



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

[You Are The Way-
Jesus Culture](#)

[Set A Fire-Jesus Culture](#)

[Walk With Me-
Jesus Culture](#)

Prayer

Lord, now I understand that I've been trying to find answers I'll never discover by myself. The things I long to know can only be revealed by You, so today I ask You to pull back the veil that has concealed those things I long to understand. I know that when You get involved, my eyes will be opened and my ignorance will evaporate. I sincerely ask You in faith to speak to me and to show me those things I need to know, in Jesus' name I ask it. 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.

“ Passion Conference ”

Francis Chan

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1 AHAB TOLD Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had slain all the prophets [of Baal] with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow. 3 Then he was afraid and arose and went for his life and came to Beersheba of Judah [over eighty miles, and out of Jezebel's realm] and left his servant there. 4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a lone broom or juniper tree and asked that he might die. He said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers. 5 As he lay asleep under the broom or juniper tree, behold, an angel touched him and said to him, Arise and eat. 6 He looked, and behold, there was a cake baked on the coals, and a bottle of water at his head. And he ate and drank and lay down again. 7 The angel of the Lord came the second time and touched him and said, Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you. 8 So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and nights to Horeb, the mount of God. 9 There he came to a cave and lodged in it; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah? 10 He replied, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I, I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 11 And He said, Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; 12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire [a sound of gentle stillness and] a still, small voice. 13 When Elijah heard the voice, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah? 14 He said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, because the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword. And I, I only, am left, and they seek my life, to destroy it. 15 And the Lord said to him, Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. 16 And anoint Jehu son of Nimshi to be king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah to be prophet in your place. 17 And him who escapes from the sword of Hazael Jehu shall slay, and him who escapes the sword of Jehu Elisha shall slay. 18 Yet I will leave Myself 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him. 19 So Elijah left there and found Elisha son of Shaphat, whose plowing was being done with twelve yoke of oxen, and he drove the twelfth. Elijah crossed over to him and cast his mantle upon him. 20 He left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, Let me kiss my father and mother, and then I will follow you. And he [testing Elisha] said, Go on back. What have I done to you? [Settle it for yourself.] 21 So Elisha went back from him. Then he took a yoke of oxen, slew them, boiled their flesh with the oxen's yoke [as fuel], and gave to the people, and they ate. Then he arose, followed Elijah, and served him.

Chapter 19

So Ahab told his wife Jezebel the whole story of what had happened, what Elijah did, and how he killed all of her prophets with the sword. And Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, and she said, So let the gods do to me, and even more also, if I don't make your life like the life of those prophets by to morrow this time. And when he got the message from Jezebel, he got up, and he began to run for his life, and he came all the way to Beersheba, [which is about eighty miles, eighty-five miles south from this area,] and he left his servant there (1Ki 19:1-3).

Probably so bushed he couldn't go on any further.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, he came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested that he might die; he said, It is enough; now, O LORD, [I've had it] take away my life, slay me, I'm through (1Ki 19:4).

Now this is, you know, out of a distraught condition. You're all upset. And it's interesting how that when we are so upset, we oftentimes say things we don't really mean. You know, you get real upset and you just say things you don't really mean. Afterwards you're even sorry that you said them many times. But I was just upset so I just you know didn't really engage my brain. I just let my mouth run and I said these things. But I really didn't mean them. You know a lot of times we say things that we don't really mean. We ought to be really more careful with our speech. You know, you say to your child, "Get back in this house or I'll knock your head off." You really don't mean that.

The prophet is saying, "Lord, slay me, I've had it. I'm through. Just kill me, Lord. I don't want to go any further." If he wanted to die, he didn't have to run. He could have stayed right back there in Jezreel and Jezebel would have taken care of it very gladly. So the very fact that he was running showed that he wanted to survive. That was the whole purpose of the flight is to get away from the threat of Jezebel to kill him.

