

#2
January 12, 2004

a scrapbook of life in Christ

the Journey

Thus says the Lord,
"What injustice did your fathers find in Me,
That they went far from Me
And walked after emptiness and became empty?
"They did not say, 'Where is the Lord
Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt,
Who led us through the wilderness,
Through a land of deserts and of pits,
Through a land of drought and of deep darkness,
Through a land that no one crossed
And where no man dwelt?'
"I brought you into the fruitful land
To eat its fruit and its good things.
But you came and defiled My land,
And My inheritance you made an abomination.
"The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?'
And those who handle the law did not know Me;
The rulers also transgressed against Me,
And the prophets prophesied by Baal
And walked after things that did not profit."

(Jeremiah 2:5-8)

A MUTUAL CONVERSE

I snubbed God this morning.

Oh, it wasn't malicious. I didn't turn away in disgust, or curse His name. I didn't, in the spirit of fleshly comradery, badmouth Him to someone who cared nothing about the condition of my or their soul. But it was a snub nonetheless.

Most of us have been there—especially those of us with long, dangling roots in the faith, those of us who first heard of Jesus in the Beginner's Sunday School class, or began hearing the words and concepts of the Christian faith in a church service of our fragile youth. Most of us, at some time in our more jaded adulthood, have snubbed God in the very same way.

It is a familiar moment: We are reading a devotional—because we're supposed to, right? Christians are supposed to read devotionals—when a Scripture passage is quoted that is so familiar that we can almost, if not literally, quote it by heart. We have read it and heard it so many times that the keen edge of its blade has become dulled by time and sheer repetition. And in that moment we make a hasty and rather rude decision: We decide that our time is more valuable than God's.

Stop Me if You've Heard This One

There is the temporal equivalent to this situation. A friend or acquaintance begins an old hackneyed saw; within a few words we nod our head in recognition, and with a grimacing smile playing at the corners of our mouth we stop him with, "Yeah. I've heard that one." We don't need to hear again the old joke—and it wasn't *that* funny at the first telling. We may be within our rights with our friend's redundant attempt at humor, but there is a generous helping of arrogance on our part when we treat the Almighty with the same dismissive regard.

That attitude—that easy sloughing off of God's word—says two things about us. First, that we consider our time to be too rare and too valuable to be spent in repetitive communion with the Father. After all, we must be efficient with our

time: we could be out saving souls, or healing broken hearts, giving ourselves as a "living sacrifice." God is logical, and orderly, isn't He? Surely He respects the careful way in which we manage our time.

Second, this attitude betrays our opinion that we have already gleaned everything there is to know about a familiar passage of Scripture. We understand the words that comprise it, the point the passage is making, and how it fits into its context. What more is there, for pity sake?

Job done. Finis.

Of course, God is buying none of this. And, speaking of familiarity, He is all *too* familiar with our callous disregard for what He has to say—whether in prayer, or in the pages of His book. His timeless, longsuffering love for us means that He will keep trying from *His* end, but He is saddened by the apathetic response of His child.

That Glimmering Moment

The infinitude of an invisible, all-powerful God is not difficult for the average human being to grasp. It is easy to understand that the Almighty, the Creator of everything that is, would be, in His nature and behavior, infinite light years beyond anything we could imagine. But then,

We have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found Him, we need no more seek Him. This is set before us as the last word in orthodoxy, and it is taken for granted that no Bible-taught Christian ever believed otherwise. Thus the whole testimony of the worshiping, seeking, singing church on that subject is crisply set aside. The experiential heart-theology of a grand army of fragrant saints is rejected in favor of a smug interpretation of Scripture which would certainly have sounded strange to an Augustine, a Rutherford or a Brainerd. In the midst of this great chill there are some, I rejoice to acknowledge, who will not be content with shallow logic. They will admit the force of the argument, and then turn away with tears to hunt some lonely place and pray, "O God, show me Thy glory." They want to taste, to touch with their hearts, to see with their inner eyes the wonder that is God.

(A.W. Tozer)

strangely, we forget about this singular infinite quality of God when it comes to His ability to speak to us through His word. Somehow in our dim imaginings we

think not only that His book is finite, but that equally finite is His ability to communicate new colors and shadings, new pertinent applications of His truth through it.

But just as each of us has demonstrated these ubiquitous bad manners, each of us has also experienced that glimmering, crystalline moment when an already familiar Bible passage leaps off the page and smacks us up-side the head with new revelation—or its timely application to a specific situation. In that moment we marvel, we gasp, we shudder with holy ecstasy at God's intimate condescension to our humble life. And, in that brief moment, we clutch His

word to our breast, vowing never to release this precious handbook from our grasp.

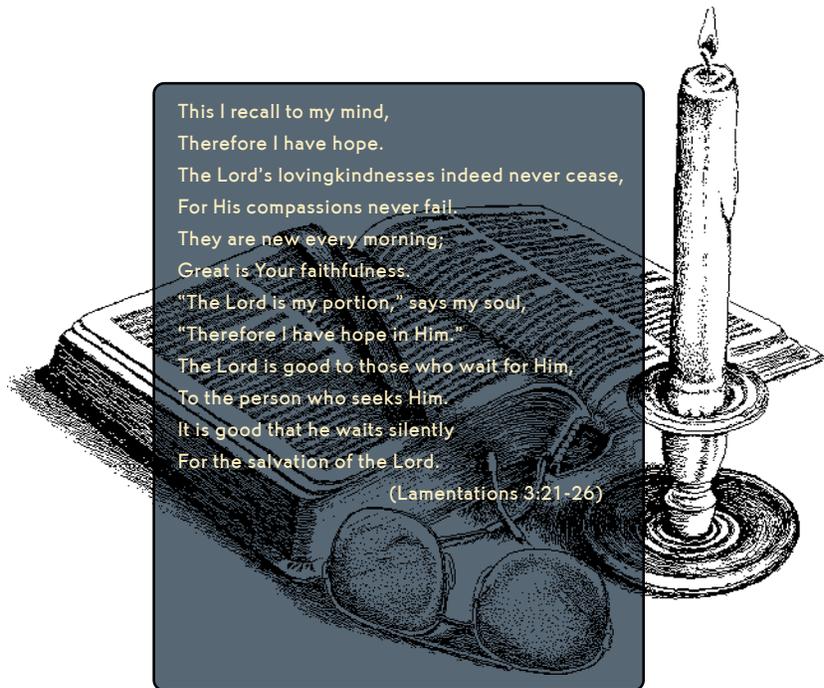
But we do, of course. A week or two later we are back to skimming and abridging—as if mentally writing our own *Reader's Digest* version of God's word.

And, again, He sighs.

Around the time of Christmas each year, we hear the old familiar imagery of God "seeking" man, in the form of the baby Jesus, to draw unregenerate humanity unto Himself. While that is true, it is equally true that regenerate man is to be seeking God—seeking His wisdom, embracing His Spirit, learning from the example of His Son. The spiritually minded Christian (and, sadly, there are many who are not) is to embrace the process of sanctification that will gradually change him or her into the image of Christ.

One does not fall in love, then ignore the object of one's desire. True love is ever-growing, ever-deepening within the experience of mutual converse. We speak to God with our heart; He speaks to us through His word.

Perhaps it is time we stop assuming we have heard it all before.



This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.
The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.
"The Lord is my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I have hope in Him."
The Lord is good to those who wait for Him,
To the person who seeks Him.
It is good that he waits silently
For the salvation of the Lord.

(Lamentations 3:21-26)

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