

THE FRUIT GOD LOOKS FOR

The church today, despite the many blessings of God, is no better than either Judah or Israel of old. The hearts of God's people have not come back to that place of being one with God and to move on with Him. We saw in the previous issue that Micah was not the least bit impressed with all that was happening in the midst of Judah. He was one of those prophets who always saw what was on the heart of God and only identified with what would satisfy God. It was a good thing that happened

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in the days of King Hezekiah, but that should have led them to a deeper and closer relationship with God. It could have been something that moved on to the depths in God. As we have heard before, we should be careful to make sure that our lives are not merely external in character. That is a very dangerous place to be in, even for us, in these days. The Lord, our God, condemns such an attitude. Remember, Jesus often told the Pharisees that they did all things to only be seen of men. This is what God hates even today. These were the 'transgressions' of Judah because they were given to orthodoxy, to outwardness, and to a legalistic life. This is something that could also damage our spiritual life. We need to be very careful of such transgressions that could seriously damage our lives. And this is the discrepancy prophet Micah saw, **looking beneath the externals of ritual and form, Micah evaluated the hearts of God's people and found them to be as perverse and ungodly as the heart of the men of Israel, who dwelt in the Northern Kingdom.**

We can be orthodox about our doctrines, and legalistic about our teachings on God's word and yet lack that internal link with that truth, in our lives. In other words, we can be wholly religious in our lives, paying close attention to our quiet times, and our daily devotions of the Word, (where we display an orthodox and a legalistic spirit) and miss the aspects that touch the inward man in our lives. May God help us and save us. Micah was not impressed with all that was happening outwardly in Judah, but he was highly sensitive to the Spirit of God so that he might ascertain the heart of God for His people.

A Fresh Expectation

God has led us into a New Year with an expectation. In our lives, the time that has gone by is not going to come back to anyone of us. The spiritual moments we have experienced in the past will not be repeated to us. It is up to us to seek and make good the time that is before us. With honest hearts, we must show God what we need.

In church history, we see that when God brought in reformation and cleansing God wanted the people to move deeper and deeper into His Person and purpose. They experienced some work of God in their lives, but then they settled down and were satisfied with a superficial expression. Are there things that are merely superficial in your life? The things which are merely external, the superficial, and the legalistic, neither bring growth nor any habitation of truth into our lives. We need to be open to the Spirit to help us and examine us. If our lives are to be dictated and governed by external and superficial things, then there will be no true spiritual fruit in our lives. Good things can happen in our daily lives or on Sundays, but as apostle Paul says, it is God who weighs it all. Only the Holy Spirit can help us. All of us can live in the realm of orthodoxy, legalism, and externalities and still be coming to the House of God. As we have seen several times before, we can be satisfied to be a part of "the crowd". We will find that we are there outwardly, but our inner life is starved or altogether missing.

The externals and the routine do not bring growth or fruit in our lives. Many a time the routine dictates our lives. The outer things can govern us despite our desires for closer ties with the Lord. It could happen on a Sunday as well! God's people can thus live in orthodoxy and legalism. Many have lost that inward link with the Lord. A man of God once said, "**We come to a place where what has been determines what is and what is determines what will be.**" In other words, what had been in the past determines what we are today. **What we are today is the result of what has been governing our lives until yesterday.** This is a dangerous state to be in. Beloved, what has been should never govern our lives. **What has been should not become a lord to tell us what is, and what is, should not be ruler to tell us what we will be.** The things of our yesterdays should not lord over our todays. God's people are to grow and bear fruit with an inward link with the Lord. The Lord Jesus said that every branch has to abide in the vine to bring forth fruit.

