

INNER RENEWAL



Regeneration

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So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

II Corinthians 4:16-18

To follow Jesus in this world of flesh and blood is to walk every day in the middle of a discrepancy. On the one hand is that vision of God's glory which came to us at some point in our life ... a God who is utterly good ... a Kingdom of God where there are no tears, no sickness, no pain, no death ... a Savior who heals the sick, opens the eyes of the blind, forgives the sinner, changes people into new creatures. Surely it was the vision of this God which opened the door for us into a new life. We have seen the merciful God and once having seen him we can never be the same.

On the other hand, we have to live every day in a world which absolutely repudiates our vision of God ... a world where the hard realities are tragedy and evil, a world where on every side we see weeping, sick-ness, pain and death. Where people don't receive our gospel and where even among those who do receive our gospel there often seems to be no change.

The man goes on drinking, the woman goes on hating her husband. A world where the nations are getting ready for an inevitable war and we can see that it is only a matter of time before all hell breaks loose.

Here's the vision of God ...

Here's the anti-God reality of daily life.

The trick is to keep the vision clear, keep our feet on the ground with real living in this real world, and still keep our sanity.

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves..."

Matthew 10:16

"For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet."

Matthew 24:5-6

Consider what happens to many believers as they experience this tension between their vision of God and the anti-God realities of daily life. It is like having two giants, each pulling on one of your arms until you feel as though you're going to be torn apart. And the temptation is to try to back away from one or the other.

There are those who try to eliminate the tension by scaling down their vision of God. "How can I serve a merciful God in an unmerciful world?" "How can I live by his Spirit of giving when the world is cheating me and taking from me at every turn?" So they lower their sights to a vision of a God who is very mild and very weak ... to a Jesus who contents himself with patting little children on the head and posing for religious pictures.

And when you scale down your vision of God, you end up with a lukewarm life. Numberless people who started out as burning and shining lights have settled for the lukewarm routine of a little bit of church, a little bit of prayer, and a life without strain or risk or pain, which is also a life without joy and without lasting fruit.

There are those who become alarmed and give up the vision completely. "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars – see that you're not alarmed." When believers become alarmed they panic and run from the vision. "I must have made a mistake. Perhaps I only imagined that I saw the glory of God."

And when they let go of the vision, despair sets in. Soon their minds are engulfed by the absurdity of life and they spend the rest of their days lying on the bottom of an ocean of cynicism, like sunken ships.

Then there are those who try to preserve their vision of God by running away from the world. Whether we find a quiet cabin on a lake a hundred miles from the nearest town, or whether we bury our heads in "Christian sand" and withdraw from everything that seems to be of the world – only listen to Christian radio, Christian T.V., read Christian books, (never talk to anybody at work but Christians and one or two red-hot prospects) – we're running away.

Soon *our vision of God*, far from being preserved, *begins to shrivel* until the God we serve turns out to be as unreal and demonic as all the idols of Babylon.

"I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one ... As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."

John 17:15, 18

But there are believers who keep their vision of God right in the middle of all the turmoil and they don't wear out or become bitter, or stale, or stagnant.

They live every day in this tension between their vision of God and the anti-God pressures of this world and become stronger and fresher and keener all the time. How do they do it? They are renewed by God! In the midst of the strain, pressure, and tension which they experience every day, they have found the Sabbath Rest.

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28

That's what Jesus is talking about –

– inner rest, inner renewal.



Let it Flow Nancy Cupp

Living water that keeps you fresh for the raging battle.

We cannot afford to compromise our vision of God; it's the most precious thing we have. That vision needs to get brighter with every year that passes because that vision of God, shining from the face of Jesus, is our life.

Nor can we afford to withdraw from the world. God put us in this world. Jesus has sent us out into this sea of troubled human life to proclaim his gospel, to call souls into his kingdom. We need to be out in this crazy world with our eyes open and our hearts on fire.

But to keep the vision and continue our labor in this world we need to be renewed by God himself. He promises to do it if we will but make ourselves available.

God himself will give us an inner renewal.

