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THE PROMISES OF GOD WHOSE MOLD ARE YOU IN? LEVITICUS 18:1-5



GOD'S PROMISE TO YOU:

“Obey my words and you will be spared the world’s heartache.”

While there are many differences between Israel’s spiritual experience in the Old Testament and that of the church in the New Testament, here is an important one: the church is made up of people who become believers after being part of a pagan culture. Believers in Christ come out of a pagan, non-Christian life and learn to live as Christians. On the other hand, Israel was prepared by God to move into a pagan environment as believers. They were taken out of Egypt and then instructed by God in the desert before moving in and confronting a very pagan and immoral group of tribes in the Promised Land.

The famous rendering of Romans 12:2 by the J.B. Phillips New Testament—“Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold”—was perfect for the Christians in Rome. They were surrounded by a pagan culture, susceptible to the pressure all around them to revert to their pre-Christian lifestyle. Israel, however, was about to move from the desert into an arena (Canaan) where they would encounter many vile practices—especially in the realm of sexual immorality and perversion. God’s basic instruction to his chosen people in Leviticus 18 was this: “When you enter Canaan, your jaws are going to drop. You’re not going to believe some of their practices. They may look enticing, but they are a death trap. If you copy the Canaanite lifestyle and get involved in their perversion, you will disintegrate as a people. Trust me on this; I

am the Lord. If you keep what I am about to tell you, you will live. If you do not, you will perish.”

The key element for the Israelites was “trust.” It was not necessary for them to experience sin in order to discover that God’s words bring life. Nor is it necessary for us. If we will take God at his word—“the man who obeys [my words] will live”—then we will never experience the heartache that comes from being squeezed into the world’s mold. Unlike Israel, we are already living in the midst of the world. Obeying God’s word will keep us from dying spiritually in it.

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REFLECTIONS

Reflections on God's revealed truth
MARCH 2010

TURNING FEAR INTO *Faith* (a prayer for freedom)

Dear Father, there have been many times when I have wandered in the wilderness of disbelief, murmuring and rebellion, wondering indeed if You really have my best interests at heart. I know that I make life far more difficult when I question Your purposes and resist what would, in the end, be the smoother and simpler course. Sin against You complicates and confuses my life, and only leads to pain and regret in the end. Please give me the gift of Your wisdom and grace to think biblically in these moments of doubting Your goodness and provision, so that by Your power, I will turn fear into faith. Then I will be increasingly liberated from the oppressive weight of circumstances and view my situation in light of Your perfect character. I desire to grow in faith, hope and love and to cling firmly to Your loving purposes.

A teaching letter to encourage believers to Develop a Clear Mind and a warm heart



THE PURSUIT OF GOD—PART 13

This Reflections series is based on my 11-part CD teaching series on A. W. Tozer's spiritual classic, *The Pursuit of God*.

Removing the Veil

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." (Hebrews 10:19)

Removing the Veil Over Your Heart

God has removed the sin barrier. Now comes his invitation. Twice the writer of Hebrews implores us to "draw near." "Let us therefore *draw near* with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (4:16). And, ". . . let us *draw near* with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (10:22). The call goes forth, yet we hesitate, lingering at the entrance, reluctant to push on inside. The years pass and we grow old and tired of milling around in the outer courts of our bodily temple. What hinders us? Have we so quickly forgotten who it is that waits for us? Is he not the Father who is mighty and awesome in presence, the maker of things visible and invisible in Heaven and Earth? Is he not the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, being of one substance with the Father? Is he not the Spirit that is holy, the one who proceeds from the Father and Son, and who empowers and indwells?

The need for divine communion is desperate. Tozer observes that, "The world is perishing for lack of the knowledge of God and the Church is famishing for want of His presence. The instant cure of most of our religious ills would be to enter the Presence in spiritual experience, to become suddenly aware that we are in God and God is in us." The truths of the ancient creeds roll off our tongues so

easily, while the Person of whom they speak waits within. And who is it that we keep waiting? It is the . . .

"One God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. One Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God; begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God; begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father. And the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified."

