church whose husband was an Army captain or Air Force captain. And so I was making a routine call on her because she had attended the church. And as I went over to their house in the evening that I might meet her husband and all, the fellow met me at the door. And I introduced myself, I said, "I'm Chuck Smith and your wife was in church last Sunday and I just came over to meet you and say hi."

The guy began to curse me and he said, "Get out of here. I don't want to see you." And he was just very mean. He didn't even know me.

And he said, "I have just come from the hospital where the doctors have told me that my little girl has polio." Well I knew that he had a little boy that was crippled from polio. He had come with his mother to church.

And he said, "This is my second child with polio and any God that would allow my children to have this crippling disease I hate. I want nothing to do with anybody that has anything to do with Him." And he began to curse me again.

And I said, "Tell me something, sir, have you been serving God?" And that really made him mad. And he went on with his oats telling me, you know, that he hadn't been serving God.

He said, "I know what it's all about. My dad's a Presbyterian minister. I grew up in a Christian home and all." But then he was just so bitter against God.

And I said, "Well, answer me this. If you hate God so much and you haven't been serving Him, why should God be obligated to take care of your children? I mean, after all, what does God owe you?" Well, he was silent but I didn't go in.

But it is interesting how that somehow we want to live our own lives, we want to ignore God, we don't want any part of God in our lives until calamity comes. And then somehow we want to blame God for the calamity. Why would God do this to me? As though God actually owed me something when I've been totally ignoring Him.

So Ahab is now trying to blame the prophet of God for the calamity that has come to the land; the drought. Now just because Elijah said there's not going to be any rain until I say so, he's blaming Elijah for the judgment of God. "Are you the one that troubles Israel?" And Elijah's not about to take the blame.

He answered, I haven't troubled Israel; but you, and your father's house have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and you've followed Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather me together all Israel to the mount Carmel, and bring in the prophets of Baal all four hundred and fifty of them, and the prophets of the groves the four hundred prophets of Ashtoreth, that you've been supporting. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, gathered the prophets together to mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto the people, and he said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD is God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people didn't answer a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Now give us two bullocks; and let them take the choice, whatever bullock they want, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and don't put any fire under it: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And let them call on the name of their gods, and I will call upon the name of Jehovah: and the God that answers by fire, let him be God. And all the people said, [Good enough, fair enough] It is well spoken (1Ki 18:18-24).

So here is Elijah making an open challenge to the prophets of Baal.

So Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, choose one of the bullocks for yourself, dress it first; for you got a lot of you guys; call on the name of your god, but don't put any fire under it. And they took the bullock which was given to them, they dressed it, they called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar that was made. Now it came to pass at noon, that Elijah decided to just mock them, and [have a little sport, and he] said, You [guys] ought to be crying louder: for now, look, he is a god; lest maybe he's in conversation, or maybe he's on vacation, or he could be asleep, and you need to wake him up (1Ki 18:25-27).

So why don't you scream a little louder?

And so they cried all the louder, they cut themselves in great religious zeal with knives, with lancets, till the blood was gushing out all over them (1Ki 18:28).

Leaping on the altar. Crying for Baal to send fire. And of course, nothing happened.

Now about the time of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither a voice to answer, nor any that regarded their cries. So Elijah said to all the people, Come on over here now near me. And the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And he came and he built with these stones the altar in the name of the LORD: he made a trench about the altar, enough to contain about two measures of seed. And he put wood in order, and he cut up the bullock in pieces, and laid them on the wood, and he said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and the wood. He said, Do it a second time. Do it a third time. And the water ran all about the altar; filled the trench also with water. It came to pass at the time of the evening offering, that Elijah the prophet came near, and he said, Jehovah God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that you are the God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all of these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that you are Jehovah God, and that you have turned their heart back again. And the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up all the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Jehovah, he is the God; Jehovah, he is God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; don't let any of them escape. And he took them down to the brook Kishon, [which is in the valley there beneath Mount Carmel flowing out of Megiddo into the Mediterranean] and he killed [all eight hundred and fifty of] them there. And so Elijah said to Ahab, Get up, and eat and drink; for there is a sound of an abundance of rain. So Ahab went to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down on the earth, and he put his face between his knees, and he said to his servant, Go up and look toward the Mediterranean. And he went up, and looked, he said, There is nothing. He said, Go again. And he sent him seven times. And it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there is arising a little cloud out of the sea, about the size of a man's hand. And he said, Go up, and say to Ahab, Prepare your chariot, and get down, in order that the rain doesn't stop you. And so it came to pass in the meantime, that the heaven was black with clouds and the wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel (1Ki 18:29-45)

The other end of the valley of Megiddo.

