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As the Rain Comes Down

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Series: Making the Spiritual Switch

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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There are very few written guarantees in this life that are ironclad. In fact, the term “limited warranty” has become a byword in our day for man’s hesitancy to unconditionally stand behind what he sells. “Limited” can mean many things. It can mean limited in time, limited in scope, or limited in a pro-rata sense. It can mean anything from “free exchange for 90 days” to “if you’ve used it, it’s yours”.

While warranties are often used as selling points at the close of a sale, they are often much more difficult to invoke *after the sale*, when the mood of the hour changes to: “I never said the car would run;” or “I said the air conditioner would get cold; I didn’t say it would cool the house.” Almost no one gives *unconditional warranties* in our day. The rash of lawsuits that accompany today’s liability paranoia has ended that.

The exception, of course, is God. He is still in the business of standing behind what He says. If He makes a promise, He keeps it. If He makes an appointment, He’s there. If He guarantees a certain result from obeying a given principle, *it always happens that way*. That is what makes Christianity so different. It is based on the promises of a God whose word *has never been broken*. Thus, it could be written of Abraham,

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief;
but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

And being fully persuaded *that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.* (Romans 4:20,21)

What a verse to memorize. What a verse to appropriate. What a testimony to be engraved on your life: “fully persuaded, that *what He had promised* He was able to perform.” The man or woman with that kind of conviction about the Word of God will, without question, change the course of the world in which they live, for it is not *they* who change their world, but the Word of the God in whom they believe. “Fully persuaded that what He has promised He is able to perform.”

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That ability to perform that which He has promised is illustrated by one of nature's most beautiful natural provisions, and it is easily understood, simply by making the spiritual switch. Turning our attention heavenward once again, let's pop up our spiritual umbrellas and ask God to send us a little rain.

THE WEATHER FORECAST: PARTLY CLOUDY

The pages of the Bible are stained with drops of water. From Noah's much heralded rainstorm that finished off both the rain gauges and the weather forecasters, to Elijah's much prayed-for clouds that meant the end of the longest drought in history, Scripture is filled with stories and principles about the heavens pouring forth moisture on man. At some point, in nearly every book of the Bible God calls our attention to rain. Always it is divinely timed; always it is in the prescribed amount; and always it is at the exact location that He, in His sovereignty, has chosen. The Scriptural weather forecast is always "partly cloudy" (or "partly sunny" as they say these days), because our God created rain to teach us truths we simply *have to learn*.

Truths about rain pour from every corner of the Word. In I Kings 18 and Luke 12 we read of the clouds as a sign of impending rain. In Deuteronomy 11 we read how the land of Canaan would be abundantly supplied with rain. In Psalm 77 we read that the condensing of the clouds is the cause of rain. In Hebrews 6 we read how rain makes the earth fruitful. In Psalm 68 we read that rain refreshes the earth. In Psalm 104 we read how rain replenishes the springs and fountains. Deuteronomy 11 again tells us how rain, *just after harvest*, prepares for sowing. Amos 4 describes the withholding of the rain as punishment from God for sin.

Rain comes from God according to Joel 2. It is sent both upon the just and the unjust, according to Matthew 5. God should be feared for the rain, we read in Jeremiah 5. God should be praised for the rain, we read in Psalm 147. In Jeremiah 14 idols were proved impotent because they could not make it rain. North winds drive away the rain, says Proverbs 25. Rain often destroys homes, according to Ezekiel 13 and Matthew 7. Rain can keep you from traveling, says I Kings 18. Usually sunshine and heat follow the rains, II Samuel 23 reminds us. Rainbows are not uncommon when it rains, says Ezekiel 1. Rain rarely falls in Egypt, says Zechariah 14. Thunder and lightning often accompany the rain,

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says Psalm 135. When it doesn't rain, it causes the earth to open up, says Job 29. The lack of it causes the springs to dry up, says I Kings 17; no rain causes famine, according to I Kings 18; and prayer can cause it to rain again, according to I Kings 17, and James 5.

Obviously most of those facts are not earth shaking to you; you knew about rainbows, thunder, famine, and north winds even before you knew they were in the Bible. However, the key is that God thought it important enough to specifically list those facts about rain in order to teach us *more and more about Himself*.

There is nothing incidental or accidental about the Word of God. Nothing. Therefore, every mention of rain has spiritual significance. Remember, *the purpose of the Scripture is spiritual*. God wasn't writing history. He was writing "His-Story". Every jot and tittle, even the genealogies, were written to transform the spirit of man. Paraphrased it says,

These things were written for our admonition, upon whom
the ends of the world are come. (I Corinthians 10:11)

PORTRAITS OF SHOWERS

The showers in Scripture paint portraits for us of how God works and who God is. Here are just a few of those rain-soaked photographs for us to consider as we *remember God when the rain comes down*.

1- The primary purpose of rain is restoration and growth. Although it is true that clouds partially obscure the sun, and although it is also true that rain is often accompanied by storms, God's primary reason for sending rain is to give life and to give it abundantly. Without the clouds there would be no rain. Without the rain there would be no life. Without life there is no growth. Without growth there is no maturity. Without maturity, there is no reproduction, and the cycle is broken. Storms are necessary for transformation, and rain is the key ingredient. In the sense that we look upon life's storms as intrusions, we need to rethink our theology. Storms generate showers. Showers generate growth. Without life's storms we would be more comfortable, but our long-term prognosis for fruitfulness would diminish accordingly. Thus, *every time the rain falls*, we can stop and thank God for life's storms, *whether we feel like thanking Him or not*.

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ

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Jesus concerning you.

(1 Thessalonians 5:18)

It does *not* say *every time you feel thankful give thanks*. Understanding the difference is the key to developing a life of praise. We don't thank God for life's storms because we *like getting wet*. We must thank Him, however, because after the storms have ceased, the waters will run deep, and the fruit will remain. That is why we are here.

2- Rain and the growth it produces comes totally from the hand of a sovereign God. (Joel 2:23) Weathermen can't make it rain. They can report on what God does, but they cannot influence it. Rain and the growth it produces is completely of God. And in the same way, all spiritual growth is of God.

3- Rain is a reminder of the grace of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is confirmed in both Psalm 72 and Hosea 6.

He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. (Psalm 72:6)

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain upon the earth. (Hosea 6:3)

Rain speaks of Jesus. The quiet rains, the gentle spring rains, echo forth a chorus of praise. As the raindrops fall, they whisper,

*Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, —Sweetest name I know,
Fills my every longing, keeps me singing as I go.*

(From "He Keeps Me Singing," written by L.B. Bridgers, © 1938. Renewal, The Broadman Press, owner.)

4- Gentle rains are a reminder of God's goodness and are cause for praise.

My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil [flow] as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

He is the Rock, his work is perfect: (Deuteronomy 32:2-4b)

Not only does the gentle rain call the name of Jesus, it softly reminds us of His goodness. As He waters the land and replenishes the soil, His constant goodness to us fills the air with gladness and thanksgiving.

5- Violent rains are a reminder of God's judgment.

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Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone,
and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their
cup. (Psalm 11:6)

The storms of life that come are reminders of God as well. Just as the rains nourish and provide growth to the hungry soil, lightning, thunder, and flood waters remind us of God's ultimate judgment and, thus, of God's ultimate plan.

6- Violent rains are also a reminder of the oppression of the poor.

A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain
which leaveth no food. (Proverbs 28:3)

Because rain is an undeserved gift from a loving, gracious God, it is a reminder that God, living in man, will meet the needs of those around him. A violent storm reminds us of people who sweep through life destroying, never taking the time to stop and minister to those who need to be fed, both spiritually and physically.