And so he went to sleep and when he woke up, the angel was there, [had prepared a meal for him,] and said, Come on and eat (1Ki 19:5).

Because you're going to go a long way on this food. So he had angel's food and it lasted for forty days. Good stuff. Very nutritious. He went forty days on the strength of that meat.

And he came to Horeb the mountain of God (1Ki 19:8).

Down in the Sinai, way down. Man, he's really fleeing from her. Down in the barren wilderness, Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb, both names given to this mount, the mountain where Moses met God and received the Lord.

And he came to a cave, and he stayed there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him [there in the cave], and said unto him, What are you doing here, Elijah? (1Ki 19:9)

Now Elijah didn't really understand the question. The question was, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And Elijah answered why he was there, not what he was doing there, but why he was there.

He said, I've been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because Israel has really turned against God, they have forsaken His covenant, they have broken down His altars, they have slain His prophets; and I'm the only one left; and they're even looking for me to kill me (1Ki 19:10).

How bad can things get? The nation Israel in total apostasy. They have forsaken the Lord, broken down His altars, killed His prophets. Only one prophet left and they're looking for him. Now that is Elijah's overstatement of the case because he is so upset and discouraged.

And that's one thing about discouragement and despair, it causes you to overstate the case so it actually looks worse than it really is. You know, we get so discouraged and so despondent, we don't want anyone to cheer us up. I just want sympathy at this point. This is so bad. No one's ever had it this bad, you know, and we always are overstating then the case, as Elijah was actually overstating the case of the problems in Israel. They've killed all of Your prophets and I, only I am left, and they're looking for me to kill me. "God, You don't have a single one left in Israel." That isn't quite right, Elijah, but you're upset and I understand, you know. You get so down that you just can't see any glimmer of hope, any light.

The Lord said, Elijah, come on out here and stand here on the mount. [So Elijah came out the entrance of the cave and he stood there] and there came this fierce wind whipping through there, tearing rocks lose, [rolling down the hillside]; but God wasn't in the wind: Then there came this earthquake, [just shook the whole place]; God wasn't in the earthquake: then there came a fire just raging through, God wasn't in the fire: then there came a still small voice (1Ki 19:11-12).

You know, quite often we miss the voice of God because we are anticipating God to speak in such, you know, great thunderous tones or in such a mystic way. I say, "Well, the Lord spoke to me."

"Oh, how did He speak?" My, the voice of God must really rumble like thunder or something, you know. And we think that when God is leading us that there must be something almost like a trance experience where I become, you know, almost in this trance and I hear a little sign saying, "Beep, beep, beep, beep, turn right. Beep, beep, beep, beep, go forward," you know. "Beep, beep, stop." And that some kind of a mystic thing where I'm walking around in a trance. God is leading me. I'm being led by the Spirit. Not so. In fact, when God is leading your life He does it in such natural ways that generally, you're not even aware that God is leading you because it just seems such a natural thing.

Years ago I was driving up to Ventura to have services in a church up there where I grew up. And they had invited me back to speak on a Sunday evening. So I decided to go up on Saturday, take a leisure drive, stay with my aunt in Santa Barbara Saturday night and then drive back to Ventura on Sunday and speak there on Sunday evening. And so I had started up to Ventura and I was in Hollywood and I came to Sunset Boulevard and it just flashed to me, I had a convertible, flashed on me, What a beautiful day. Why not just flip the top down, drive down Sunset Boulevard to Pacific Coast and go up past Malibu. I love that drive up the coast through Malibu and Point Mugu and on in that way. Such a beautiful day, you know, I thought. Just put the top down and take a drive up the coast.

So I started winding down Sunset Boulevard, winds all the way through until it finally drops you there in Santa Monica at the Pacific Coast Highway. And as I was coming down, the skies were so blue, so clear and it was just such a beautiful day, spring day. And there was a couple who were hitchhiking. And oh, well, I'm all by myself, might as well pick them up and so I picked them up and I started asking them questions. Found out they were from Montana.