And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel (1Ki 18:46).

So God answered by fire, and now God sent the rain in answer to his prayer. But remember the confidence in prayer came from the fact of the listening ear. And this is always true. Real confidence in prayer comes from the fact that I have heard from the Lord. The listening ear is an important thing in prayer. Now so often, we are so overwhelmed with our particular problem that we just rush right into God and start blurting out the whole, you know, scene, rather than coming in and just waiting to maybe listen to God. Maybe He has something to tell me.

With many people prayer is only thought of in terms of a monologue. They never think of prayer as a dialogue. But real prayer should actually be a dialogue. I should be listening to God. I should be listening to see what God instructs and directs me. And therefore, that time of quietness before the Lord is very important where I just go in and I just sit down and relax and am in quiet before the Lord that He might have an opportunity to speak to me. Then I speak to Him. And then I believe it's always important for me to wait for Him to answer me.

And so I like to spend quiet time listening, talking, listening again, that I might get directions or instructions or guidance from the Lord a response to my request. And it's always an exciting experience when God responds to my questions or to my request and begins to give me direction and answers because I take time to wait for the response. A lot of times there are people who say, "God never responds to me." Well, did you give Him a chance? Did you really listen? Did you wait for the response from God?
(Through The Bible Series C-2000; Chuck Smith; 1979-1986; Commentaries Through The Bible)

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](#)

COMING INTO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE by faith does not release us from the cautions God has given us in His Word. Study the Bible seriously, and you will find that God desires His church to be watchful and alert, diligent in the humble life of faith and trust.

In the Letter to the Hebrews, we come to a sobering caution and a spiritual responsibility:

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Heb 12:15)

In the King James Version, this verse carries an even stronger warning: "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God"

We know our human natures, and we do not deny our human weaknesses. We confess that we need both the cautions and the encouragements God has provided. We know very well our need to lean on the divine promises for the better kind of life—the life of faith and trust that is pleasing to God.

This Letter to the Hebrews was written in the first place to provide caution and encouragement. And it still speaks plainly to us today. Its message and appeal come to us with urgency: "There are decisions to be made. You must dare to believe! You must dare to obey God! Go on over to the victory side where there is forgiveness and blessing from the eternal Son, who is now your great High Priest in the heavens!"

The cautions may be negative, but our Lord's emphasis is positive: "Each of you must press forward in your Christian faith and experience! Be diligent and be wise, and you will not be among those who delay and question and hold back!"

Now, what warning was the writer trying to give us when he said that some people might miss the grace of God—might fail of the grace of God? And what warning should we take from the writer's reference to some who would actually fall away?

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. (Heb 6:4-6)

Controversial statements

The interpretation of these statements has always produced differences of opinion among Christians. My purpose is not to engage in argument. Rather, I am hopeful that some of these considerations I am proposing will be helpful if you feel concerned or even confused.

Ministers have said to me that there are so many positive Scriptures that they just work around the more difficult and controversial sections. When I preach month after month in a specific book of the Bible, I try faithfully to deal with the "hard-to-understand" passages when I come to them.

For centuries, there have been differences in the interpretation of certain verses relating to the faith and endurance of Christian believers—the "perseverance of the saints," as some call it. In Christian theology, so the dictionaries say, this simply means "the continuance in a state of grace until it is succeeded by a state of glory."

I look back into church history, and in my own mind, I can visualize John Calvin and John Arminius—who polarized the issue of God's sovereignty versus man's free will—squaring off in their own differences at this point. But why should this be made such a great test in the area of our Christian fellowship?