Beneath everything that was

happening in Judah, Micah saw a heart that was not really with God and His ongoing purpose for their lives. **As long as we are moving with the Lord and as long as there is growth, there is always an unpredictability.** We are never fully sure because of various uncertainties in our lives. When we are moving on with God then there will be uncertainties and even unpredictability. That is where we must be open and become dependent on the Lord. For example, in the olden days, when we went to church, we knew what songs we would sing and there was nothing that we could call unpredictable in the worship. Everything was so organized that nothing was uncertain. The congregation stood up and sat down in a routine form or ritualistic way in response to the event at hand. However, God has brought us out of the traditional systems of man. Now the question is do we come to the House of God with the same mentality? Are we those who know everything that is going to happen in our worship gathering? That means there is no expectation beyond the normal routine of things, there

is no uncertainty. On the contrary, when we come to the church, we come not knowing how the service will proceed. That shows that we are open and dependent on God. This is very important. We should come to God's house without knowing what is going to happen. We can pray, "Lord, help me to worship You as I ought to worship You. I want to meet with You Lord. I don't know whether I will meet with You or miss You." That is what is meant by linking and moving on with God.

There is yet another kind of heart that does not bother about coming late or singing songs without an inward link and doing what others do without any sense of that inward link with the Lord or any kind of expectation of the move of the Spirit. Surely, you are an orthodox believer if you are satisfied with the external activity of the church. If your thoughts are centered on things outside the church, then all you will wonder is how long will this worship last. There will be no sense of expectation, no longing, nothing but mere routine. There is nothing uncertain. If this is the case, then

let me tell you that you are an orthodox person. One eye is on the watch and one on the cellphone. Ask yourself, does this mean being open and available and centered upon the Lord? All that you are doing is being orthodox and this is the way you have been all along.

Our determination and strong resolve should be, "Lord, I don't want this year to be like the years that have gone by. I want to get into the depths of You and Your Purpose. What I have been in the last year should not dictate what I should be in the coming days and years, but rather I should be open to the Lord for the Holy Spirit to guide me, lead me and take me on." Saints, remember when you would have an expectation in your being, then even in your day to day life you will live with an expectation for God to bring changes in your life.

Our Greatest Enemy

It is important to let God be real in your life. If you bring the Lord into your circumstances, then He is the One who will live

and lead in your lives every day. I see many young brothers and sisters complain, "What is this life? I see the same faces at home; I see the same faces at work; It is the same day, the same office and the same things." But let me tell you that when you look into the face of God before you look at other faces, then their faces will be different and those 'same things' will be different." **When we are in pursuit of Him then He is our refreshing button.** This is so important. The thing that can refresh us is our living relationship with the Lord. May God help open our eyes to behold this! Remember, when we have given ourselves to the Lord then He lives in all our situations. Then that which can refresh us is our relationship with the Lord.

Our greatest enemy is not Satan, **but our greatest enemy is our own self; it lies within. It is this self-life within us that accepts things as they are and settles down and says, "This is the way I am." In other words, that which we believe we have been, always determine what are. So we come to a place**

where what has been determines what is and what is determines what will be. We loosely often say, "This is the way I am, this is the way I will be, and this is the way I will always remain. Who can change me?" This is a dangerous state to be in. That sort of attitude in us, that self in us is the greatest enemy of God's purpose in our life. Let me strongly emphasize that the attitude, "what 'I was' determines what 'I am' today." will lock up our growth as there is no expectation for change.

Micah cried out at the time of the harvest for he looked for fruit but there was no fruit. The tragedy is that he looked for it and he could not find it. Micah 3 says,

*5. Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even pre-prepare war against him.
6. Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye*

shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.

Micah says that there are prophets who do not speak the word of the Lord. They erred and strayed away from the Lord. They, therefore, take the people in a wrong path.

Micah 3:7 KJV. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.

Whatever they speak will not happen. God will not answer them because it is not the word of the Lord.