I said, "Well, what are you doing here in California?" They said, "Oh, we're looking for work." I said, "What kind of work do you do?"

"I'm a farmer." And he said, "I haven't been able to find anything in Los Angeles." I said, "Where are you going?"

They said, "Well, we're going to San Francisco."

I said, "There are no farms in San Francisco." I said, "It's the same as Los Angeles, it's just a big city." I said, "Now between here and San Francisco there's a lot of farm country. In fact," I said, "I'm going through Ventura." I said, "There's a lot of farms around Ventura. There's a lot of ranches and all." And I said, "If you want to really get farm work, you better stop in one of these communities between here and San Francisco, Salinas or somewhere, you're never going to get a job on a farm up there."

Poor kids, they didn't know anything about California. They just heard that it was sunny and all and they were tired of the snow in Montana and just newly married and decided to move to California and get a job. Then I started witnessing to them about the Lord. And when we got to Ventura, they decided that they would stay and look for work there. And I drove them by the church where I would be the next evening, invited them to come and meet me at the church the next evening. And we had prayer with them, they both accepted Christ. And so I bid them farewell and went on up to Santa Barbara to stay with my aunt and never really expected to see them again.

When I got to Santa Barbara my aunt was making enchiladas and she was the greatest enchilada maker in the world. And the phone rang and it was my mother. And there were problems at our home in Santa Ana. I had an alcoholic uncle that I kicked out and he came back while I was gone and my mother was quite desperate. She couldn't take him. It was my dad's brother and she said, "It's either him or me."

And so I had to drive right on back to Santa Ana that night and deal with my uncle and get him out of there for my mother's sake. So my whole trip to Santa Barbara was sort of in vain anyhow, I thought. But then I drove up the next night to Ventura, spoke at the church. We gave an invitation for those at the end who would like to receive Christ to come forward. And this couple who I never expected to see again came forward.

And so there were several people that came forward that evening and I went down and prayed with many of them. And I went up to this young couple and I told them how great it was to see them and how thrilled I was that they were there. And they were just beaming all over, telling me just how glorious it was that they had accepted the Lord and how happy they were.

And they said, "This man who came to pray with us, I knew him, his name was Mr. Jenkins. I grew up in Ventura and I knew him quite well. And he was a foreman at the Del Mar Liminary Ranch." And so he came forward, prayed with them, and they shared what the situation was. So he said, "Hey, I got an opening out in the ranch right now." And he hired them and they had a job and housing and everything else. And God just put the whole thing together.

Then I got to thinking, it must have been the Lord that put into my mind, "Why don't you flip the top down and go up the coast?" You know it seemed like so me because I love the ocean and all. It seemed like such a natural thought that I really wasn't aware at that moment in Hollywood that it was actually the Spirit of God speaking to me and directing me to this couple that were really searching for the Lord, as much as anything else, because they were wide open to receive the witness and all. And yet I realized, "Hey, God was directing me, because though I love the coast, being that well along on my way in the inland route, I don't like Sunset Boulevard and all the signals going up to the coast." And yet suddenly I realized it was the Lord. Now it wasn't something mystical and there wasn't thunder and lightning and great winds and earthquakes or anything else. It was just a very natural way. And what the Scripture is saying is that God usually speaks to us in very natural ways.

Don't expect God to speak in some earthquake, or in fact, it's awfully hard to hear God many times when our earth is shaking around us. It's awfully hard to hear God in the midst of the tempest and the storms of life. It's hard to hear God when it seems like everything around us is being consumed. Many times we need to get our hearts very quiet before God. We need to get away from the tempest. We need to get away from the shaking and the things around us to get alone to where I can really hear that still, small voice of God within as He guides me, as He assures me of His love, as He assures me of His purpose. And I get the strength and the help from God when He speaks to me. And it's that still, small voice within. So natural that it seems like it comes maybe even from your own heart or your own mind. But in reality, it is God speaking to you. It's always an exciting experience when I come to the realization that that thought didn't come out of my own subconsciousness, that thought came to me from God. God planted that thought in my mind, that still, small voice. It was God speaking to me. And it's beautiful. It's a glorious experience to hear the still, small voice.