People have cornered me and pressured me, asking pointedly, "Are you Calvinistic or Arminian in doctrine?" I think I have effectively parried this thrust by repeating a conversation I once had with a prominent English clergyman of our times. He spoke to me of another minister of his acquaintance, and I asked, "He is a Calvinist, I presume?" My minister friend smiled with good humor. "Well," he replied, "I think he is what we might call an equivocating Calvinist! "From a personal point of view and to answer the curious, I would say that the phrase also describes me fairly well!

We need to disagree graciously _____

I have always said that these are personal matters for each of us to determine in our own sincere lives of faith. I have found many thoughtful people in our fellowship who do not want to be pushed from a position of charity and understanding to the extreme edge of any doctrines, particularly where the deity and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ are not in question. Scores of books have been written by people who have taken opposite sides on some of these difficult passages of Scripture. I have read and studied many of these books. In this context, I recall a friend's story. He told me that he had discovered a woodworking shop where all varieties of wooden products, like clothes pins and chair legs, were made and sold. There was a rather startling sign in front of the shop. It read: "All Kinds of Twisting and Turning Done Here." When I have read the narrow, partisan arguments set forth in some of these books I mention, I have felt they too could use the words as an overall title: "All Kinds of Twisting and Turning Done Here"! We do well to remember that we are Christ's only representatives in an evil world and in a very self-centered society. I believe our Lord wants us to be day-by-day examples in the gracious art of putting our Christian love and concern ahead of any divisive dialogue. One school of thought has always insisted that those who have fallen away could not have been genuine believers. They may have had the appearance of being Christians, but they were not. They could speak the language of Christians. They had the reputation of being Christian believers. They may have won the trust and confidence of the Christians around them, but they had not attained unto the grace of God. And because they had missed, in some way or another, the grace of God, they had fallen away.

On the other side, there are many reasons for considering those who have fallen away as once Christian believers. They were described as enlightened, as having shared in the Holy Spirit, as having tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age. But, the arguers persist, they merely had received light. They had only tasted. They may have recognized the Holy Spirit, but they did not possess Him. As a result they fell away.

We should compare Scripture with Scripture _____

When it comes to the original Greek, I do not profess to be a scholar. But I do know how to compare the basic meaning of the same words when they are used in different places in the Scriptures. Some teachers have commented: "Enlightened—that means they merely had light, but they were not born again. They merely received light." But when Paul wrote to remind the Ephesian Christians of his prayer that the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened, he used the very same word we find in Heb 6:4. Paul was praying for an advanced spiritual state for genuine Christians whom he called saints and chosen of God. Clearly enlightened may mean much more than merely receiving information about the gospel. The next expression refers to their tasting of the heavenly gift, the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age. The word tasted has caused some to conclude that these to whom the writer refers merely licked at it—sampled it—to see if they liked it, and decided that they did not. But the very word used for tasting here is also used in Heb 2:9, where we are told that Christ "tasted death for everyone." If tasting the heavenly gift means merely nibbling but never swallowing and digesting, are we to say the same for Christ, who tasted death for everyone? Christ experienced death. We can hardly conclude other than that the people mentioned in Hebrews 6 likewise had experienced the heavenly gift, the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age. Then there is the expression, "who have shared in the Holy Spirit." Those who suppose these were not genuine Christians minimize this sharing in the Holy Spirit. "They went along with Him, but they never really possessed Him." But I find this same Greek word translated "sharing" or "partaking of" used elsewhere in the Scriptures for accepting, receiving, eating. I have to believe this word means actual experience, also. These had received and experienced the Holy Spirit. This would indicate that those who had experienced and actually shared in spiritual attainments could fall away, some even "crucifying the Son of God all over again" to the point they could not be brought back to repentance.