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day."

II Corinthians 4:16

Paul was getting older when he wrote this. He experienced the bodily changes that age brings to all humans. But the inner Paul was younger than ever.

"That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts ... that you may be filled (inwardly) with all the fullness of God."

Ephesians 3:16-19

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom."....

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

Psalms 51:6,10

"Give for alms those things which are within..."

Luke 11:41

God renews us from the inside out. Don't worry about the outside.

Give him the inside and watch the change that will come over your whole life.

God himself will give us a daily renewal.

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day."

This isn't a once-a-year thing or even once-a-week. It's a daily thing. Just as our bodies are renewed with sleep – daily, and our strength is renewed with food – daily, so our vision of God is renewed daily.

of course, there is a need for us to make ourselves available to him daily. How can God renew me if I don't take the time for this? If I'm going to expect God to renew me inwardly as I do my daily work and drive down the freeway I'm going to take some time, daily, to hold still before him. Jesus, the incarnate Son, found this necessary; so did the apostles. Holding still before God in prayer is not a luxury, nor is it a religious chore. It is a *wonderful necessity*.



Out of the Ashes Nancy Cupp

God himself will give us a renewal of the mind.

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Romans 12:2

The mind is the place where we imagine, weigh, consider, decide – if it is not the dwelling place of God it becomes the dwelling place of Satan, the habitation of lies. If it is not constantly renewed in God it soon becomes home base for weird thoughts, suspicions, lusts, fantasies that are the very atmosphere of the world.

***"Do not be conformed to this world,
but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..."***

So if we open our mind to him, God puts his word into it – his life.

He gives us thoughts to think, mental visions to behold, that cleanse us, refresh us, draw us afresh into the reality of his kingdom. God himself will give us a renewal of all our powers.

***He gives power to the faint,
and to him who has no might he increases strength.***

***Even youths shall faint and be weary,
and young man shall fall exhausted;***

***But they who wait for the Lord,
shall renew their strength,***

they shall mount up with wings like eagles,

***They shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.***

Isaiah 40:29-31

How many times we go to prayer in a state of actual physical weakness and come out strong. How many times we lie down at night drained of strength even to think of that obstacle we have to face the next day. In the morning we rise renewed – by sleep to be sure – but by sleep in which God restored our strength on every front.

We have brothers and sisters in prison camps who know much more about this than we do. While others around them, with much more stamina faint with weariness, they mount up on wings like eagles.

They don't just survive, they burn with holy light! And in our relatively safe situation, needs press upon us from all sides which will also exhaust us, unless our powers are renewed by God. And we soon find that the most important function of our lives is not eating, or sleeping, or even ministering to the world, but inwardly waiting on God in whatever we're doing. Ministering to him with our hearts while we work, while we rest, even while we sleep.



Arise My Love Nancy Cupp

As the end of this age draws near, the tension between our vision of God and the surrounding anti-God atmosphere of daily life will increase.

And as that tension increases the lamps of some will flicker out.

If there has ever been a time when we need to offer our inmost lives to God's Spirit for daily renewal, it is now!

There is a life of freshness, zeal, unquenchable joy, closer than we may have imagined.

God help us to receive it and live it,

***that we may mount up on wings like eagles,
run and not be weary, walk and not faint.***

Prayer-

Holy, Beautiful Lord, Living Water, Perfect One...We call to you to keep our vision of you fresh, alive and deeply adoring in the midst of this anti-God reality we live in. Give us inner rest, inner renewal as we are drawn to you, O Precious Lord. We open our hearts to you in the midst of our own weakness and decay, our increasing frailty. Enliven us, renew us. We open our minds to you as well. Transform them, renew them, rescue them from darkness and despair. Cleanse them, make them your dwelling place. Keep our vision of you, burning and strong. Keep us burning with your Holy Light as this anti-God atmosphere closes in ...may we arise from your presence daily, refreshed, and yes filled with zeal, filled with unquenchable joy and a new closeness to you stronger than ever before. May our lamps burn strong until the end.

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THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN

