

A.W. TOZER

Compiled and Edited by James L. Snyder

LIVING
— AS A —
CHRISTIAN

TEACHINGS FROM FIRST PETER



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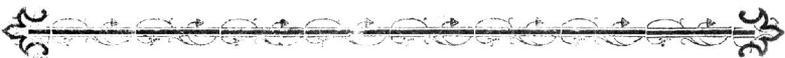
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INTRODUCTION



THE AMAZING CHRISTIAN



What is a Christian? The contemporary scene is flooded with all kinds of erroneous ideas of what it means to be a Christian, most taken from the culture around us. For some, the Christian is simply a cleaned-up person trying to do the best he can. Some have crafted a template into which they try to squeeze the Christian. But the Christian does not fit, and the result is a caricature, without any power or authority.

In this book, Dr. Tozer is writing to the Christian whose love and affection for Christ is the all-consuming passion of his life . . . every day. He is not writing about the carnal Christian who has not surrendered himself to Christ's rule in his life. Throughout this book, he makes one assumption: that he is talking to someone who has experienced a genuine conversion experience. He insists that we must have the utmost confidence in our conversion experience and trust the Holy Spirit to guide us day by day in the way that brings the most glory to the Christ who died for us. Tozer begins where most writers end. To him, conversion is not the end but rather

the beginning of a wonderful walk of faith and trust and, yes, of works.

It was interesting to me to see Dr. Tozer's comment about Hebrews 11. Most of us look at that as the "faith chapter" of the Bible, but Tozer, in his inimitable way, calls it the "works chapter." Faith without works is dead, and there has to be a balance between what we believe and what we live. Nobody can walk far on only one foot—we need the balance of both feet, and Dr. Tozer gives us quite a spiritual balance as he describes from God's Word what the Christian walk is all about.

Certainly, we need to celebrate what we have been saved from. That should bring to us a great deal of praise and thanksgiving that God has saved us from a life of wretchedness. But, more important, we need to celebrate what we have been saved unto. The Christian walk is the forward walk. It is the "looking unto Jesus" that is most important. Every redeemed person has a specific destiny to fulfill. Discovering that destiny and fulfilling it in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit is the joy of the Christian's daily walk.

We must start with Christ, continue with Christ and, finally, end with Christ. It is always Jesus Christ, our all in all; anything outside of Christ is not part of the Christian's life and walk.

Throughout the book, Dr. Tozer spends time developing the theme of salvation as God's master plan for man. The preciousness of God's plan of salvation reveals the value He places on man. Salvation is not a casual thing to God, and should not be thought of carelessly by us. To use a favorite Tozer illustration, it is not put a nickel in the slot, pull the lever, take a box of salvation and then go your separate way. Rather, what salva-

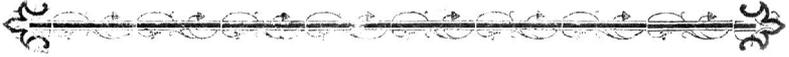
tion does to the person who embraces Jesus Christ is nothing short of revolutionary, and his walk from that moment on is nothing short of miraculous.

This amazing Christian is the reflection of salvation's glory in the world around him. Not only is salvation a precious and wonderful thing, but also so is the Christian. Salvation is not an end in itself, but rather a plan for man to get back into the center of God's love and favor. Everything about the Christian reflects the glory of his salvation. All heaven looks with pride upon this curious creature called a Christian.

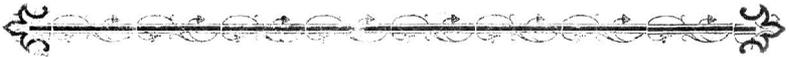
This Christian can withstand anything that comes against him, including heresy of all kinds that have infested the Church from the beginning. Tozer describes these heresies and how the Christian rises above them, including the blatant attack of Christianity's archenemy, the devil. It also includes the Christian's attitude toward persecution and suffering for the cause of Christ. This remarkable Christian is in the world, but he is not of it. Therefore, how he lives in front of the unsaved is crucial.