Backsliding and the "unpardonable sin" _____

Right here, I would like to suggest a point for clarification. I do not think we are referring to what we commonly call "backsliding" when we are considering what it may mean to fall away. Look at Peter. He failed miserably, but he was forgiven and became a great apostle. Look at Mark. He went back for a time, but he was restored and served Christ until he died. We also know that there have been many backslidden Christians who have agonized over the possibility of having committed the unpardonable sin. I have discovered a very helpful rule in this matter. I believe it holds good throughout the whole church of God around the world. "Anyone who is concerned about having committed the unpardonable sin may be sure he or she has not! Any person who has ever committed that dark and dread unpardonable sin feels no guilt and confesses no worry. Jesus dealt with the Pharisees and told them face to face that their expressions concerning His person and their attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to the devil were evidences of the unpardonable sin. But His warning caused them no worry. They still believed themselves to be entirely righteous! They felt no need for repentance, no sorrow for sin, no guilt for unbelief. "Do not worry about us," was their attitude. "We do not have any problem!" Returning to our rule for Christians with guilt and concern, the very fact that a person is worried and concerned indicates that the Spirit of God is still working in his or her life. Being human and therefore finite, we may not know in this life all that the inspired writer meant when he used the words fall away. I suggest that to actually fall away means that the person has no worry about his or her spiritual defection. He or she shrugs it all off as though it was a foolish relationship in the first place. Concerning the words, "it is impossible ... to be brought back to repentance," I have found a helpful suggestion. Let me refer to the example of a sinning man in

the church at Corinth: It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. (1Co 5:1-5)

With God all things are possible_____

It is plain that Paul condemned this man for his incestuous acts, and it appears further that he could not be brought to repentance by the Corinthian church. So Paul said, "We will hand him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the coming day of our Lord Jesus Christ." In the light of this action and the instructions of Paul given to the believers in the church, I ask you a question—and I think it is a searching question: May we not conclude in faith, relative to those the church cannot bring to repentance, that God Himself may accomplish it, even by bringing them to the point of death and turning them around to Himself? The suggestion is surely inherent in this study of the incestuous man, for we learn in Second Corinthians that he indeed repented. Some of these questions have been on the lips of Christians throughout the centuries. Some of them have been bitterly argued. There are believers still who spend much time and effort trying to convert other people to their opinions concerning them. When it comes to this issue of the impossibility of renewing a person to repentance, the question has long ago been settled in my own heart and mind: I am not going back! For me, the question of falling away is only academic. It is academic and not real to all Christian believers who, like their Savior, have set their faces like a flint. We will follow the Lamb wherever He leads us! We have not come into the Christian faith to promote or protect shallow Christian experience. Neither is it our calling to defend the coldness of heart that is all too apparent in Christian circles. Let us never, never defend such coldness of heart! Rather, let us covenant to follow Jesus Christ fully and faithfully. We know that He will faithfully and lovingly do His part to keep us and sustain us.

God's first-aid kit_____

But, you ask, "What if I fail? What if I stumble through some weakness of the flesh?" Probably the very best way for me to close out this discussion is to remind you of God's first-aid kit for His devoted family. I had some part in raising a family of six boys and one girl. As a family, we could never have made it without the first-aid kit. There was hardly a time during those years that we were not giving attention to a cut or a bruise, a cold or an illness. It is remarkable that they all survived—and in good health!

God has provided an effective truth—I call it our spiritual first-aid kit—in John's first letter:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1Jo 1:8-10 to 1Jo 2:2) That is a plain, blunt, helpful message from the Scriptures. If you say you have not sinned, you are lying! Jesus is our great High Priest, and He appears with the Father on our behalf. He is our Advocate, our Intercessor. Go to Him, confess your sin and your need, and He will cleanse and forgive. He will bless and heal.

No turning back! _____

Now, we have come through these difficult, hard-to-understand passages, and it remains for us to determine that we are committed followers of the Lamb. We are not going back! I never want to experience whatever it means to fall away, to fail the God who is full of grace and truth. I do not want to know—or experience—whatever it means to fall away.

I do not want to know any more about hell. What I do know about hell is enough to make me want to know much more about heaven and our Savior, who is already there.

I do not want to find out how far I can go toward the edge without finally perishing. But I do want to know, by the grace of God, how closely and carefully I can walk with Him in faith and blessing and victory.

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 549-553)

Chapel Flock ♦ PO Box 161102 ♦ Wichita, KS ♦ 67216 ♦ (316) 243-1438

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