The Lord said, repeated the same question, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And Elijah still didn't understand the question. He answered the Lord the same way.

I've been very jealous for You: for Israel has forsaken the covenant, they've broken down your altars, they've slain your prophets; I, only I am left; and they're looking for me to take my life (1Ki 19:14).

Now the question was, "What are you doing here?" Not "Why are you here?" So the Lord got then to specifics with this upset prophet because in reality, he was doing nothing. He was hiding. Doing nothing. He had put himself out of service. He was out of commission. He wasn't. There was no one to witness to down there. There was no work for God to be done in that barren wilderness. So he was doing nothing. God doesn't like for us to do nothing. And so the Lord re-commissioned him.

He said, Now look, get out of here, and get on up to Damascus: and when you get there, anoint Hazael to be the king over Syria: And then get down and anoint Jehu to be the king over Samaria: and then anoint Elisha to take your place and all (1Ki 19:15-16).

God put him back to work. God got him away from this place of hiding in a cave, of doing nothing and commissioned him back into service for the Lord. Even as God wants to get you off your duff and get you back doing something that's worthwhile for Him.

And then the Lord sort of puts a little thing on the end. "Elijah, you were exaggerating."

For I have seven thousand men in Israel, whose knees have not bowed to Baal, whose lips have not kissed his image (1Ki 19:18).

"I, only I am left." No, no, you're not alone. "I've got seven thousand." God knew them. God had been observing.

So he departed from there, and he found Elisha, and Elisha was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, [actually there were ten before him and he had the twelve beside him]: and as Elijah passed by, he took his mantle and he threw it on him. And Elisha left his oxen there, and came running after Elijah, and he said, Wait a minute, I pray you, let me go back and kiss my father and mother goodbye, and I will follow you. And he said, Go on back to your oxen: what have I done to you? But he returned back and he took a yoke of oxen, and he killed them, and he boiled their flesh, and he gave it to the people, and he ate. And he arose, and went after Elijah, and became the servant of Elijah (1Ki 19:19-21).

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](#)

HOW MANY ARE WITHIN THE ranks of the Christian church by confession of faith—yet living daily as spiritual paupers and beggars, as though Christ Jesus had never been raised from the dead?

I long for every believer in the church of our Lord to join me in a clear-cut manifesto to our times. I want it to be a declaration of our intentions to restore Christ to the place that is rightfully His in our personal lives, in our family situations and in the fellowship of the churches that bear His name. Too many within the Christian church seem able to do no better than to be concerned—and then to be apologetic. Let me say that the time for apologies is long past! The need today is for men and women of faith and courage and daring. The need is for Christians who are so concerned for the presence of Jesus Christ in their midst that they will demonstrate the standards of godliness and biblical holiness as a rebuke to this wicked and perverse generation. The church, generally speaking, is afflicted with a dread, lingering illness that shows itself daily in the apathy and spiritual paralysis of its members. How can it be otherwise when twentieth-century Christians refuse to acknowledge the sharp moral antithesis that God Himself has set between the church, as the body of Christ, and this present world with its own human systems? The differences between the churchly world and the followers of the Lamb are so basic that they can never be reconciled and they can never be negotiated. God never promised His believing people that they would become a popular majority in this earthly scene. But the inspired writer to the suffering Hebrew Christians in the first century promised something better. He emphasized the availability of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, in the life of the true Body, His church: You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire. ... But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God..... You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Heb 12:18, Heb 12:22-25)

