



~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

“come just as you are”

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing



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Worship Music

Prayer

Lord, I reckon myself dead to sin. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. Since this is who You have made me to be, I ask You to help me say no to my flesh and to temptation and then to count myself alive unto You. Holy Spirit, energize me with Your strength and power to walk in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. Lead me and guide me in Your way and will, and Your plans for me. Allow me to see what You are doing through out the world. Cause Your mercy and compassion to well up in me. Fill me each day whom to bless and how to bless them, whom to pray for and how to pray for them, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1 NOW LISTEN and give heed, O Israel, to the statutes and ordinances which I teach you, and do them, that you may live and go in and possess the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you. 2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. 3 Your eyes still see what the Lord did because of Baal-peor; for all the men who followed the Baal of Peor the Lord your God has destroyed from among you, 4 But you who clung fast to the Lord your God are alive, every one of you, this day. 5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land which you are entering to possess. 6 So keep them and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. 7 For what great nation is there who has a god so near to them as the Lord our God is to us in all things for which we call upon Him? 8 And what large and important nation has statutes and ordinances so upright and just as all this law which I set before you today? 9 Only take heed, and guard your life diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen and lest they depart from your [mind and] heart all the days of your life. Teach them to your children and your children's children— 10 Especially how on the day that you stood before the Lord your God in Horeb, the Lord said to me, Gather the people together to Me and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn [reverently] to fear Me all the days they live upon the earth and that they may teach their children. 11 And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick gloom. 12 And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the voice of the words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. 13 And He declared to you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments, and He wrote them on two tables of stone. 14 And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you the statutes and precepts, that you might do them in the land which you are going over to possess. 15 Therefore take good heed to yourselves, since you saw no form of Him on the day the Lord spoke to you on Horeb out of the midst of the fire, 16 Beware lest you become corrupt by making for yourselves [to worship] a graven image in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, 17 The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, or of any winged fowl that flies in the air, 18 The likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, or of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth. 19 And beware lest you lift up your eyes to the heavens, and when you see the sun, moon, and stars, even all the host of the heavens, you be drawn away and worship them and serve them, things which the Lord your God has allotted to all nations under the whole heaven. 20 But the Lord has taken you and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be to Him a people of His own possession, as you are this day. 21 Furthermore the Lord was angry with me because of you, and He swore that I should not go over the Jordan and that I should not enter the good land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance. 22 But I must die in this land; I must not cross the Jordan; but you shall go over and possess that good land. 23 Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you. 24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. 25 When children shall be born to you, and children's children, and you have grown old in the land, if you corrupt yourselves by making a graven image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the Lord your God, provoking Him to anger, 26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that you shall soon utterly perish from the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess. You will not live long upon it but will be utterly destroyed. 27 And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations to which the Lord will drive you. 28 There you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. 29 But if from there you will seek (inquire for and require as necessity) the Lord your God, you will find Him if you [truly] seek Him with all your heart [and mind] and soul and life. 30 When you are in tribulation and all these things come upon you, in the latter days you will turn to the Lord your God and be obedient to His voice. 31 For the Lord your God is a merciful God; He will not fail you or destroy you or forget the covenant of your fathers, which He swore to them. 32 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from one end of the heavens to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever occurred or been heard of anywhere. 33 Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you heard, and live? 34 Or has God ever tried to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? 35 To you it was shown, that you might realize and have personal knowledge that the Lord is God; there is no other besides Him. 36 Out of heaven He made you hear His voice, that He might correct, discipline, and admonish you; and on earth He made you see His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire. 37 And because He loved your fathers, He chose their descendants after them, and brought you out from Egypt with His own Presence, by His mighty power, 38 Driving out nations from before you, greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is this day; 39 Know, recognize, and understand therefore this day and turn your [mind and] heart to it that the Lord is God in the heavens above and upon the earth beneath; there is no other. 40 Therefore you shall keep His statutes and His commandments, which I command you this day, that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may prolong your days in the land which the Lord your God gives you forever. 41 Then Moses set apart three cities [of refuge] beyond the Jordan to the east, 42 That the manslayer might flee there, who slew his neighbor unintentionally and had not previously been at enmity with him, that fleeing to one of these cities he might save his life: 43 Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland, for the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, for the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, for the Manassites. 44 This is the law which Moses set before the Israelites. 45 These are the testimonies and the laws and the precepts which Moses spoke to the Israelites when they came out of Egypt, 46 Beyond the Jordan in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the Israelites smote when they came out of Egypt. 47 And they took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, who lived beyond the Jordan to the east, 48 From Aroer, which is on the edge of the Valley of the Arnon, as far as Mount Sirion (that is, Hermon), 49 And all the Arabah (lowlands) beyond the Jordan eastward, as far as the Sea of the Arabah [the Dead Sea], under the slopes and springs of Pisgah.