It is a holy Trinity of Persons in one God, for . . .

" . . . we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the glory equal and the majesty co-eternal."

The veil of sin has been removed. The call for communion has gone forth. The need for each one to hear, to touch, to taste and see that the Lord is good, has never been greater. What is it that continues to stand between us and our heart's true home? It is the veil of *self* that yet remains to be torn down. Tozer writes, "Self is the opaque veil that hides the face of God from us. It can be removed only in spiritual experience, never by mere instruction. We may as well try to instruct leprosy out of our system. There must be a work of God in destruction before we are free. We must invite the cross to do its deadly work within us."

He continues with the stark reminder, *"Let us remember that when we talk of the rending of the veil we are speaking in a figure, and the thought of it is almost poetical, almost pleasant, but in actuality there is nothing pleasant about it. In human experience that veil is made of living spiritual tissue; it is composed of the sentient, quivering stuff of which our whole beings consist, and to touch it is to touch us where we feel pain. To tear it away is to injure us, to hurt us and to make us bleed. To say otherwise is to make the cross no cross and death no death at all. It is never fun to die. To rip through the dear and tender stuff of which life is made can never be anything but deeply painful. Yet that is what the cross did to Jesus and that is what the cross would do to every man to set him free."*

We must abandon whatever worthless tinkering we are doing with our inner lives and give up all trial-and-error attempts at ridding ourselves of that veil. We must quit hoping that someday, somehow, we will stumble on some trick that magically

wakes up to find that he's become a dragon. The nasty nature inside of him soon manifests itself onto his external body. He now looks to be on the outside what he is on the inside. Eventually, the Lion in the story, who represents Christ, tells him, "Do you want to become a boy again?" Of course he does. And so the lad, now in dragon skin, tries to remove the dragon nature using his own talons to cut it off. As he cuts he finds that it is very painful. Eventually, he succeeds in tearing it off. But he soon finds that there is another dragon beneath. So, he cuts that skin off as well. Still he finds that there is another one, and another one under that. Finally, the Lion says, "You will not be able to do it yourself. I will have to do it for you." So, Eustice Clarence Scrubb grudgingly gives permission for the Lion to cut away the dragon skin and return him to being a boy again. Using his claw, the Lion cuts so deeply that the dragon-boy feels he will surely die. It is so painful, so agonizing. When the Lion is finished, the boy looks down and sees a very thick dragon skin lying on the ground. The Lion tells him to

"Self is the opaque veil that hides the face of God from us. It can be removed only in spiritual experience, never by mere instruction." —A. W. Tozer

removes our veil. It will never happen. God must do everything for us. Our part is simply to yield to the painful but effective process by confessing our poverty of spirit, forsaking our feeble attempts, repudiating the self-life, and then slowly beginning to live out the fact that he has been successful and that it is gone.

In the *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, one of the books in C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* series, the story begins with the words "There was a boy named Eustice Clarence Scrubb, and he deserved it." He was a nasty little guy. Later in the story he

go wash in a pool of water. When he comes out of the water he's a boy once again.

The imagery is powerful. What we need done, we are unable to do ourselves. But God, being unwilling to violate our free will, will not do what only he can do without first receiving our permission. But when we agree to let him do his work, he immediately proceeds with the transformation process. Make no mistake; it is a bloody and painful process. Yet when it is over, he cleans up our lives and gives us our humanity back. We are transformed into precious children, beloved by their Father.



TAKING THE STEPS OF FAITH

Lord, I thank You that You have created me in Your image and have given me the dignity of being capable of moral choices that genuinely affect my journey and destiny. By Your grace, may I exercise this moral and spiritual capacity by taking the steps of faith, especially in times when my flesh resists this process and when fears prevent me from trusting You. I realize that there are times in my life when You ask me to make the first step, because You don't want to force me into obedience but desire my willing cooperation with Your glorious intentions. I recognize that without You I cannot, but without me You will not. May I strengthen my resolve to be Your loving servant and child so that I will pursue the course You have set before me in spite of my fears and natural resistance.

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