Mic 3:9-12

*9 Listen to me, you leaders of Israel! you hate justice and twist all that is right
10 You are building Jerusalem on a foundation of murder and corruption.
11 You rulers make decisions based on bribes you priests teach God's laws only for a price; you prophets won't prophesy unless you are paid. Yet all of you claim to depend on*

the Lord. "No harm can come to us," you say," for the Lord is here among us." 12 Because of you, Mount Zion will be plowed like an open field; Jerusalem will be reduced to ruins! A thicket will grow on the heights where the Temple now stands. (NLT)

Mic 3:9-12

9 The leaders of Jacob and the leaders of Israel are Leaders contemptuous of justice, who twist and distort right living,
10 Leaders who build Zion by killing people, who expand Jerusalem by committing crimes.
11 Judges sell verdicts to the highest bidder, priests mass-market their teaching, prophets preach for high fees, All the while posturing and pretending dependence on God: "We've got God on our side. He'll protect us from disaster."
12 Because of people like you, Zion will be turned back into farmland,

Jerusalem end up as a pile of rubble, and instead of the Temple on the mountain, a few scraggly scrub pines. (THE MESSAGE BIBLE)

Beloved, does it not seem that Micah is standing right here in our midst? What a time? These things were prophesied so many years ago and yet those words are so true for today. "Your prophets won't prophesy unless they are paid. You preach God's laws only for a price. You say no harm can come to us for the Lord is here among us. All the prophets are saying God is with us. No harm will come to us for the Lord is among us. Because of you, Mount Zion will be ploughed like an open field. Jerusalem will be reduced to ruins. A thicket will grow on heights where the temple now stands." These are the words that Micah had to speak to God's people. What a tragedy it was. He said, "God's judgments have come because of you". As it says here, "I look for the fruit but do not find any fruit."

Saints, pay attention, the Lord is looking for truth that will bring fruit in His church, but He does

not find it there. What a tragedy that is! God says, that in the season when He looked for it He could not find it. So, we see that the lamentation of Micah was not for the orthodoxy, the legalism, the outwardness! That can never produce the fruit that God is looking for. What God is looking for is - how open our hearts are changes; how obedient we are to His word. That is what God is concerned about. Micah lamented over God's people. And he was able to see what was coming. And what he was able to see was that there was a famine amid many blessings. The harvest had come but the fruit he desired had not come. What does that mean? It talks of a famine amid plenty. How true that is in these times in which we are living? As far as God's work, and the church is concerned, so much is being boasted of today. People claim great statistics in terms of the growth of their ministry, about great accomplishments for the Lord. They profess great gains and achievements in the work of the Lord, but the time of the harvest they are not able to produce what God wants. There is no fruit that God looked for; that cluster of fruit is missing. There is spiritual

poverty all around because nothing is seen that would delight His heart and meet His satisfaction. This is what Micah could see.

Judah placed its confidence in the outward orthodoxy of its ritual, just as many of God's people do today; they place their confidence in the orthodoxy of their doctrine. But God demands more, saints of God!

Micah, in words and expressions, seems to echo the message of the prophet Amos who spoke to the people in the north of Israel. He urged the people to return to God in a way that would be demonstrated by a change of heart—a change of heart that would issue in a lifestyle that will affect every area of their lives. (Amos chapter 5)

Mic 6:6-8

6 Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or

*with ten thousands of
rivers of oil? shall I give my
firstborn for my
transgression, the fruit of
my body for the sin of my
soul?*

*8 He hath shewed thee, O
man, what is good; and
what doth the Lord require
of thee, but to do justly,
and to love mercy, and to
walk humbly with thy God?*

God's Victory Over His People

Let me not end this message with a negative note. I know this is true and this is where we are, but I want to speak a word that goes across to everybody. God is going to visit His people. God's judgments will bring His people to a place of cleansing and thus remove all their iniquity.