Chapter 4

NOW therefore (Deu 4:1); Moses is now making application. **NOW** therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and to the judgments, which I teach you, to do them, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD the God of your fathers is given to you. For ye shall not add unto the word which I commanded, neither shall ye diminish from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you (Deu 4:1-2). So the forbidden to add or take away from the commandments, from the word that God had spoken through Moses. When we get to the book of Revelation, again there is a prohibition to adding to or taking away from the words of that prophecy. It is interesting how people like to mess around with the word of God, adding or taking away. But that is something that we have been forbidden to do, not to add or to diminish from that which God has declared. Behold, [he said] I have taught you the statutes the judgments, the LORD commanded me. Now keep them and do them: for this is your wisdom and understanding. For what nation is there that is so great, who had the God that is so near to them, as the LORD our God is in all of the things which we call upon him for? For what nation is there so great, that has the statutes and judgments that are so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to yourself, and to keep thy soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them to your sons, and to your sons' sons (Deu 4:5-9); Teach them to your children, to your grandchildren these commandments, these statutes. There's no nation in all the world that has had the privileges that we have had. God being so near to them and giving them such a righteous law. And then he speaks about how that the law came there on Mount Horeb or Mount Sinai—Horeb and how that the people were fearful because of the thunder and the lightning. [And Moses said,] Now you heard the words, but you did not see any similitude; only you heard a voice. And the voice declared unto you the covenant, and he commanded you to perform, the ten commandments; he wrote them on two tables of stones. [verse fifteen] Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for you saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb in the midst of the fire: Lest you would corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of any male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flies in the air, The likeness of any thing that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes into heaven, when you see the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the host of heaven, and you be driven to worship them (Deu 4:12-13, 15-19), Now, he points out the fact that when they heard the voice of God they didn't see any form at all, deliberately so. For God did not want them making any kind of a representative likeness of God. Now in all of the nations around them they had all of their little carvings, all of their little idols that were representing their gods. Some of them were female idols with multi-breasts, some of them were male-type idols. Some of them were weird, wings. Some of them looked like fish. Some of them looked monstrous, gargoyle kind. This is God. This is what God looks like. He said, "not so". God doesn't want you making any graven image. God doesn't want you making any kind of a representative likeness of Him. It's not to be done. Now there is a compelling force within man to worship. It's a part of human nature. And here he has said, Lest when you look at the stars, and the moon, and the host of heaven, that you'd be driven to worship heaven" (Deu 4:19) There is something within man that drives him to worship. You've gotta worship something. It's like Bob Dylan said, "You've gotta serve somebody" and that's true. You're driven to serve somebody. There's a driving, compelling force for you to serve somebody and it is always tragic when men leave the worship and serving of the true and the living God, the creator and the sustainer of the universe of all life and life forms. And they begin to make a likeness of God like a man or like a woman or like an animal and they begin to bow down and worship these little likenesses. They begin to offer their prayers before these likenesses. There's something within man that compels him to worship but God doesn't want you worshipping before any altar. When the woman of Samaria said unto Jesus, "Our fathers say that we're to worship God in this mountain. You say that we are to worship Him in Jerusalem. Where do we worship God?" (John 4:20). Jesus said, "The day is coming and now is when they that worship God will neither worship in this mountain nor in Jerusalem for God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth and God is seeking such to worship Him" (John 4:23-24).