The blessings are here and now_____

These warm, glowing New Testament words speak of God's great plan for Christ's life to be exhibited constantly in the faithful and believing church. They speak of great treasures and glorious realities that we should presently be enjoying in our Christian life and walk. The Hebrews writer says plainly that if we are a New Testament church, we have come to the joys of Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. He says we are surrounded by an innumerable company of angels. He reminds us, without any hesitation, that by our faith we are already included in the general assembly and church of the Firstborn. He states that our names are written in heaven. He does not hold back: he tells us that we are perfectly related to the Judge of all and to the spirits of just men made perfect! Because there are no limitations known to our God, the writer presses on to assure us of the reality of our fellowship with Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and of His blood, which speaks better things than the blood of Abel that cried out for revenge. These are all reasons why we should take our stand, put ourselves on record. This revelation of what God expects of the New Testament church makes me fall down before the Lord. I find myself crying in faith and determination: "Jesus, I will trust You and follow You in this present evil age. I will trust You to be my very life and sufficiency in the fellowship and joy of the body of believers, Your church!"

Repeat: this is a present reality_____

Let me hasten to the Spirit's emphasis here to Christian believers. The inspired Word of God insists that the reality and the blessings from the heart of the living Christ are not reserved for some future and heavenly age. We are forced to part company with a great segment of popular Christian theology which congenially offers us soothing advice: "Let's not get mixed up or sidetracked. All of these precious things are references to heaven. So we will just bide our time, and we will have it all—some day!" Actually, there is no mention at all of a future heaven in these promises to the church. There is no reference to the day we will die. Rather, the New Testament church of Jesus Christ is to know and possess these realities now. We can meet God and His Spirit in blessed reality now! We can know and commune with our Lord Jesus Christ in our heart of hearts now! We may know the joy of sensing all around us God's innumerable company and the fellowship with the church of the First born now! As committed Christians, we know what we believe and we know what God has done for us. We want to make it plain to our own day and age that we are highly privileged to be part of a Christian church in God's plan and in God's will. We are thankful for the dimensions of His grace and love. We know where we stand in faith, and we are not bound by ecclesiastical traditions, except where we choose to be and intelligently and openly desire to be. Because we experience the life of Jesus Christ in the body, we need not be engaged in finding out what other religious groups are doing. Our statement of faith is clear: through the Holy Spirit we get our instructions from the throne of God as we study and lean upon His revelation in the Scriptures. We desire to make it very plain that we have a valid reason for our assemblies and fellowship. It is a reason of spiritual life and spiritual maturity. It is not a social reason—even though our Christian fellowship does have social implications.

The negatives must be dealt with _____

Let me remind you that the writer to the Hebrew Christians began this section with a negative reference: "You have not come to {Sinai}," and then he proceeds to the positive declaration, "You have come to Mount Zion." It is fitting that we consider the negative before dealing with the positive. How can anyone deny that a portion of our Christian teaching has always taken into account the negative concerns? When we stand up for Jesus, it means that there are some things that we will be against. This is the way it is in this world. We do not deny it, and we do not apologize for it. To say that we will never discuss anything in the negative would be similar to saying that there is only one side of a coin. If I should try to split all of my Canadian quarters right through the middle because I am impressed with the likeness of the Queen but I want to get rid of the likeness of the elk on the other side, someone might soon appear at 5 Old Orchard Road to deal with me. "A nice old man," they would comment condescendingly, "but he has slipped his trolley." There is polarity in the universe, and we do well to recognize it. In order for right to be established and grow, wrong must be exterminated, or at least minimized. Of these words, exterminate or minimize, I prefer exterminate. I like to see the extinction of things that are wrong and unworthy. We are always going to have to deal with the negatives—the things that are offensive and out of place—in order that we may emphasize the things that are right and that have a rightful place. I am reminded that when Jesus came to offer Himself to Israel, there was much that He was forced to oppose. Much of His teaching was against the negatives in the religious professions of the Pharisees. He found it necessary to expose the negative concepts they held and to oppose their distorted and unworthy views of God's love and mercy. It is surely just a pipe dream to imagine that a man with a head full of error and a heart full of heresy can receive truth into his mind and being. When Martin Luther came into his effective ministry, he had to personally engage the power of Rome, and he dared to stand against it. The plain-speaking evangelist, Charles Finney, had to meet and defeat the dead Christian orthodoxy of his day in order to release the power of God's Word for the salvation of men and women. The Christians of our own day who still think they can be "carried to the skies on flow'ry beds of ease" are wrong, terribly wrong! We must face up to what is going on in the churches and meet it as men and women of God. It is not enough just to show a smiling countenance and insist that we are hoping for the best. Where we see there is wrong, we must face up to it, show why it is wrong and dismiss it; and then plant truth in its place. A builder dares not erect any structure until he has cleared the sand and debris away in order to place the foundation squarely down on rock.