Mic 7:16-17
*All the nations of the world
will stand amazed at what
the Lord will do for you.
They will be embarrassed
at their feeble power. They
will cover their mouths in*

*silent awe, deaf to
everything around them.*

*17 Like snakes crawling
from their holes, they will
come out to meet the Lord
our God. They will fear him
greatly, trembling in terror
at his presence. (NLT)*

Saints of God, what a word that is! It is God's unchanging word which says that the nations of the world shall stand amazed because of what the Lord will do for His church. Let me conclude by saying that God will do many things in His church through His judgments and when this happens, all the nations of the world will stand amazed at what the Lord will do for His church and in His church. **They will be ashamed and mortified of their evil power when the church shall arise in the power and glory of the Lord. They will see that they have no real power when they consider all they have done against the church of Jesus Christ through the centuries.** They will cover their mouths in silent awe and shame. Like snakes coming out of holes that eat the dust of the earth, they will come up to meet the Lord our God. Beloved,

think of the glorious end purpose of God in His people!

These are the words that God spoke through Micah. When God brought Israel out of the land of Egypt all the nations heard Him, as far as the land of Canaan. They said we have heard what He did, and they feared. That is a great reality. But what God will do for His church in the end-days will be much more marvelous so that all the nations will be astounded! The Lord is going to startle the nations.

Exodus 15:11

Who is like unto thee, O

LORD, among the gods?

who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Another version says, "Thou stretches out thine hand unto Thy holy habitation. The people shall appeal. When the dukes of Edom shall be amazed then the mighty men of Moab shall take hold upon them and all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

Regardless of what the church is today, let me tell you that a great work of God is going to

come upon His people. He will take a people and bring them to Zion.

Joshua 2:8-10

8 And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;

*9 And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, **and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.***

10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

Let me encourage God's remnant people. This is our God and what God will do in the end times with His church will be much greater. The gentiles and powers of darkness will behold the power of God and they will be ashamed, and they will not be able to do anything. There will be a total victory for the church of Jesus Christ.

I would like to bring something that shook me and encouraged me. Many times, we talk about victory over the enemy. But God began to speak to me, **“My son, victory over the enemy is nothing for me, but what I (God) look for is victory over my own people.”** Not that we are at war with God, but this God is able to have us, fully and completely, and we will not be those who are walking in our own ways. It matters greatly to the Lord where He is LORD over His church. This is what God is looking for. **The most important event will not be Israel’s victory over her enemies, but God’s victory over Israel, His church!** Halleluiah!

Satan is defeated. God is looking to put all the victories under the feet of the church. That is the victory that God is looking for in every local church. Nothing is too difficult for the Lord. Even Pharaoh is nothing, the Amalekites are nothing, the Jebusites are nothing, the Canaanites are nothing, but what God is looking for is Israel, submitted to Him and all the enemy is defeated. This is the victory God is looking for.

Micah 7:18

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

The prophet was confident of one thing. That one thing is the unchanging character of the eternal God. In another translation it says, “where is another God like you?”

The meaning of the word ‘*Micah*’ means “Who is like unto You.”

“Where is a God like you, who forgives the remnant, overlooking the sins of His special people? You will not be angry with your people forever because You delight in showing unfailing love. Once again You will have compassion on us, You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the oceans.” Hallelujah! What a tremendous promise that is! Micah knew that God would not forget His

promise and so he says in verse 20,

Micah 7:19-20

19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

20 Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

Another translation says, "You will show us your faithfulness and unfailing love as you promised to our ancestors Abraham and Jacob long ago." Micah knew God will not go back on His promises or His covenant

agreements with His people. God's people were not always true to God, but He will be true to His people. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim 2:13). What God promised to Abraham, the father of the nation, He will fulfill in his seed (the many sons). To you and your seed (and that seed is His church), He will fulfill in His church. Micah could have sung, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word"

Beloved saints, let's sing that song with all our hearts and let there be expressions of faith before His throne as we march on to God's eternal purpose! Glory to God!