God cannot be localized. Nor should we try to make any kind of a representation of God. I personally have great problems with any pictures of Christ. I really don't care for them. That's personal, that's with me, that's something personal. I'm not telling you to go home and get rid of all the pictures. It's just something personal within me. I don't care for any pictures of Christ. God didn't want man making any kind of representation of Himself. So they heard the voice but they didn't see any likeness, they didn't see any form lest they would create some form and begin to worship it. Men are driven to worship. Furthermore the LORD was angry with me [He said] for your sakes, and he sware that I should not go over Jordan, that I should not go over into the good land, which the LORD God gives to you for an inheritance: But I must die in this land, and I must not go over Jordan: but you shall go over, and possess the good land (Deu 4:21-22) "For your sakes." You see, Moses recognizes that it was for their sakes that God was sticking to his word. For the LORD thy God—well before, Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant (Deu 4:23) Now the danger of forgetting, the peril of forgetting. which God made with you, and you make a graven image, or a likeness of any thing, that the LORD thy God has forbidden you. For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God (Deu 4:23-24). And people say, "Oh, there we go. The Old Testament concept of God; a consuming fire, a jealous God". Look at Hebrews in the New Testament, declares, "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). It is interesting that fire is used as a figure for God. Because what can you say about fire? It's everywhere. The scientists have a word, Eremacausis, which refers to the slow burning fire of nature and it's everywhere. It's in all of the material universe. There is that slow burning fire which is gradually destroying everything. We no long—we no sooner put this building up, before we got the last nail in, the slow-burning fire had begun to deteriorate it. Before we could cover the roof with the roofing materials, some of the nail heads began to oxidize. What was it? Slow burning fire of nature; it's everywhere.

Isaiah records how that at one time the Assyrians had invaded the land and the people called upon the Lord and an angel of the Lord went through the camp of the Assyrians and in one night destroyed a hundred and eighty-five thousand front line fighting troops. And when the children of Israel woke up in the morning and looked out upon the camp of the Assyrians there were nothing but corpses and it said, "And fear gripped the hearts of the sinners in Zion" (Isaiah 33:14). Terror took hold on the hypocrites and they said, "Who among us could dwell in the devouring fire?" (Isaiah 33:14). They saw the fire of God and its effect upon their enemies and a fear gripped their hearts, and they said, "Who amongst us" and the word dwell can also be translated approach or flee "from the devouring fire". And in reality there is no place that you can flee from the presence of God. "If I ascend into heaven thou art there. If I descend into hell thou art there". And the same fire of God that burns in heaven is the same fire of God that burns in hell. It isn't who can