Some things we must oppose _____

As Christian believers, we must stand together against some things. So, if you hear anyone saying that A. W. Tozer preaches a good deal that is negative, just smile and agree. "That is because he preaches the Bible!"

Here are some of the things we oppose: _____

We are against the many modern idols that have been allowed to creep into the churches. We are against the "unauthorized fire" that is being offered on the altars of the Lord. We are against the modern gods that are being adopted in our sanctuaries. We are specifically against the baptized foolery and sanctified frivolity that have come to the fore, even in conservative Christian churches. We hold firmly to our belief that the Christian church is a divinely appointed body and that as a church we are called to worship and witness for Christ. We believe in another dimension also: that we are called to an attitude of separation from the things of this world that grieve the heart of God. We are against this world's ways and its false values. We are against this world's follies and its vain pleasures. We are against this world's greed and sinful ambitions. We are against this world's vices and its carnal habits. We believe this spells out clearly the Bible truth of separation. God asks us to stand boldly against anything or anyone who hurts or hinders this New Testament body of Christians. We dare to state that an apathetic tolerance is not necessarily a virtue. It may be a downright vice if it is given to excusing hurtful abuses. Actually, the body of Christ has been given deposits of love and faith that bring self-healing and self-building. But if the church tolerates within itself those things that harm and destroy, it will not heal itself—it will wither! Therefore, it is necessary for us to stand with and teach the Bible and all its truths. The Word of God is the "antibiotic" that seeks out and destroys the viruses that would plague the life of the church.

Now, to the positive side!

But there is a positive side. We do need to rejoice in the positive blessings that come to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. His positive will is our glory! It is a positive reality that we do not have to wait for that day when Christ is fully revealed to know the everlasting joys and possess the everlasting treasures that have come to us through His death, resurrection and glorification. The apostle Paul does not advise us to wait until we get to heaven. In his Letter to the Ephesians, he encourages us to claim our spiritual inheritance and heavenly blessings now: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ... He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ {that is here and now}... to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves {that is also here and now}... In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace {that, too, is now}. ... And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ. ... (Eph 1:3-9) Paul then races on into the future to show us that all of our gracious blessings which we now have in Christ constitute only the prelude for all of the ages to come. It is a remarkable listing of the shining glories to which we, as members of the body of Christ, are called in our pilgrimage here. Note that I am speaking of the "body of Christ, not what is frequently referred to as the institutional Christian church. It can be fairly said that the institutional church is largely known in the world as an organization and not as a living organism. The institutional church offers many good things to its members, but it does not necessarily recognize the true glory of Christ's life within. It lives and thrives on sociability, amusements, group activities—things that may be innocent and pleasant and nice but which lack the glories of the church of the living God. That wondrous delight which the disciples felt when they met with their risen Lord is not there. There is no delight, no adoration, no worship except what is superimposed by the beauty of the stained glass windows and the solemnity of organ tones.

It is paramount that the church of Jesus Christ should be concerned for the supreme gifts of God. The church should be concerned for those spiritual blessings that have been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ and made accessible to us now through the ministries of the eternal Spirit of God.