FOLLY *of* BELIEVERS

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF SOUL life can be separated generally into four divisions: natural strength; self-conceit, hard and unyielding towards God; self-styled wisdom with many opinions and plans; and emotional sensation sought in spiritual experiences. These are due to the fact that the life of the soul is self, which in turn is natural strength, and that the faculties of the soul are will, mind and emotion. Because there are these various faculties in the soul, the experiences of many soulish Christians are bound to be extremely unlike.

Some incline more to the mind while others to emotion or will. Although their lives are therefore greatly dissimilar, all nonetheless are soulish lives. Those who turn to the mind may be able to discern the carnality in those who fall under emotion, and vice versa. Both, however, belong to the soul. What is absolutely vital for believers to see is that they must have their true condition exposed by God's light so that they themselves may be liberated by the truth instead of their measuring others with new knowledge. Had God's children been willing to use His light for self-enlightenment their spiritual state would not be so low today.

The most prominent indication of being soulish is a mental search, acceptance and propagation of the truth. For Christians of this type the highest spiritual experience and the profoundest truth serve but to cultivate their minds. This does not necessarily mean that one's spiritual walk is not in any manner affected in a positive way; but it certainly denotes that the prime motive is to gratify the mind. **While believers who are mastered by the mental faculty do indeed have a great appetite for spiritual matters, yet for the satisfaction of this hunger they depend more upon their thoughts than upon God's revelation.** They consume more time and energy in calculating than in praying.

Emotion is what believers mistake most for spirituality. Carnal Christians whose tendency is emotional in character habitually crave sensation in their lives. They desire to sense the presence of God in their hearts or their sensory organs; they yearn to feel a love-fire burning. They want to feel elated, to be uplifted in spiritual life, to be

prosperous in work. True, spiritual believers sometimes do have such sensations, yet their progress and joy are not contingent upon these. **The soulish are quite different in this respect: with such sensations, they can serve the Lord; without them, they can scarcely move a step.**

A very common expression of a soulish walk manifests itself in the will-that power of self-assertion. Through it believers who live in the soul make self the center of every thought, word and action. They want to know for their satisfaction, feel for their enjoyment, labor according to their plan. The hub of their life is self and the ultimate aim is to glorify themselves.

Countless saints are blind to the harmfulness inherent in soulish experience. They consider it right to resist and reject those obviously sinful deeds of the flesh because these defile the spirit, but at the same time are they not justified in walking by the energy of the soul which they share in common with all men and animals? What wrong is there for we men to live

by our natural power provided we do not sin? As long as the teaching of the Bible concerning soul life does not touch their hearts they will be unable to see any reason for denying that life. **If for instance they should transgress Gods law and offend Him, they definitely know this is wrong; but if these same believers try their best to do good and to inspire their inborn virtue, how, they ask, can there be any objection?** In performing God's work they may neither do it zealously nor depend upon His strength, but at least, they will argue, what we do is God's work! Perhaps many of these endeavors are not appointed by God; nevertheless, those activities are not sinful, claim these believers, but rather most excellent! What offense can that kind of work be? Since God has bestowed gifts and talents in abundance, why can we not work with them? Are we not to engage our talents? If we are not talented we can do nothing; if talented, we should employ them at every opportunity!

Their reasoning continues in another vein: we of course would be wrong to neglect God's

Word, but can it now be wrong for us to search out diligently with our mind the meaning of the Scriptures? Can there be sin in reading the Bible? There are many truths of which we presently are ignorant; how unreasonably long we would have to wait to understand them if we did not use our brains! Is not our mind created by God for us to use? Since we are doing it for God and not for sinful ends why can we not use our mind to plan and plot God's work?

They go one step further. Our seeking for the consciousness of God's presence, they will insist, arises from an honest and sincere heart. When we feel dry and low in our life and labor is it not true that God frequently uplifts us by making us so aware of the love of the Lord Jesus as though He had set aglow a fire in our hearts and by giving us such joy and such a sense of His presence that we can almost touch Him? Can anyone deny this as the summit of spirituality? Why, then, judge it wrong if we earnestly seek and pray for the restoration of such feeling after it has been lost and our life has become cold and common?