escape, but who can flee from it. In reality you are in the fire of God. You can't escape it. The question is what is it doing to you? And that all depends on what you are. For you see, fire can, in the case of steel, transmit into permanency as it is forged in the fire, tempered by the fire, transmitting it into permanency. But that same fire can absolutely destroy and consume a piece of wood. The Bible says that our works are one day gonna be tried by fire. And some of our works like wood, hay and stubble are just gonna go up in smoke. Those that can endure, those that are last through the fire, you'll be rewarded for. "Our God is a consuming fire, our God is a jealous God." A very interesting figure that is used of God. But let's jump down for a moment to verse thirty-one. (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) and he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them (Deu 4:31). Yes, He's a consuming fire and those enemies of God shall be destroyed by that consuming fire. Consuming is just a qualifying word and that is a word that qualifies really the enemies of God; that which the fire will do to enemies of God. But that same fire transmits us into permanency because from us it consumes the dross and the impurities of our life. It's the refining fire of God burning within our hearts, consuming dross transmitting into permanency. And so when you beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained a long time in the land, and corrupt yourselves (Deu 4:25), Now this is almost a prophecy. He lapses into a prophetic thing here. So in generations to come, your children's children and all, you're in the land; they're gonna start making graven images. You shall do evil in the sight of the LORD your God, and you'll provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto you're going over to Jordan to possess it; and ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you (Deu 4:25-27). And so here He is prophesying the failure of the nation and of the fact that they would be driven out of the land and dispersed into all the world and yet you will be left, though few in number; the remnant. Now the interesting miracle of history is that even though the Jews were driven from the land as was prophesied here, yet they were left a nation. They were left an ethnic group of people and this is unparalleled in history. No other ethnic group has been able to maintain a national identity without a homeland, outside of the Jew. And yet they have maintained that national identity. And then there you will serve the gods, the work of men's hands, of wood and stone and so forth. And when you are in tribulation, and these things come upon you, even in the latter days, if thou shalt turn to the LORD, and thou shalt be obedient to his voice; (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers. For ask now of the days that are past (Deu 4:28, 30-32), Look back in your history books He is saying, and see. Since God created man upon the earth, whether there has been any such thing as this great thing, or has been heard like it? Did ever the people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of fire, as you have heard, and still lived? Or has God ever taken a nation like he has taken you, from another nation, by the great signs and all, that he brought against the Egyptians and make you to hear his voice. And because he loved your fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them (Deu 4:28-37), Now, He said he didn't do this because of your greatness or because of your goodness but because of His love for your fathers. To drive out the nations, and to give you a land. Know therefore this day, consider it in your heart, that the LORD he is the God of heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else (Deu 4:38-39). And so again the exhortation to keep the statutes and the commandments. Now, they appointed the three cities of refuge that should be on the east bank of the Jordan River where those who were guilty of manslaughter could slay, could flee and be protected from the manslayer. (Through The Bible; C 2000 Series; Chuck Smith; 1979-1986)

Chapter 6; "A Garden, Not A Factory" Chuck Smith

Have you ever considered the vast difference between "works" and "fruit"? "Works" suggests a factory complete with pressures, deadlines, and the constant need to produce. But "fruit" pictures a peaceful, tranquil garden, a place where we are inclined to stay and drink in the beauty while we enjoy each other's company. It's important to realize that God doesn't come to His factory looking for products. He comes to His garden to enjoy its fruit. The gospel of grace invites us to leave behind the smog and pressure of a factory-like life of works and instead bear the fruit that God desires to see in the garden of our lives.

The Natural Result of Relationship; Galatians 3:2,3 is a critical passage for those who desire to live in a way that pleases God. Paul writes, "This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Notice the apostle is comparing two things: • the Spirit, which is related to faith; • works, which are related to the flesh. Whenever we get into the realm of works, we are dealing with the flesh. Whenever we are in the realm of the Spirit, we are dealing with faith. The Spirit and faith are related, as are works and the flesh. Someone may say, "But Chuck, we must do works for the Lord." No, we mustn't. There is not one thing that I can do in my flesh that will please God. On the other hand, faith always produces fruit. If you are involved in works, then you are relying on the flesh. But if you are walking by faith with Jesus Christ, the Spirit is producing fruit in your life. Fruit isn't something you are generating because you think you have to; fruit is the natural result of relationship. Look at the luscious fruit hanging on a peach tree. The peaches aren't out there struggling and working day by day trying to get ripe; all they have to do is hang in there. Ripening is the natural product of relationship. As long as they are abiding, they are going to bring forth sweet fruit. This is true of our own experience as well. If we are truly abiding in Christ - which is a position of faith - then fruit will come forth from the relationship. If there is no fruit in my life, then the relationship must be questioned and even challenged. That is why Paul tells us, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (II Corinthians 13:5). Jesus told us that there is such a thing as a wolf in sheep's clothing. You can look like a Christian, act like a Christian, and talk like a Christian - but grandma, what big teeth you have! You may have all the outward appearances of a sheep but in reality be a wolf. So how are we going to know who's who? Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20, emphasis added). We are called to examine our lives in order to determine what kind of fruit we're bearing. If the fruit is bad, then there is something wrong with our relationship, which means there is something wrong with our faith. A vital relationship of faith in Jesus Christ will bring forth fruit - without fail.

