

The Hidden Life of Faith in the Smitten Rock

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer
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In chapter 33 of the book of Exodus, verses 21-22. The Lord said, behold, there is a place by me. And thou shalt stand upon a rock, and it shall come to pass while my glory passes by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by.

Now, here in this chapter are the sections of the two chapters, which we read this morning, there is depicted one of the most charming and beautiful scenes found anywhere in the entire Bible. And this I would not say as a type of anything, but I would say that it is a marvelously beautiful illustration. It doesn't preach to us maybe, but it seems to us. And it seems to us the song of the hidden life, I will hide thee in a clift of the rock while my glory passeth by. And it sings to us of the hidden life of faith, the song of the man and or a woman who has found the hiding place in the smitten rock.

Now, faith in the gospel oracle, has certain clear specific results. And I might say that faith is a gift of God to contrite hearts. It is not a conclusion drawn from facts. It is a spiritual ability imparted by the Holy Ghost. I keep bearing down on this wherever I go and telling the people, because it is one of the doctrines that has been lost by a de-emphasis. It is not denied, it is de-emphasized, with the result that it, for all practical purposes does not exist as a valid Christian doctrine today, that faith is not a conclusion. We do not say, you believe God wrote the Bible. Yes. This text is in the Bible. Therefore, did God write that text? Yes. If God wrote the Bible, this text is in the Bible, and God is true, therefore, is that text true? Yes. Well then, you're a believer.

Now, that is one kind of faith, certainly that's a kind of intellectual conclusion drawn from a set of facts. But faith in the gospel oracle, the faith that transforms men, is a gift of God, a spiritual ability to trust Christ, imparted by the Holy Spirit to the penitent man and withheld from every other sort of man.

Now, the man of faith, that is, who has this real faith, this imparted faith, enters an immortal kingdom at once. He is born into the Kingdom of God, and he joins a select circle. He joins the circle of the elect. It is not the ecumenical circle that we hear about so much recently. It is more than that. It's bigger than that. It is the select circle. It is the circle of the elect, of those who've entered that immortal kingdom. And when a man thus does enter that Kingdom, he becomes what I might call a God-hidden man. I will hide thee said God. I will put thee in a clift of the rock. And this was, I repeat, perhaps not a type, but at least a beautiful illustration of the God-hidden life.

Now, I want to say four or five things about this man of faith, that he is a God-charmed man. If he's a real Christian and hasn't been wrongly taught, he lives in the center of the miracle, and he becomes in one very real sense, a true Bible mystic. He feels that the whole world is his. And he comes into accord with it. When our Lord Jesus Christ was in the wilderness, it said that he was among the wild beasts. And I suppose the average reader of that passage, might pity the Lord or say, how wonderful that he was protected by the beasts. But G. Campbell Morgan, in his book, "The Crisis of the Christ," he says this, that it's all wrong to think that our Lord was surrounded by beasts bent upon destroying him. He said that those beasts dated back to the early creation, and that they recognize their maker, and that they were tame in His presence; that they could not harm the one from whose hand they had come. So that the Lord among the beasts was as safe as the Lord among the angels. Now, I add that sentence. That was not from his book. But the idea is there that it was perfectly safe there as He would have been in heaven, because the beasts of the forest shall honor Me, says God. And they glorified Him by lying down at the feet of his Son.

Now, this God-charmed man sees the miracle, where everybody else sees no miracle at all, only the crass laws of nature and matter and form. But the true child of God sees the miracle everywhere. It is not a sign of senility or a sign that a man's mind is bad, when he insists upon seeing God in a drop of water or a grain of sand, and of hearing the voice of God in the sighing of the wind or in the roar of the storm. God is in His world and He is in charge of it. And the God-charmed man finds God there. He is charmed and entirely safe. It was said about Jesus, you remember, that His hour was not yet come. They could not harm him while he walked among them, because His hour was not yet come. He was a charmed man and bore a charmed life.

