



Links Players

The Zone

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." (Psalm 91:1-2, ESV)

A few weeks back, Fred Couples (AKA Freddie) shot 60 in the final round of the SAS Championship at Prestonwood C.C. When asked about his performance, Freddie characteristically responded with, "An unreal day."

On the front nine, he had five birdies in a row. He wasn't content with that. So, he birdies the last seven on the inward nine. If that's not the "zone," there is no such thing.

No matter your level of play, you've probably experienced something like this a time or two in your life. Maybe you didn't have seven birdies in a row, but you've had a stretch that, in hindsight, you would label "the zone."

Writing for Sports Psychology Today, Mike Edger argues, "Athletes talk so much about performing in the zone and how awesome it feels. Many athletes view the zone as this magical, hard-to-obtain state of mind. But the zone is really not that complicated or hard to achieve."

Edger might receive some pushback from a few of us on that last opinion. The zone, if anything, is, by definition, an extraordinary performance, in competitive sports, at the highest level, unexpectedly arriving and vanishing in a flash.

We've all watched in amazement those athletes who had moments in the heat of battle that exceeded both their and our expectations. Accomplishing something that borders on the impossible makes this such a fascinating area of research.

The game of golf has a bucketload of magical moments that we would categorize as "finding the zone." One such moment occurred in the 2016 Ryder Cup. Sergio and Phil went mano a mano on the final day.

Consider the following: Combined; they had 19 birdies. Sergio didn't make a bogey. Mickelson made ten birdies. And finally, Sergio halved the match by making a 15-footer on the last hole. Both men were in a place that we only dream of.

As those who have committed their lives to the risen Lord, we have had seasons of life that could be described as an elevated state of existence—"the zone." We are, as some would say, "flying on the

wings of eagles.” Others, not wanting to go that far, would say they’ve had a “mountaintop experience.”

The Psalmist describes it as “abiding in the shadow of the Almighty.” This is a poetic way of saying we can live in the presence of the Lord. The Puritans called it the “felt nearness of the Lord.”

However we end up describing it, Jesus opens us up to a whole new dimension of existence. As those who have repented of our sins and placed our trust in Jesus, our triune God has opened the doors into his presence. He has invited us to enter into “gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise.”

That is to say, we have a standing invitation to “come before the throne of grace” and enjoy him now and forever. God forbid that we reduce Christianity to receiving forgiveness of sin(s) and fail to realize that his forgiveness is unto the greater end of restoring that which was lost in Adam—a personal relationship with God.

May we all learn to live and abide in the “zone” of his extraordinary grace and, as Piper says, “glorify God by enjoying him forever.”

Prayer: Lord! Draw us nearer and nearer to the throne of grace.

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Dennis Darville

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