Our Big Mistake; One of our biggest problems is that we tend to be more interested in what we do than in what we are, while God is more interested in what we are than in what we do. He looks for fruit; we try to produce works. Sadly, through the years we have all heard things like, "You ought to be doing these works for the Lord; you ought to be doing that work for God." We are always being exhorted and pressed into works for the kingdom. So we get out and start doing a work for God because the pastor or the committee has asked us to do it. Maybe it is calling on visitors to the church when God hasn't called us to be a caller. I know some people who are petrified by

visiting the homes of strangers. When they go to a door and knock, they're fervently praying, "Lord, please don't let them be home tonight." Visitation isn't natural for them. It is a forced effort, a work of the flesh, which they soon come to resent. They hate it and begin to drag their heels. So the committee chairman calls them up and says, "We missed you last Tuesday in our calling night. We want to make sure you are there next Tuesday night." They grudgingly respond, "Okay," and the downward spiral continues. That's how you get pushed into molds for which God did not create you. You are forced into unnatural positions and you begin to chafe under your service to God. But God does not want you to give Him anything that you are going to gripe about. God can't stand "Christian griping." It's an insult to Him. Even I hate it when people gripe about what they have done for me. It makes me feel stupid and foolish. Who asked them to do it, anyhow? If there's something you just don't want to do, don't do it. Don't go out and do some magnanimous deed and then gripe and complain about it. You would be better off to do nothing. Leave the calling to those who love to do it. There are people who are thrilled to talk to strangers. They get bored just sitting at home and they can't wait to strike up conversations with people they've never met. That is their nature. It's natural for them - and that is the key. When it is natural it is in the realm of fruit; when it's pressured it is in the realm of works. God always equips us to do whatever He has called us to do, and it will be natural for us to do it. Many people feel like second-rate Christians because they can't do what others can. They run into a believer who says, "This past week, praise the Lord, I witnessed to five people and all five of them received Jesus." Oh man, thinks the person not blessed with the gift of evangelism, I am a horrible witness to the Lord. I didn't witness to anybody. I am such a failure. He is made to feel guilty because he wasn't out collaring people and asking them if they knew the four spiritual laws. Why are some people so effective in evangelism? Because it is natural for them. God has endowed and equipped them for the work. Not everybody in the body is the mouth, however, and the mouth couldn't operate effectively unless there was a brain behind it and feet to carry it where it needed to go. We should not feel guilty because we do not have the same ministry or effectiveness as others. The body works as a unit, and God is the one who has assigned each of us our place in the body. God wants you to do what He has naturally endowed you to do. The fruit of the Christian life blossoms from you naturally as you abide in Jesus Christ through your faith in Him. Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). God wants you to be extremely fruitful for Him. That fruit can come forth only as you abide in Christ - and that is a position of faith.

No Such Thing as Fleshly Faith; Matthew's Gospel tells us that one day many people will come to Jesus, telling Him of all the works they did for Him, and the Master will reply, "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:23). The Lord doesn't recognize works of the flesh; He never has. Remember when God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac... and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Genesis 22:2)? The Lord's comment sounds a little odd - after all, Abraham did have another son, Ishmael, who was at least 14 years older than Isaac. What did God mean, "Take now thy son, thine only son"? The answer is, Ishmael was a work of the flesh. He was not the son of promise; he was not the son of faith. Ishmael was a product of the flesh. God refused to recognize Ishmael because he was the work of the flesh. God recognized only His work of the Spirit, Isaac, the child of faith. Therefore He said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac." God never recognizes or rewards the works of our flesh. On the other hand, He jealously desires that the fruit of the Spirit be increasingly characteristic of our lives. The fifteenth chapter of John explains how believers bear fruit. Jesus said, 'Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4). Jesus placed the emphasis not upon what we do, but upon what we are. What comes forth from our lives is the result of our relationship with Him. We can't have a true, right relationship with the Lord without bringing forth fruit. If there is no fruit - for "by their fruits ye shall know them" - then we had better reexamine our relationship.