In the Old Testament, there's that passage, typical again, or at least a picture of how a sample of how things are, where Elisha was in Dothan the city, and his servant became frightened because the Syrian king had sent a great host with chariots and horses and soldiers against him. There they were surrounding the city, a great host. The margin says, a heavy host. I don't know how many that would be. And the young, inexperienced man, who hadn't learned that he was living a charmed life, and inhabited a perpetual miracle, he came running in excitedly to his master and said, O Master, Master, they're surrounding us. There is a great host.

And the old experienced man said, don't worry young fellow. They that are with us are more than they that are against us. O Lord, he said, open his eyes and let him see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man. And he looked and lo, in the mountains were horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha. And Elisha went on and prayed, O God, send these men in and make them temporarily blind and they became temporarily blind. And he led them into Samaria, and captured the whole army. These two men, this preacher and his associate, they led the whole army in and captured them. And the young associate, full of zeal and some ignorance said, Father, what will we do? Kill them? No, he said, give them something to eat and send them back home. He had inhabited

a miracle too long. He didn't need to kill men. And he said, now Lord, let them see. And every man saw and said, how did we get here? They were in Samaria, captured.

Now, that's an example at least. It's a sample of how God works. I have a lot of illustrations drawn from church history which I shall not at this moment give you, but which couldn't be given in proof of the fact that the man of God lives a charmed life. And I repeat what I have often said and hold as a part of my living creed. That if a man obeys God, he cannot die until his work is done, if he obeys God. Now, if he leaves the way and goes among the wolves of his own deliberate sinful intention, I have no hope then that he shall fulfill the will of God. But if he obeys God and goes where God sends him, he is a safe man until he's ready to die. And who wants to live five minutes after the Lord says, come up hither. Who wants to be asleep when the clock rings and the voice of the Lord says, come on.

Now, he is not only a God-charmed man with a charmed life, but he's a God-defended man. I get great help from Moses. When Moses used to get into a sudden jam with Israel, Cora, or somebody was after him. It said in solemn, slow language, the Shekinah cloud came and stood before the tent of meeting. And Moses stood back behind that cloud, and the angry, murderous men and women that surrounded him, withdrew like wolves when the woodsmen builds a huge roaring fire. You could see their eyes shining in the dark, but not a one of the murderous crew dare come through the circle of light, the God-defended man.

And the Scriptures says, woe to that man by whom the offenses come. And he says again, no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper. And every tongue that rises against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. If the tongue that rises against thee is a true tongue, and what he says about you is true. The Lord won't condemn that tongue. But if it's not true, the Lord will condemn that tongue. And then He says, I will go before thee.

L.B. Compton, whom I quote sometimes as being one of the greatest preachers I've ever heard, an uneducated southerner from North Carolina. This man had experiences, that if they were written up in the slow, stately language of the King James version, might well be misunderstood as a last chapter from some of the books of the Bible, Compton at one time was sued by a rich townsman for something or other for which he was not to blame. And his friends came and said, you know, this man has influence on his side. He has everything on his side. Why do you not hire a lawyer and get your witnesses going and do something. He said, I can't. God won't let me. All God will let me do is pray.

So, he prayed, and it came right down to the wire, I believe the day or not more than the day before the suit was to be aired in court, and everybody knew who'd win. A poor preacher, what could he do against an influential townsman who had brought suit against him. It would have meant the loss of everything to the man of God. But he waited on God in holy prayer. And the day

before, or the same day, I've forgotten which. But a few hours before the trial was to come up in court, there was a call. Would this preacher please come down and pray for a man who was desperately ill? He hurried down and you've guessed it. The desperately ill man was the man who was suing him in court. He got down on his knees beside the bed and prayed for his deliverance and the suit was called off and everything was made up. And everybody said, what has God wrought?