7- Steady, fruitful rains remind us of the righteousness of God as it is demonstrated to man.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break
up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he
come and rain righteousness upon you. (Hosea 10:12)

8- Rain speaks of God refreshing His people spiritually.

Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst
confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary. (Psalm 68:9)

Ezekiel 34:26 is perhaps the most famous promise in that regard. It reads,

And I will make them and the places round about my hill a
blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his
season; there shall be showers of blessing.

Showers of blessing;
Showers of blessing we need
Mercy drops 'round us are falling,
But for the showers we plead.

"There Shall Be Showers of Blessing" written by Daniel W. Whittle.

The rain speaks of God's provisions to meet our needs, both in the physical realm and in the spiritual realm.

AS THE RAIN COMES DOWN: A PERFECT PROMISE

We see that rain paints pictures from the pages of Scripture—living photographs of who God is— and gentle reminders of what God does which give us an overview. However, there is one major passage in Scripture which, if examined closely, will permit us to discover the specific application of this spiritual switch most needed.

That passage is found in Isaiah, chapter 55. It would be good to read it all, but for the sake of this lesson, we'll begin with verse 6,

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.
(Isaiah 55:6-11)

Here we find one of those written guarantees that the world simply cannot offer. It is an irrevocable promise from a God whose word *cannot be broken*; it is the solid rock that stands when all other ground becomes sinking sand; it is the basis upon which the Church builds its ministries, develops its programs, and structures its priorities. God chooses those beautiful raindrops to use as His paintbrush to illustrate this promise, regarding His Word.

God's Call

The first thing we notice about this promise is that it is prefaced by a call. Before the thing God has said will come to pass *can come to pass*, man must come to God on God's terms.

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He must “Seek the LORD while He can still be found; He must call upon Him while He is near.” The wicked, (or sinner) must *forsake his ways*, that is, he must reach a place where he is willing to turn around and leave the things he has *called* life and face the One who *is* life. God will do two things. He will “have mercy upon him”, and He will “abundantly pardon”.

Before the rain can minister to your life, the rainbow of grace must shine into your life, and you *must be born again*. God will not “instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go” until you are His. In order to be His, you must come to him on His terms. If you are not a child of God, the remainder of this book may be of intellectual interest to you, but it cannot be appropriated apart from a born-again experience with the Living God. He *will abundantly pardon*, if you come to Him, but *only if you ask Him into your life*. Many churches around the world today are preaching the principles of Scripture as though they apply to all men. They do not. They apply to all men who have been to the Cross of Jesus Christ, repented of their sins, and acknowledged totally new ownership of their lives. “But as many as *received Him*, to them gave He power to become...” (John 1:12) and only to them.

God’s Mind

Secondly, God reminds us that His is a spiritual kingdom, and nothing the mind of man can contrive can even comprehend it, let alone add anything to it. That is why Paul reminded us,

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

(I Corinthians 2:14)

Our thoughts are not as His thoughts; our ways *are not as His ways*. (Isaiah 55:8) How different is God’s philosophy from the natural philosophies that govern man’s conduct? They are as far apart as heaven is from earth. The call is to repentance and salvation; the objective of that call is for our minds to be transformed by God’s mind until we see life from a perspective *that is totally different* from the world around us. *How can that transformation take place?* How can our natural minds yield to a kind of thought process that runs diametrically opposed to that of everything and everyone around us? What vehicle could God use to make this happen?

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God's Picture

God knew we would ask that question. How could redeemed man, having received the Spirit of God, now appropriate the mind of God? To be certain we understood all of the ramifications of the principle, God went back to His picture book of nature and let the rain begin to fall. And *as the rain begins to fall*, the portrait began to make sense. Remember,

As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater,

So shall my word be...

(Isaiah 55:10,11a)

“So shall my word be.” His Word, then, will be the vehicle by which this transformation takes place. How will it work? *Just like the rain*. What do we learn from rain? Think about it, Beloved, and *listen to what God says about the miracle of the sovereignty of rain*. It will fill your heart with comfort, if you are in any form of ministry; it will fill your heart with hope and rest, if you are anxious about things you cannot see.