Renegade Fruit Inspectors; God did a marvelous work in your life by His Holy Spirit. When you were still a sinner, God loved you. And when by faith you called out to Him, He justified you of every wrong thing you had ever done. God wiped your slate clean. He obliterated the past so thoroughly that He made it as though it never existed. That is what the term "justified" means. The moment you received Jesus Christ by faith - before you paid one penny tithe, before you did one thing - God took all of the black marks against you and wiped them out. Because of your simple belief in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, God justified you of all your past. Because of your belief, God imputed to your account the righteousness of Jesus. Your relationship with Him began by believing. This is all very basic, but somehow we often forget it. Sometimes believers criticize other believers or find fault. They say, "Do you know what they are doing? This is terrible. They call themselves Christians, yet they are doing this and that. They are not living up to the standard - why, they even go down to the beach. That is horrible!" Now, what are such believers doing? They have set themselves up as judges. They have become renegade fruit inspectors. They are judging the quality of another man's servant. Paul had something to say about that; he wrote, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth" (Romans 14:4). It is much easier to please God than man. To please God, we only need to believe in Him and trust in Him. That is the gospel of grace. If you were serving me, I might judge your service. I might say, "You are a lousy servant. I don't know why I keep you around." If you were doing something that displeased me, I would be the one to tell you, "Look, I don't like the way you're drying the dishes; you are leaving too much water on them and you're putting them away still wet. I don't like to get a glass out of the cupboard that still has moisture in it. That is where germs are bred. Now dry them completely." On the other hand, I might say, "You are a wonderful servant. You do such great work! It is a pleasure to have you with me!" In either case, I would be the one to judge your service, not an outsider. The truth is, I am not your master and I can't direct how you are to serve. You must stand before your own master and I can't judge your service. I can't say, "What a lousy servant you are." I have no right to judge your service to God. God is the one you are serving, and before your master you either stand or fall. Paul goes on to say, "God is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4). Don't worry that some people can't see how you're ever going to make it. I have found that God has been much easier to please than man. It is an exercise in futility to try to please everybody. Even if you manage it, someone is going to fault you because you are a people-pleaser. It's just not possible to please everybody. What's beautiful is that we don't have to please everybody. All we have to do is please God. And what do we have to do to please Him? Just believe in Him and trust in Him. We don't please God by all of our works and feverish activities. We please God when we believe in Him and trust in Him. That is the gospel of grace. It's My Pleasure! Faith pleases the Lord and faith produces relationship. The relationship produces the fruit. I don't just sit and be pure and holy and righteous and smile and be sweet and show love all day long. I am caught up in activities, but activities which are not work. It is fantastic to be able to say, "You know, I am doing exactly what I want to do; in fact, I'm doing what I love to do!" It isn't a work isn't a favor, it is simply something I enjoy. Years ago when I served in a denomination I would go to conventions and see some of my buddies. We would go out for dinner and I would start talking about