The man is a God-defended man when he belongs to this charmed circle. But he's also a God-taught man said Paul, in Corinthians 2:7, we speak the wisdom which is of God, the hidden wisdom, a mysterious wisdom, which was ordained by God before the world for your salvation. And that wisdom of God sometimes leads men in a way that we know little of.

I think I'll tell you what I heard at conference. I spent three days of last week at conference. A good brother, a man without much education, but a deeply spiritual man of God, a Swede by the name of Olson preached and he told us this story. And it's so good that I must share it with you. He said that when he was a younger preacher and was on the radio, singing, he says he doesn't do it anymore. He's found he can't, but then he didn't know it. And he was singing. He said, he got a call one day saying, would you please come out to such and such a home just outside the city, and have a little meeting with us there? So, he said, sure, he would. And he took his guitar, if you please, and some hymnbooks and a friend, and they drove out.

When he got there, the yard was full of cars, and the house was full of people jammed and sitting around in borrowed chairs. He said when he walked in, they looked at him as if he was a stranger. But he said that God had sent him, so he passed the hymn books around and got the key on the old guitar, and everybody sang. Then he said, he asked his friend to testify, which he did. Then he said he launched in and preached a rather, I don't suppose very eloquent, nor very learned, but a good gospel sermon. And he gave the altar call, and they went down on their knees everywhere and began to pray. And some of them found God.

After he gathered up his hymn books and started for the car, somebody ran out and said, Brother Olson, come back and pray for my sister. He said, are you saved? She said, No. Is your sister No. Well, he said, you'll both get saved before I'll pray for her to be healed. So, he got them both saved. And he said that he personally knows that a large number of those who were saved that day, still are walking with God and some of them have died, but lived for God down to the end of their days. And he said after he had gotten safely away and the circumstances were known, he had gotten in the wrong house. And it was a family reunion of the Nelson clan. And nobody expected him. But being good Scandinavians, they had enough religion somewhere to let him have his way.

Now, that's what I mean, a God-taught man. Here was a simple-hearted fellow that wouldn't know a Greek root from a root of ginseng, or carrot. But he did know the voice of God when he heard it.

He says, I pretty near faint when I think about that now after these years. Oh, brother, he said, was I ashamed. But the Lord had had his way with a man who was simple enough. And God spoke to him in the mystery which was before the foundation of the world. And the man that's hidden is a God-led man without a doubt, because he is led by a kind of instinct if he's a prayerful man.

I have read some touching stories, and have reason to believe they're true. They're not all quite alike, but they have one central likeness, the story of the instinct of animals. I read not long ago of a female, a dog they had had around the place and she was much appreciated and loved by all of them. But something happened, and they sold her. And they took her hundreds of miles across the continent west. Three weeks went by, and at the end of about those 21 days, she came limping in, the pads of her feet bleeding and sore. And she herself a complete wreck and skin and bones, but came in and put her nose across the threshold and lay down and looked up and whimpered. She was back home. How did she find her way over the unknown highways for hundreds of miles. Nobody can tell you that.

Out on the steps of Russia when a man is lost, he doesn't try to find his way home. He speaks to his horse, puts the reins on her mane and braces himself against the storm. And she finds her way home. The bird finds his way back to Capistrano, and nobody knows how. There is a spiritual instinct that's like that. You're so puzzled your brain doesn't tell you a thing. You comb your intellect, nothing registers. No bell rings. And after a few years have gone by, you see you did the right thing. Why did you do the right thing? There is a hidden mystery which is ordained before the foundation of the world. And the instinct of the Holy Ghost in the breast of a man will keep him right.

I've been meeting men from all over the world, literally, meeting men. and I find a wonderful thing. I find that God is speaking to them about the same thing He's been speaking to me over the last ten years and is saying to me the same thing. And I get letters from people and they're hearing the same voice and going the same direction. A few aren't. Occasionally, somebody will barge in and take over, who is in the rut and who has heard no voice for years, except the hard voice of authority or theology. But those who've listened and know the sound of the other world, they're saying about the same thing here and there.