These musings are just what numerous saints do turn over in their hearts. They do not distinguish the spiritual from the soulical. They have not yet received that personal revelation of the Holy Spirit which shows them the evil of their natural walk. They must be willing to wait upon God for instruction, petitioning the Holy Spirit for revelation as to the sundry evils of their natural good life. This needs to be done in honesty and humility, accompanied by a readiness to forsake everything which the Holy Spirit may uncover. At the appropriate time He will point out to them the utter corruption of their natural life.

The Holy Spirit will equip them to realize that all their work and walk are centered upon self and not upon the Lord. Their good deeds are done not only by their own efforts but primarily for their own glory as well. They have not sought God's will in their exertions. They are not disposed to obey God nor to undertake every matter according to His guidance and through His strength. They simply do what and as they feel

like doing. **All their prayers and striving after God's will are purely outward shows; they are utterly false.** Though these believers use God-endowed talents, they nevertheless think only of how gifted they are, forgetting entirely the Giver of these gifts. They eagerly admire the Word of the Lord but seek knowledge only to satisfy the aspiration of their mind; they are reluctant to wait upon God for His revelation in due course. Their quest for the presence of God, for the consciousness of His mercy and nearness, is not for God's sake but for their happiness. By so doing they are not loving the Lord; rather, they are loving the feeling which refreshes them and affords them the glory of the third heaven. Their total life and labor elevate self as the center. They wish to enjoy themselves.

God's children are awakened to the folly of holding fast their soul life only after they have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit as to the abhorrent character of that life. Such enlightenment does not arrive all at once; it proceeds gradually; not once for all but on many

occasions. When believers are illumined by the Spirit for the first time they repent beneath the Light and voluntarily deliver their self life to death. But human hearts are exceedingly deceitful. After a while, perhaps but a few days later, self-confidence, self -love and self-pleasure are reinstated. Hence, periodic illumination must continue so that believers may be willing to deny their natural life. What is truly distressing is to find few believers so possessed of the Lord's mind that they are amenable to yielding voluntarily to Him in these matters. **Multiplied defeats and no less shame are always required to render believers willing and ready to forsake their natural**

propensities. How imperfect is our willingness and how fickle is our condition!

Christians ought to eliminate their folly. **They ought to adopt God's view of the absolute impossibility for their natural walk to please Him.** They must dare to allow the Holy Spirit to point out to them every corruption of the soul life. They must exercise faith in believing God's estimation of their natural life and must wait patiently for the Holy Spirit to reveal in them what the Bible says of them. Only in this manner will they be led in the way of deliverance.

- *Watchman Nee*



A Sacred Occupation

P rayer, according to Tozer, was the most sacred occupation a person could engage in. Often when Tozer prayed, people felt as though God was right at his elbow. Sometimes they were tempted to open their eyes to see. Tozer's praying embraced the minutiae as well as the transcendental. One time, while King was visiting, Tozer had to go downtown to buy some special light bulbs for the church. Before the two men left the office, Tozer had them both kneel. In the most simple

terms, he prayed, "Now, Lord, we don't know anything about light bulbs." And on he went in a very human way to ask God for wisdom in such a mundane matter as the purchase of light bulbs.

During a business session at a Christian and Missionary Alliance General Council, the delegates were bogged down in motions and amendments, and amendments to amendments. Tozer became increasingly impatient with the tedium of it all. Finally, his

restless spirit could take no more. He turned to Raymond McAfee sitting beside him.

“Come on, McAfee,” he whispered, “let’s go up to my room and pray before I lose all my religion.”

Whatever acclaim he earned as an eloquent preacher and an outstanding writer can accurately be attributed to his close relationship with God. Tozer preferred God’s presence to any other. The foundation of his Christian life was prayer. He not only preached prayer but practiced it. He always carried with him a small notebook in which he jotted requests for himself and others, usually of a spiritual nature.