a scripture that the Lord had opened up to my heart. "Oh, come on, Smith - shop talk," they'd say, and change the subject. I would reply, "What do you mean, 'shop talk'? This is my life! There is nothing I would rather talk about. There is nothing more exciting to discuss." When you are doing what you love to do, it is not a work. You are not in a shop. You are not laboring in a factory. Your activity is the fruit of relationship. When the love of God fills your heart, all you want to do is talk about Him: His Word, His goodness, His love. You don't go around looking for brownie points just because you have been doing what you like to do. You don't look to be rewarded for what is natural to you (even though God will reward you for the fruit that comes forth from your life). You do it because you want to do it, because it is your nature to do it, because God has put it in your heart to do it. The fact is, you feel as if you would die if you didn't do it. "For the love of Christ constraineth me," wrote Paul (II Corinthians 5:14). "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (I Corinthians 9:16). I am sure all of us have had experiences like Jeremiah, who was thrown into a dungeon for declaring the word of the Lord to Israel's kings. As he was sitting in the dark he said, in effect, "That's it; I am through. God, here is my resignation. Don't ever ask me to speak in Your name again. I am not going to do it. Don't lay Your word upon my heart anymore. Lord, I am through, I have resigned. Do You understand? It is over. I'm never going to speak again in the name of the Lord. You treat me like this and let me get thrown in a dungeon. You don't take care of me. But it's all right; I am through!" (see Jeremiah 20:9). Jeremiah was stewing. He was angry. Yet he soon confessed, "But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (verse 9). He could do nothing but speak. He had to speak. He didn't have to force himself as if it were a work; in fact, he tried to force himself not to speak, but spoke anyway. Why? It was natural; it was the fruit of his relationship. Gripping Is Not a Fruit of the Spirit. God does not run factories; He grows gardens. He is not interested in your works; He desires to enjoy your fruit. He does not want you to depend upon your flesh; He calls you to rely upon His Spirit. As Paul reminds us, having begun in the Spirit, we cannot be made perfect in our flesh (see Galatians 3:3). We cannot add works to our faith and improve the relationship, even though many people endeavor to do exactly that. So many times people begin by believing in the Lord, loving the Lord, serving the Lord, and having a glorious time. The joy of the Spirit is theirs. Then some brethren show up and begin to lay heavy trips on them. "Hey brother, if you are really a Christian, you need to be doing this. How come you guys are doing that? Man, you mean you guys call yourselves Christians? Why, you don't even do this." They start laying down all of these heavy requirements so that Christianity becomes a grind. It ceases to be natural and a delight and begins to be a chore, a job, a work. When will we learn? We cannot improve on the righteousness given to us by God. Any works-based relationship soon becomes a grind in which we lose the joy of our relationship with the Lord. Suddenly it's a duty, an obligation, an onerous task. Before long, we begin griping. The joy of the Lord departs from our walk. We no longer enjoy freedom, but labor under a yoke of bondage. We think, I had better say my prayers tonight, or I will really be in trouble. Oh, but I am so tired. I don't want to get out of bed. I suppose I'll have to, but - oh, man, it's so cold! I am sure God says, "Oh, shut up and go to sleep! Don't bother Me in that kind of a mood. Who asked you to call, anyway?" You might think that if anyone should have mastered this lesson, it would be ministers of the gospel. Yet there are men who would have us believe they minister the things of the Spirit by the works of the flesh. They will describe what great consecration it takes to have their kind of ministry - what tremendous personal sacrifices a person must make to have such power. They will tell of their commitment and their fasting and their consecration and will lay it all out as though their works have achieved for them some level of spirituality that moved God to entrust them with His power. God can't trust everybody with this power, they say, but they have earned it. Oftentimes they actually say things like, "I went into the other room, closed the door, and said, 'God, I am not going to come out of here until I have the power.' And I stayed in there and fasted and prayed until I got it." They speak as though their righteousness earned them God's favor. But it didn't; it was only a work. And God will never honor or recognize a work of the flesh. Paul said, "Have ye suffered so many things in vain? If it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3:4,5). A true minister gives all the glory to the Lord. "Let your light so shine before men," Jesus said, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). We're All Invited; The works of God are not wrought because of our righteousness. They are wrought by grace through faith. And that means that any of us can do them. You don't have to be some specially anointed kind of instrument. Let your life be as a garden where God can come to enjoy the fruit you are producing as you abide in Christ. James says that Elijah was a man of passions just like us (see James 5:17). He became discouraged, he got upset, he got angry, he blew it. Yet he prayed and it didn't rain for three years. Elijah was not some superholy kind of prophet. He wasn't a mystic. He was a person exactly like us, with the same kind of feelings we have - the same kind of discouragements. Yet God listened to him because of his faith. That same potential is yours. All it takes is believing the Lord and trusting in Him. Since you've begun in the Spirit, you must continue in the Spirit. Having begun in faith, you must continue in faith. Don't degenerate into works; don't let your Christian experience become a bore. Don't become a factory worker, but let your life be as a garden where God can come to enjoy the fruit you are producing as you abide in Christ by faith.

("Why Grace Changes Everything"; Chuck Smith; Chapter 6: "A Garden, Not A Factory")

(AMP Bible; The Everyday Life Bible; Joyce Meyers; Scripture; Commentaries; Past Pastor Sermons; Dictionary; 2006; pg 274-276)
(Word 9 Bible Software; 2010; Concordance, Dictionary, Scripture, Sermons of Saints past, Devos; Sparkling Gems From The Greek)