

# Spiritual Fluctuations

by A.W. Pink

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*The real Christian experiences fluctuations in his conflicts with sin, his enjoyment of the Scriptures, his faith, his prayer life, and his outward lot, which are helpful for his growth in piety.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 42:36, Numbers 11:6, Job 29:2, Psalm 19:10, Psalm 55:19, Psalm 89:49, Isaiah 12:2, Romans 7:14

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Trials and Tribulations"

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## Description

A.W. Pink explores the concept of 'Spiritual Fluctuations,' emphasizing that true Christians experience significant changes in their spiritual lives, contrasting with those who maintain a steady, unchanging faith. He argues that while many may envy a uniform spiritual experience, such stability can often lack genuine depth and the fear of God. Pink highlights the various changes believers face in their struggles with sin, their enjoyment of Scripture, their faith, prayer life, and external circumstances, suggesting that these fluctuations are essential for spiritual growth and humility before God. Ultimately, he asserts that the trials and changes in a believer's life serve to deepen their relationship with God and enhance their piety.

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## Transcript

"Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God" (Psa. 55:19). As there are some people who uniformly enjoy good health, so there is a class of religious professors who appear to maintain one steady level of experience. There is no rise and fall of their emotional thermometer, no ebbs and flows in the tide of their energy, no ups and downs in their history. Their faith (such as it is) does not flag, their "assurance" is never eclipsed by the dark clouds of unbelief, their zeal continues lively to the end. Are such people to be envied or pitied? Perhaps such a question seems senseless. Does not the timid and trembling believer, whose case varies as often and as radically as the weather, frequently wish that his experience approximated far more closely to that which we have just described?

Surely such a uniform level of experience is greatly to be coveted. What more desirable than unruffled peace, unbroken confidence, uninterrupted joy. Ah, but all is not gold that glitters, and much that passes in the churches for the coin of Canaan lacks a genuine ring to it. We must needs inquire, Is such a peace that of the graveyard or the peace of Heaven? Is such confidence a carnal one, or the fruit of the Spirit? Is it a delusive or a substantial joy? In order to ascertain this, the question has to be raised, Is the fear of God upon such characters? Do they furnish any clear evidence that it is so? The solemn declaration of our text demands an impartial answer to these queries.

What "changes" the real Christian experiences in his conflicts with sin! At conversion it often seems as though the believer is completely delivered from all his spiritual enemies. His heart has been so melted and drawn out Godwards, his sense of Christ dying on the Cross in his room and stead has imparted such a hatred and horror of evil, that he is filled with a desire and determination to live henceforth unto the pleasing of his Lord. He feels that the Song of Israel on the farther shores of the Red Sea (Exo. 15) is exactly suited to express his case. But how soon he discovers that the Wilderness of Sin lies between him and the Promised Land, and that though the Egyptians be dead there are Amalekites to assail him (Exo. 17:8). True, God grants him many a token of His favour along the way, and at each gracious reviving indwelling sin appears to slumber; but soon after it awakens and rages worse than ever, and, "I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14) becomes his cry.

What "changes" the real Christian experiences in his enjoyment of the Scriptures! Often he is able to feelingly exclaim, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psa. 19:10). But alas, it is by no means always so. When fellowship with God is broken our relish is lost for His Word, and it becomes more or less neglected. Sad to relate it was thus with Israel of old: "But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes" (Num. 11:6). And, when the Lord chastens His child because of his waywardness, so far from His Word affording comfort, it pricks, condemns, and terrifies. How many a backslider has turned to the Word only to feel that the solemn curses pronounced upon the hypocrite and the apostate apply to his case.

What "changes" the real Christian experiences in his faith! On some occasions his heart goes out instinctively to God so that he can exclaim, "I will trust and not be afraid" (Isa. 12:2); but at other times he is filled with doubts and fears, and is quite unable to lay hold of the Divine promises. Nor is this always explainable from the human side: when a Christian is walking closely with God and is conscious of no transgression, yet he is not lord of his faith, and is painfully reminded of the fact. What "changes" the faith of Abraham experienced: not fearing to leave Chaldea at the call of Jehovah, yet in the time of famine going down to Egypt--daring to arm his servants and rescue Lot from Chedorlaomer --yet on two occasions afraid to own Sarah as his wife; believing God that he should have a numerous seed, and then resorting to the unbelieving device of cohabiting with Hagar.

What "changes" the real Christian experiences in his prayer life! One day he is favoured with real freedom and his devotions are delightful, but another day he is bound in the spirit and his attempts at supplication are wearisome. O how different it is when the believer is favoured with conscious access to God and an answer of peace is granted him, from feeling that the Lord is far off and the heavens above are as brass. How different it is from having liberty in pleading the promises than deeming ourselves to have no right to appropriate them; from having importunity to plead our suit than a sense that it is useless to continue asking. And what a sore trial it is for the Christian when such an experience is protracted: then it is that he cries, "Oh that I were as in months past" (Job 29:2).

What "changes" the true Christian often experiences in his outward lot! For a time-- perhaps for years--the smile of Providence is upon him, and then all is drastically altered. One trouble follows swiftly upon the heels of another, until the sorely tried soul is ready to say with Jacob, "all these things are against me" (Gen. 42:36). The strain of financial reverses and family bereavements undermines his health, and Satan takes full advantage of his low spirits and shattered nerves. Thoroughly dejected, he asks, "where are Thy former loving kindnesses?" (Psa. 89:49).

But such "changes" or afflictions are helpful, for they deeply exercise an honest heart, humble him before the Lord, cause him to tread more softly, and deepen his fear of God. Long continued ease and comfort produce the worst effects upon the godless, but the spiritual fluctuations to which we have alluded are a part of God's discipline for the believer's growth in piety.

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