Tozer’s prayers bore the same marks as his preaching: honesty, frankness, humor, intensity. His praying deeply affected his preaching, for his preaching was but a declaration of what he discovered in prayer. His praying also affected his living. He often said, “As a man prays, so is he.”

Everything he did flowed from his prayer life. The bulk of his time each day was spent wrestling with God in prayer. Tozer literally practiced the presence of God. Often he would withdraw from family and friends to spend time alone with God. It was not unusual for him to lose all track of time in those meetings with God.

McAfee regularly met in Tozer’s study each Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday morning for a half hour of prayer. Often when McAfee would enter, Tozer would read aloud something he recently had been reading—it might be from the Bible, a hymnal, a devotional writer or a book of poetry. Then he would kneel by his chair and begin to pray. At times he prayed with his face lifted upward. Other times he would lay prostrate on the floor, a piece of paper under his face to keep him from breathing carpet dust.

God’s Presence

McAfee recalls one

especially memorable day. “Tozer knelt by his chair, took off his glasses and laid them on the chair. Resting on his bent ankles, he clasped his hands together, raised his face with his eyes closed and began: ‘O God, we are before Thee.’ With that there came a rush of God’s presence that filled the room. We both worshiped in silent ecstasy and wonder and adoration. I’ve never forgotten that moment, and I don’t want to forget it.”

On occasions while McAfee was praying, he would hear Tozer rustling about. Opening an eye to see what was going on, he would discover Tozer, pencil in hand, writing. While McAfee was praying, Tozer had a thought he wanted to capture. Tozer met with his church staff regularly for prayer. Once, during a staff prayer meeting, Tozer was prone on the floor in deep conversation with God. The telephone rang. Tozer broke off his prayer to answer the phone. He carried on about a 20-minute conversation with a pastor, giving him all sorts of instructions and advice that he

himself never followed—taking time off, going on a vacation, and so on. The staff just sat there listening and chuckling to themselves because Tozer never took a vacation in his life.

 Hanging up the telephone, Tozer resumed his position on the floor and picked up where he left off by saying, “Now, God, as I was saying . . .”

Once Dr. Louis L. King, Tozer and two other preachers were engaged in a half-day of prayer. One of the preachers was known for his bombastic, colorful speech both in his preaching and his praying. This man began praying for a certain world leader who at the time was hindering missionary work. “If you can’t change him,” the preacher prayed, “then kill him and take him to heaven!” Later, Tozer took King aside. “Did you hear what he prayed this morning?” he asked, a hurt expression on his face. “‘Take him to heaven’? Why he doesn’t even believe in Jesus Christ. That wasn’t prayer. He was saying that for our benefit. You never speak to God in that

fashion. When you approach God, you should always use reverent language. It's God, not man, we're talking to in prayer!"

Summer Bible camps and conferences were a special delight to Tozer. Every year he spent considerable time ministering at these places. To him, the whole atmosphere was conducive to prayer and getting closer to God. He usually would walk out each morning to the surrounding woods to find a place to pray. Kneeling beside a fallen log, he would spend time in worship and prayer. On occasion, another person would join him in these rustic prayer meetings. As they began, Tozer would have some word to say about coming into the presence of God, which to him was always very real and immediate. Then he would invariably say, "Well, what shall we pray about!" Then followed a brief time of talking about subjects of prayer. Usually Tozer prayed first.

One morning the rain changed his usual plans, so he and Robert W. Battles, a close

friend, met in Tozer's cabin for prayer at nine o'clock. Dr. Battles was sharing the conference platform with Tozer. Each knelt on opposite sides of a cot.

"Well, Junior," Tozer asked, "what should we pray for today?"

"I think we should pray for these people who have come to hear the likes of us preach."