The Holy Spirit, writing this passage in the book of Isaiah, is drawing a heavenly portrait of spiritual growth. We don't have an abundance of tangible information about spiritual growth because *spiritual growth cannot be seen*. Granted, *some of the fruits of it can be seen*, but not all of what we call fruits are the direct evidence of growth, and we can be easily deceived. So God unlocks the treasures of the rain cloud and lets an illustration pour down upon us to explain *how man grows spiritually*.

God's Promise

The portrait God paints is of rain falling from heaven, seemingly uncontrolled, seemingly without a definitive destination, seemingly without *any assurance that it will bring forth fruit*. It cannot be seen returning to heaven, it can only be seen falling upon the ground and disappearing. What happens after that cannot be observed. Often, on the horizon months later, beautiful plants indicating new life has begun are seen. Usually, trees turn green, flowers blossom, and nature's expanse is repainted by the delicate brush of the Master. But sometimes, *nothing happens*; and sometimes, weeds come forth instead; and we often wonder, *where did all that rain go?* Did it wash away? Was it wasted? Was it too little? Was it too much? Did it cause root rot instead of

growth?

God is giving us a three-fold promise in verses 10 and 11. The first is that *the Word of God, like rain, will not return void*. That promise, alone, is like a warm breeze of confidence that the weary teacher, preacher, missionary, or seminary professor needs when the news comes of another person who has fallen by the wayside, or when no news comes at all. It is the gentle cooling of a spring rain upon the brow of the laborer *who seems to see no fruit*. God says, just as the rain comes down from heaven and *never returns void*, so shall My Word be.

All throughout Scripture, the seed which is sown by the sower is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). Always the seed snatcher, the enemy, seeks to devour the seed *before it brings forth fruit*. How easy it is to get discouraged if you haven't lived long enough to see how a sovereign God uses the seed. You may teach your heart out or minister the Word as you disciple another, only to have it *seem to have fallen upon ears that cannot hear*. You wonder, "Is it worth it?" What about those you ministered to ages ago? The more you ministered, the less fruit you saw. It seemed as though nothing would ever happen. They moved on and you moved on and time went on; but then one day a letter came in the mail, or the phone rang, and you learned that the very person you wrote off as unteachable or unmotivated is becoming a spiritual giant. What happened? *The Word did not return void*. So long as you *faithfully minister the Word* and not the concepts of man, what happens in human hearts is God's business, not yours. You will never know this side of heaven the fruit borne because you faithfully sowed nothing but the seed.

The second part of the promise is that the word as it goes forth provides both seed for the sower and bread for the eater. The one doing the sowing is growing *as he sows*, whether he knows it or not. *You can't handle the Word of God without it affecting you*. As long as the ministering you are doing is centered around the giving out of the Word of God, you will be blessed, and those who receive the seed will be blessed. When and how that happens is God's business; but you have a promise that it *will not return void*, and it will not.

The third part of the promise is even more beautiful. Like the rain that falls, God's Word will not only never return to Him void, but it will always accomplish what God intends it to accomplish.

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It may not be what *you* intended, but it is what *God* intended. You and I do not really know the needs of those we minister to; we only think we do. We think we know what is going on in the hearts of our people, but we don't know for sure; only God does. Only God can take His Word and see that it not only never returns void, but that *it always accomplishes precisely what He intended*. Many times after a preacher or teacher shares, someone will come back and say, "God really spoke to me about such and such," and that wasn't even the intended target, but God, knowing that person's heart, took His Word and used it to do *what He intended it to do*.

What God is saying, Beloved, is *let it rain*.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;
teaching and admonishing one another... (Colossians 3:16)

If you are a teacher or preacher,

Feed the flock of God which is among you, (I Peter 5:2a)

If you are a parent,

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

(Deuteronomy 6:7,8)

The Word of God must become your consistent way of life because *it never returns void*, and because *it always accomplishes what God intends it to accomplish*. Always.