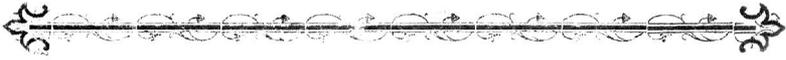
Because of the Christian's position in Christ, seated in the heavenlies, no matter what befalls, he is above all harm and can rest in the security of Jesus Christ, the victor. Dr. Tozer says, "No one, no thing, no circumstance can harm a good man." This "good man" is immortal, and when his destiny on earth has been completed, his destiny continues in what he has inherited through salvation.

James Snyder



TEACHINGS FROM
FIRST PETER





THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVES IN THINGS HE CANNOT SEE



*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not,
yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

1 PETER 1:8

Of all the apostles, Simon Peter, in my opinion, looms ahead of them all. His life and ministry are quite interesting to pursue. One of the most colorful of the disciples, he was the most vocally devoted to his Lord and ready to die for Him. I could raise some concern about some of his attitudes and actions revealed to us in Scripture, but down deep inside, Peter was radically committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, which is why I hold him in such admiration. He did not often know how to show his love, but after that mighty day of Pentecost (see Acts 2), Peter, along with the rest of the disciples, was never the same again. He became a mighty force for God.

His writings are not eloquent like those of the apostle Paul's, for he takes a rather down-to-earth approach to Christianity. His words do not rise up in moments of ecstasy and oratory as Paul's often did, but they have a way of presenting truth that the average Christian can grasp. By reading his epistles, I can almost hear him preaching simple and practical Bible sermons. In the language of the common man, Peter tells in his epistles about this amazing, indestructible Christian, of which he is a part, who believes even when he cannot see that in which he believes.

In 1 Peter 1:8, Peter begins his description of this amazing Christian. He uses two expressions very much alike except in tense: "whom having not seen" and "now ye see him not." "Having not seen" has to do with any possibility of seeing Him in the past, and "now ye see him not" has to do with any possibility of seeing Him now.

Christians, who are God's by sanctification of the Spirit and having been sprinkled with the blood of Christ, are believers in that which they cannot see and that which they have not seen. An old proverb says, "Seeing is believing." Of course, there is a kind of believing that must depend upon seeing. However, it is merely a conclusion drawn from the testimony of the senses. This is not New Testament believing at all. New Testament believing believes a report about things unseen, which is the difference between New Testament faith and every other kind of so-called believing.

These Christians believed in the invisible, another way of stating it, and this brings it close to Hebrews 11:27: "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he en-

dured, as seeing him who is invisible.” Abraham was able to endure because he was looking at the things that were invisible.

Being what we are, we pretty much trust what we can physically see; but if we could see all around us, if we could see the wonders, the invisible things of the creation, we would never be lonely for a moment and we would never doubt what is unseen. The invisible things are there, but they are simply not seen without faith. Abraham had faith and was able to carry on because he could see that which was not seen and could not be seen. And in so doing, these Christians mentioned in 1 Peter experienced the invisible so vividly and so satisfyingly that they were able to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Today we sing songs that are so dishonest that I sometimes hesitate to sing them. Yet when we sing the average hymn, if God Almighty compelled us to be entirely 100 percent honest, we simply could not sing them because their words would not be true of us.

Let me offer the words of a few hymns as examples. Here are the words of one song we sing often in our churches: “My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine!” It is a beautiful song written by Ray Palmer (1808–1887). When he wrote the last line—“O bear me safe above, a ransomed soul!” Palmer said, “I was so moved by what I was writing and what I was thinking about, that the last verse was written in a flood of tears.” That man meant it, but I wonder how many of us mean it when we sing that hymn today? It is only by a charitable adaptation of the truth that we are able to sing most of the hymns we sing.

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” written by Charles Wesley (1707–1788), is another hymn we sing with very little meaning.

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down;
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;
All thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation;
Enter every trembling heart.

I remember an old camp meeting song popular years ago, “Like a Mighty Sea,” written by A. I. Zelle:

Like a mighty sea, like a mighty sea,
Comes the love of Jesus sweeping over me;
The waves of glory roll, the shouts I can’t control;
Comes the love of Jesus sweeping o’er my soul.

I can easily believe that the brother who wrote those words was so lost in the grace of God that when he said, “The waves of glory roll, the shouts I can’t control,” he was literally telling the truth. Yet, many who sing “the shouts I can’t control” *can* control their shouts easier than they can control their lust and their temper.

If the average Christian were to sing, “The waves of glory roll, my tongue I can’t control,” he would be telling the truth. But to say, “The shouts I can’t control” is to lie in the face of God Almighty. Yet we do an awful lot of lying. I suggest if you cannot feel it, do not sing it. Let us compromise and put it like this: let us sing it saying in our hearts, “Oh, God, it isn’t true,

but I want it to be true. It isn't so, Lord, but please make it so." I think God would understand and honor our desire.

If he or she is honest, the average Christian will sing, "See how I grovel here below, fond of these earthly toys," rather than sing, "The waves of glory roll, my shouts I can't control." How can we become the ones who sing in honesty "My shouts I can't control"?

The Christians Peter writes about saw the invisible, believed in it and rejoiced with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." I do not know how to tell you how to get it; I only know how they got it. They got it by believing in what they could not see, and that is the only way that you and I will ever have joy unspeakable and a shout that we cannot control.

Belief in Things Not Seen

The characteristic of a Christian that Peter is trying to establish here is that he believes in things he cannot see. This Christian believes in the invisible. He believes that the real world coexists with the physical world, touching this world and accessible to this world. There is never any contradiction between spirit and reality. The contradiction is between spirit and matter, never between the spiritual and the real. So the believer accepts and believes in a real world of which God is the King, an eternal kingdom, an eternal world, a spiritual and invisible world co-existing with and touching and accessible to this world. Heaven is not so far away that we must take a jet and continue through light years of travel to get to heaven. The average Christian thinks of heaven as being so far away, and only by accommodation do we sing about heaven being near and "glory coming down our souls to greet."

The eternal world of which God is the King is inhabited by immortal spirits and has taken our dead Christian loved ones for a little time out of our sight. That world is as real, more real, in fact, than the physical world with which we are so very familiar. There is a wonderful sense of coexisting in our world. This is not like the great vacuum gap between the stars in the heavens. You see a star in the heavens, and between that star and the next star are a few million light years of space. The visible world that is all around us is not separated from those invisible things.

It is a commonly known fact that two things of equal density cannot occupy the same place at the same time. But here is something we must remember on the other side: Two things that are not of equal density may coexist in the same place at the same time.

For instance, if you are sitting in front of your fireplace with the fire blazing, there would be two things coexisting—light and heat. They are not equal density; they are not mutually exclusive; they are mutually compatible and are the two things coming out of that fireplace.

Consider also the sun in the heaven above. Two things come from the sun at the same time, coexisting with each other: heat and light. We are warmed by the sun and we are lighted by the sun. Light and heat do not exclude each other; they are compatible and entwined with each other and live together. Therefore, the world below that God has made, which we call nature, and the world above that God has made, which He calls heaven, are coexistent.

Not only are they coexistent with each other, but they also touch each other and are accessible to each other so that God

could put a ladder upon the earth and have its top reach the sky with angels ascending and descending. The one world is accessible to the other world either way; the gates swing both directions so that God could send His only begotten Son down and He could carry Stephen up. We can send our prayers up, and the answers can come down. The two worlds touch and are co-existent and accessible one to the other.

This Christian that Peter writes about believes in the invisible world. And this distinguishes him from every kind of materialism. During holiday seasons, our media boasts of the spiritual. However, after the season is over, they go back to materialism. Even while they are celebrating the spiritual, they do it in a materialistic way. The Christian, however, sharply distinguishes from all kinds of materialism. He does not put a lot of value in what he sees. He does not limit his belief to only what he is able to touch with his hands. He endures, seeing the invisible. The immaterialist is not ghostly and phantom, but spiritual. That which is spiritual has real existence but is spirit instead of matter. The Christian believes that and lives in the light of it, which distinguishes him forever from all brands of materialism.

It also distinguishes him from all kinds of superstition and idolatry. The idolater also believes in the invisible, but the difference is that a Christian is one whose faith in the invisible has been corrected and chastened and purified by divine revelation.

A heathen can kneel down before a stone and if he is an intelligent heathen, you might ask him, "Why do you worship that stone?" He could answer, "I don't; I worship the deity resident in the stone."

The Greeks used to kneel in front of Mount Olympus, and if you said to them, “Why are you worshiping Mount Olympus?” they would say, “We do not worship the mountain; we worship the gods in the mountain.” Even today, there are those who will kneel before statues in churches, and if you ask them, “Why do you worship that image?” they say, “We don’t worship that image, we worship God of whom that image reminds us.”

The Christian’s View of the Invisible

It is entirely possible to be a believer in the invisible and not be a Christian. Many people fall into this category. But it is not possible to be a Christian and not believe in the invisible. It is possible to believe that there is some kind of spooky world somewhere that must be placated with rabbit’s feet, strange sayings, chains around our neck and medallions and all sorts of things. That is a belief in the invisible, but it is a pagan, erroneous belief.

When Jesus Christ came and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospels, He stood up, opened His mouth and talked to us, correcting that false and sinful belief in superstitious things by telling us what the real world is. He was the only one who had ever been there to come back and tell us. Abraham died, and his body sleeps in the cave of the field of Machpelah, while his spirit is with God; but he has never been back to tell us what it is like. Jesus, however, has been there from eternity, and when He came to earth, He told us of things of heaven and chided us because we did not accept what He said.

So the Christian is not a materialist that only believes in the validity of all material things. He is not an idolater, believing

only vaguely in the existence of another world. He believes in what he has been taught by the One who had been there and came across the threshold into our world, smelling of myrrh and aloes out of the ivory palaces (see Ps. 45:8), fragrant from the presence of the eternal King.

The Christian's Trust in the Invisible

Not only does a Christian believe in the invisible world but he also counts on it. He acts, plans and lives as one who counts on the reality of the invisible. On the opposite side, the man of the earth does not believe in another world, or if he believes in it, he nods dutifully toward the belief in another world, but he does not let it change his plans any. He acts just the same as if there were no other world. He lays his plans precisely the same as if there were no invisible world, and he continues to live as if heaven is a myth and does not exist.

But the Christian counts on the other world, so that the invisible presence of God in His eternal kingdom, and the spirits made perfect in the holy church of the first-born, and the Holy Ghost and the invisible world actually influence his life. The invisible actually shapes his plans, determines his habits, comforts, consoles and supports him.

It is a comforting thought that God is near us. It is a comforting thought that there are invisible worlds near us. It consoles us to know that when Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, angels came to comfort Him, and He could have had legions of angels by His side. Nothing has changed. As the poem "The Kingdom of God" by Francis Thompson (1859-1907) proclaims:

The angels keep their ancient places—
Turn but a stone and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces,
That miss the many-splendored thing.

Our unbelieving hearts have missed “the many-splendored thing.” Angels are still here. Our friends on the other side of the ecclesiastical stone hedge are great for angels and celebrate the angelic host almost any time, day or night. But I have a sneaking suspicion there is a closer relation between their concept of angels and the pagan concept of Mount Olympus than there is of the New Testament concept. Because they go in big for Saint Angels, we do not need to turn our backs on angels and say they are not here. They are here, and Jesus said about the little child, “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10).

Because pagan religion has mixed with Christianity and has created a perverted and false view of the angelic ministry is no reason for turning our backs on the whole thing. Because the Muslims pray falsely and dutifully five times a day is no reason for me not to pray. Because the Mormons have their Book of Mormon is no reason I am going to kick the Bible out into the alley. Because the Christian Scientists meet in a church building is no reason why I am going tear some church building down. The fact of counterfeit should never force us to throw out the real thing.