The two men talked about prayer and what and who they should be praying for. Then Tozer began to talk about God, the Incarnation, the glory and majesty of the Trinity, holiness, heaven, angels, immortality, the church and its mission in the world. No agenda, no sense of time, only the marvelous sense of the presence of God.

Then, before they got around to actually praying, the lunch bell rang.

"Oh, no!" Battles complained. "We didn't even get down to praying and the bell has rung for lunch!"

“Well, Junior. We met to pray. Do you know something? What we have been doing all morning has been perilously close to prayer.”

There were times as the two men tramped through the nearby woods for a quiet walk together that Tozer would get a far-off look in his eye, his nostrils would flare and he would say in all solemnity, “Junior, I want to love God more than anyone in my generation.”

At least once, Tozer lost all track of time as he was in his cabin praying. Time came for him to speak and he was nowhere to be found. Another person had to substitute for him. When Tozer finally did show up, he would only say that he had a more important appointment.

Focus on God

In prayer, Tozer would shut out everything and everyone and focus on God. His mystic mentors taught him that. They showed him how to practice daily the presence of God.

He learned the lesson well. Prayer for Tozer was inextricably tied to worship. As previously mentioned, Tozer once remarked that “worship is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder and over-powering love in the presence of that most ancient Mystery, that majesty which philosophers call the First Cause but which we call Our Father in Heaven.”

Worship was the impetus behind all he was and did. It controlled every aspect of his life and ministry. “Labor that does not spring out of worship,” he would admonish, “is futile and can only be wood, hay and stubble in the day that shall try every man’s work.”

Rebelling against the hectic schedules that kept his fellow ministers and fellow Christians from true worship, Tozer wrote, “I am convinced that the dearth of great saints in these times, even among those who truly believe in Christ, is due at least in part to our unwillingness to give sufficient time to the

cultivation of the knowledge of God. Our religious activities should be ordered in such a way as to leave plenty of time for the cultivation of the fruits of solitude and silence."

Tozer was an ardent lover of hymns and had in his library a collection of old hymnals. Often on his way to an appointment he would meditate on one of the old hymns.

"Get a hymnbook," he frequently advised as he counselled people. "But don't get one that is less than a hundred years old!"

His Chicago church did not use the denomination's Hymns of the Christian Life. Instead, the congregation sang from a River Brethren Church hymnal. Tozer preferred it because it contained more of the great hymns that he loved, and he enjoyed hearing his people sing them.

"After the Bible," he said in an Alliance Life article aimed at new Christians, "the next most valuable book is a good hymnal. Let any new Christian

spend a year prayerfully meditating on the hymns of Watts and Wesley alone, and he or she will become a fine theologian."

Then he added, "Afterward, let that person read a balanced diet of the Puritans and the Christian mystics. The results will be more wonderful than he could have dreamed." This was his personal pattern, year after year.

During the 1950s, Tozer found a kindred spirit in a plumber from Ireland, Tom Haire, a lay preacher. Haire became the subject of seven articles Tozer wrote for Alliance Life, later reissued as a booklet entitled Thomas Haire: The Praying Plumber of Lisburn. Two men could hardly have been more different, yet their love for God and their sense of His worth drew them together.

Once, while Haire was visiting Chicago, Tozer's church was engaged in a night of fasting and prayer. Haire joined them. In the middle of the night, he got thirsty and went out for a cup of tea. Some

church members felt that Tom, by so doing, had “yielded to the flesh.” Tozer disagreed. He saw in that act the beautiful liberty Tom enjoyed in the Lord.

Just before Haire was to return to his homeland, he stopped by Chicago to say good-bye.

“Well, Tom,” Tozer remarked, “I guess you’ll be

going back to Ireland to preach.”

“No,” Tom replied in his thick Irish brogue. “I intend to cancel all appointments for the next six months and spend that time preparing for the judgment seat of Christ while I can still do something about it.”

It was an attitude not uncharacteristic of Tozer himself.

- The Life of A. W. Tozer By James L Snyder



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