But we are citizens of heaven _____

The church of Jesus Christ, His believing body on earth, recognizes that "our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phi 3:20). The believing Christian agrees that he or she is a migrant and a pilgrim. To these believers, God has imparted His own nature. They have a distinct sense of belonging to one another while they live—almost as exiles—in an unfriendly world. These earthly citizens of heaven speak a common language—that of their constitution, which is the Bible, the Word of God. They love to sing the songs of Zion, for they are loyal to the same Lord and King. Thus the Christians come together where the life of the assembly is the life of Christ. This is the Bible pattern. God the Father is there. Christ the Son is present. The Holy Spirit indwells each member. The life and spirit of Christ is the true glory of the church. Let us not overlook the fact that the "inner man" is a real being as certainly as the eternal, physical "man" is a real being. For certain the soul within us has ears and can hear the voice of God. The spirit within us can experience and taste the glories of God in a blessed fellowship now. Such is the joyful purpose of the church! I dare to remind you, as a fellow-believer, that God has set before us a rich table of blessings. He is saying, "This is all yours, and it is for you now!" God tells us that we share in fellowship with all of those who are enjoying His blessings in the heavenlies. He is saying, "Share these blessings! They are all yours. And Christ, your elder Brother, is in the midst, presiding over My table!" The reality of our spiritual blessings in Christ can never be apprehended by a downright secular philosophy. The deaf person will never acknowledge the satisfying impact of a symphony orchestra. He or she cannot hear. The ailing man on a starvation diet cannot describe the taste and delight of good, nutritional food. He is on his death course. So, the person who is dead in trespasses and sins but brags of culture and education and refinement can only shrug and walk away when we try to describe the glory of God, the beauty of Jesus, the wonder of the Holy Spirit and the present accessibility of Zion, city of God. But when that person shrugs and walks away, we still have our smile and our joy. We know what we have found: the "spirits of righteous men made perfect."

Are we falling short of the goal? _____

Are we so absorbed with worldly affairs that we do not enjoy God's promised blessings as we should—right now? Why are we not trusting God to let us inspire one another as we sense the presence of these good, invisible gifts? They are the things that are ours in Christ now because we are part of the body of Christ. Oh, for the spiritual insight and godly trust of an Elisha! Remember that Elisha, the prophet in a day long past, lived so close to God that he was able to tell Israel what their great foe, Aram, was doing. The king of Aram inquired of his forces if there was a spy in the ranks. His own people gave him this answer: "Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom" (2Ki 6:12). So the king "sent horses and chariots and a strong force" to surround Dothan, Elisha's city. The next morning, Elisha's young assistant came rushing in, pale-faced and trembling, to report the military build-up. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" he cried. But the old prophet just bowed his shaggy head in reverent prayer: "Lord, open his eyes so he may see." And God answered the prophet's prayer. God opened the young man's eyes and let him see the true situation. God showed him the presence of the heavenly host between the city and the enemy forces. The young man "saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." As the enemy troops advanced, Elisha prayed again. "Strike these people with blindness." God did so, and Elisha himself led the confused and blinded troops to Samaria and to Israel's king. The story ends as well as any in the whole Old Testament. When the king asked Elisha if he should kill the Aramean prisoners, Elisha intervened. "Do not kill them. Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master." And that is just what they did. The Bible record concludes with great significance: "So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory" (2Ki 6:23).

Our conclusion _____

Here, then, is the conclusion of our manifesto of faith:

If those who call themselves the people of God would give up their carnality and worldly-mindedness, if they would live with the reality that Jesus is victor at the heavenly controls, they could be the kind of New Testament church that makes glad the heart of God. There would be such an overflow of the Holy Spirit's gifts and graces that their spirituality would be effective in every contact and activity, just as it was in New Testament times.

God grant that it may be so!

(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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