Look at a real quarter and you read the words “Liberty, In God We Trust.” On the other side is “United States of America,

E Pluribus Unum, Quarter Dollar.” I have never to my knowledge handled a counterfeit quarter, but if I had a counterfeit quarter and somebody pitched it back to me and said it was counterfeit, I would not take out all my quarters and throw them out in the back yard. Just because there is counterfeit abroad is no reason why I should reject the truth. If some people make too much of angels, that is no reason why I should get even with them and speak too little of them.

Quaker educator Thomas Kelly pointed out that we live on two planes: the plane of the natural and the plane of the spiritual. That is why a Christian is such a wonderful, weird, strange and puzzling creature. He is both animal and spirit, insisting upon living for the spiritual while down here in his mortal body, making a Christian a funny fellow.

Take for example, two men living on the same street together at number 1631 and number 1633, side by side. They are as different as night and day. One is a good-natured, easygoing, relaxed, downright old sinner on his way to hell but does not believe it. He is easy to get along with, bothers nobody, is friendly and waves when he goes down the street. He is a sinner, an Esau, a good-natured rebel on his way to hell.

Living alongside of him is a Christian, one that has been born again and has been given the blessed Holy Ghost as the wedding ring, but he has his troubles. He weeps when there is nothing to weep about and is moody when there is no reason. He is preoccupied when somebody is standing next to him wanting to talk. When the man next door cannot keep his radio off he’s worried about whether there has been bombing overseas. He may put his Bible under his arm and start off

somewhere to a street meeting or to a prayer meeting. He is not as comfortable a fellow as the sinner is, and he does not act quite the same.

Why? Because the sinner lives on only one plane—the physical—and the Christian lives on two planes—the physical and the spiritual. In his body, he is down here in the flesh; but in his spirit, he is up yonder with God. And the result is that he is not as comfortable to be around as he might be. I have always said prophets are never comfortable people to have around, but they are indispensable if we are not going to rot.

The Christian's Preoccupation with the Invisible

It is characteristic of the Christian to be preoccupied with the invisible. Let me use the Lord's Supper as an illustration. What is a sacrament? A sacrament is where the invisible meets and touches the visible. Eternal meets and touches the temporal. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament wherein we use the material as a thin garment to disguise the spiritual, and we use the temporal as a plate upon which we serve the eternal. That has always been the belief of the Christian.

There are two schools of thought that center on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The first is that the elements actually become visible—the invisible becomes visible—and that when you take the bread from the tray, you are touching consciously and lifting the very body that Mary gave to Jesus. That seems unworthy of a serious answer.

The second school of thought believes the invisible is present in, underneath and behind the visible, and I believe in that.

Wherever faith has eyes to see, there is a smiling presence of the Son of God. I believe that in the Lord's Supper, in the bread and the wine, we can trace it, we can know where it came from; we bought it. There is nothing magical about it. It could be fed to the birds; any sinner could drink the cup; there is nothing magical about it, but it is an object lesson. It sets forth in material terms the spiritual. It sets forth in temporal terms the eternal. And wherever faith is present, we touch and handle things unseen.

An illustration of this would be in the celebration of the Lord's Table. Even in the Early Church, some Christians became so engrossed with material things that they failed to recognize the spiritual. They drank the wine and enjoyed it and ate the bread and were full, but in so doing they did not have faith in the invisible. They were not discerning the Lord's body (see 1 Cor. 11:29-30).

Throughout the Scripture, especially in the writings of the apostle Paul, the believers were warned about eating and drinking the Lord's Supper as a mere carnal thing. For many it became just a meal set before them to enjoy. This materialistic thinking grieved God. The Lord's Supper is more than just material elements; rather, for the man or woman of faith it is through this material gateway that we reach the spiritual.

The spiritual and the invisible and the eternal are right here. Faith recognizes that. This amazing Christian that Peter writes about puts his faith in the invisible, in that which he has not seen, so that the invisible has become visible.