"But what if a child has faithfully been given the Word of God, but he or she has gone astray?" God did not say they would never go astray. He said His Word *will never return void*. Never. That means that buried somewhere in the heart of that child is a fountain of life waiting for the proper moment and the proper response to spring up unto life eternal.

"But", you say, "I've been preaching for years and see so little fruit." Perhaps, but this isn't harvest time, Beloved; the harvest is yet to come. Some of those you thought *didn't even hear* will rise up to call you blessed, simply because you opened the Word of God *and let it rain*.

Perhaps you've witnessed to thousands and seen precious few respond. Perhaps you've preached to thousands and seen

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almost no one come to Christ. Perhaps you've been teaching for years and have yet to see many lives on fire for Christ. Perhaps. One thing is true: whether you have been able to see it or not, the Word of God is doing its work. Deep in the hearts of those whose lives may not yet show a sign of life, seeds are sending forth signals, calling for an awakening to take place. You may not know about it in this life, but God knows, and God says, "Let it rain". Maybe you're ministering in a nursing home, and you're not sure anyone's listening. That's not the issue. *Let it rain.*

You and I have a promise from a God who gives perfect guarantees. He has said, "My Word will *never return unto me void,*" and He has added, "*it will always accomplish what I sent it to do...*"

Lovingly, He has also added, "*You need to be reminded of that, don't you child? You need assurance when the clouds of unfruitfulness stretch across the horizon, and you see nothing happening. Then, Beloved, I will give you a sign—a reminder that whether you see it or not—I am at work. Here is that sign:*"

As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and
returneth not thither but watereth the earth, and maketh it
bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and
bread to the eater,

So shall my word be.

(Isaiah 55:10,11a)

"As the rain comes down...so shall my word be..." *Every time it starts to rain*, God is speaking. He is saying many, many things; He is painting many, many pictures; but one message is so outstanding we ought never, ever to see it rain again without joy welling up within us. That picture is a portrait of an immutable Word in the hands of a sovereign God, always accomplishing what it was intended to accomplish, never returning void.

So take heart, Beloved, and keep studying. Keep preaching. Keep teaching. Don't ever stop; just *let the rain come down.*

KEEP ON SOWING

Keep on sowing the seed, my child;
Keep on feeding the Word.
Keep on teaching the book, my child;
Keep on sharing the Lord.

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For just as the rain comes down from above
And never returneth void,
Even so, as the Word comes down,
It's power, no man can avoid.

Keep on sowing the seed, my child;
Though its fruits you may not know,
If the rain continues to fall, my child,
The flowers one day will grow.

A Challenge to Further Study and Application

1- Reread Joel 2:23, Psalm 72:6, Hosea 6:3, and Deuteronomy 32:2. What do you see as a primary picture of God's purposes for rain? What is He demonstrating spiritually through these verses?

2- Psalm 11:6, Proverbs 28:3, and Hosea 10:12 give us a different picture of why God made rain. What is the reason expressed?

3- Read Isaiah 55:6-11 again. Write it out in your own words. What do you think verses 8 and 9 have to do with verses 10 and 11?

4- Why do you think God differentiated between the sower and the eater? What promise did He give to each? As you "rightly handle" the Word of Truth, what does God do for you as a sower? What other promises can you find in Scripture that guarantee fruit as you minister the word?

5- How does Satan try to discourage you as you sow the seed and see no fruit? Why is this passage so crucial to our withstanding that discouragement?

6- Why is it so important that we understand that "God's Word will always accomplish that which He pleases, and "prosper in the thing whereto I sent it"? How can this affect your personal ministry?

7- What steps can you take to be faithful in sharing the Word without always seeing results? What verse of Scripture explains that results are not always visible?

Memorize: Isaiah 55:6-11

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