Brother Dave Enloe met me and did some red capping for me yesterday morning in the station downtown, and told me of a Christian businessman, one of the leaders of the CBMC, who was hearing from God on the same thing he's been talking to you and me on. Another man writes me from Addis Ababa. That's the way you pronounce it? Close enough. And way over there, and tells me in a long letter, what God's been saying to him. The same thing He's been saying to us.

And I run into the Africa Inland Mission crowd at Keswick. And we pray and talk together, and I find God's been saying the same thing. He's not saying it to everybody, but he's saying it to enough.

And now comes our Keswick here in the city of Chicago. How'd that get here? Twenty years ago, they couldn't have got past Cicero, or Hammond. The theological police who would have been down there and had them all in jail. Nobody who would believe in a second work of grace and the victorious life could have ever gotten where we're getting. But we're in there now. And they're bringing men here who believe that very doctrine. And I am to have the joy of being on their program and preaching that which this church has stood for, for 25, nearly 26 years of my full ministry. God's speaking and there's a mysterious wisdom that's moving among men. And God is saying, if you don't get life among your bones, you'll rattle yourself to death. And He's beginning to give life back to us again. And if the Lord will let some of us live a while longer, and keep on and keep low, good and right, I believe the day will come when we will yet direct evangelical Christianity away from Hollywood and away from hard dispensationalism back to the charm life. The Spirit-filled life, the God-blessed life.

Now, I may be too optimistic, but I am hoping. I might say he's a God-fed man, though I'm going to skip that, the hidden manna. I will give you the hidden manna. And didn't Elijah get fed by the ravens.

And the sixth is, he's a God-privileged man. How privileged he is, this man of mystery. For he knows and is not known of anybody. It says that in 1 Corinthians, the second chapter, that we are, how does it word it there exactly? I read so many versions I don't always remember how a given version reads. He that is spiritual, judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who knoweth the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him. But we have the mind of Christ. And here is the God-privileged man. This man of mystery who lives in the circle, hidden under the hand of God. And he lives a life too deep for the flesh to analyze him.

I've just been reading a book over the last couple of weeks, an exposé, really, of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis, you know, that has spawned this psychiatry, and psychiatry and I don't get along. But for 25 years, I have been familiar with psychoanalysis. And they're supposed to know all there is to know, you know, about your insides. But brethren, there is a place where Sigmund Freud and his followers never penetrated. When they come up and begin to take us apart and pull us bone from bone to see what makes us tick, the Holy Ghost comes down as a cloud and fire and they stand and stare and say, behold these Christians, what weird people they are. We can't analyze them. They won't talk. They pray. They know God in a mystery.

And I might point out that he's a God-enriched man. I will give you says the Holy Ghost the treasures of darkness. If Shakespeare had written that, he would have said, the treasures of life. Who would have thought of the treasures of darkness. It took God to think of that. I will give you the treasures of darkness, not in the darkness do men usually hope to find treasure, but in the light. But God says, I will enrich you by the darkness. And the very troubles that come to you are the dark clouds that will break in blessing on your head.

And I close with the text, I flee unto Thee to hid me. Will you this morning, find the hidden place? Maybe you've had a tough week this week. It doesn't always go as well for you as it might. Maybe you've had a tough week. Well, and maybe you didn't acquit yourself quite as well as you wish you had, and you feel a bit low about it this morning. Don't stop there, and don't let that get you down. I will flee under Thee to hide me. Moses didn't always come off in the most saintly fashion, but he was a god-hidden man. Will you be? From every stormy wind that blows, from every swelling tide of woes, there is a calm and sure retreat. It's found beneath the mercy seat. There is a place where Jesus sheds the oil of gladness on our heads, a place then all the world more sweet. It is the bloodstained mercy seat. Will you find that mercy seat with me this morning?