

(1 Peter - Part 18): On Laying Aside Certain Things

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being born again, laying aside malice and guile, and being honest and authentic in our words and actions.

Duration: 39:05

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:3, Joshua 1:8, Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 4:20-22, Matthew 6:33, James 1:22, 1 Peter 2:3

Topics: "Laying Aside"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that it is God who infuses the element of eternity into everything. Without God's intervention, mortality and corruptibility are inevitable. The preacher highlights that even the most privileged and intelligent individuals will eventually die, as it is appointed for all humans. However, the preacher also emphasizes that the Word of God calls believers to action, urging them to lay aside malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking. The preacher encourages listeners to desire the sincere milk of the Word in order to grow spiritually, emphasizing that they are the subjects of the sentence and have the ability to lay aside these negative traits. The preacher concludes by posing the question of how a person can cleanse their own heart or purge their own soul, comparing it to how a person can wash their own hands.

Transcript

From the words of Peter, the apostle of the Lord, in his first epistle, second chapter, verses one to three, Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. If so be, ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Now, I wonder if it would be unbearably repetitious if I emphasized again the word wherefore here.

There are words, many of them, that are very little more than fillers. They are conjunctives, even though they would not be called so by the persons who make grammars. They just connect.

And therefore and wherefore, in such words, are among them. But when the Holy Spirit uses wherefore or therefore, or whereas, you must always look before and see what he said before. Because wherefore means because, because of what he said before.

Now, he says before, being born again. And understand chapter two, that is put in there by man for convenience of division. It did not occur in the original.

So there is no chapter here at all as Peter wrote it, and as the first Christians read it. Being born again, therefore, lay aside all malice, and receive the word like newborn babes. You get the connection there if you pay some attention to the little wherefore.

Now, he says that we are born again. And of course, that is a biological term. It is a term that has to do with birth and life and organisms.

It is not a poetical term, nor a legal one. It is a biological one. And Peter was a follower of our Savior, and possibly present when he gave us that great third chapter of John.

Except a man be born again, cannot see the kingdom of God. And Peter remembered that, and repeated, being born again. Not of corruptible seed, but by the word of the Lord.

Now, he says here, not of corruptible seed is our birth, but by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. And this heavenly birth is, therefore, contrasted with all earthly births. There was a science, if you would want to call it a science, I think it perhaps would have the respectability that would allow one to use that word and dignify it by the word science.

It was a branch, a subhead under science, at least, called eugenics. I haven't heard very much about it. The great exponent of eugenics in our time is Albert Wiggum.

He is reduced now to writing a little feature for the Daily News and other newspapers. But he has written in the other days when he was a younger and more vigorous man, a good deal on the subject of eugenics. And eugenics simply means that we apply to humanity the same system that we apply to the If a farmer wants good stock, he breeds from increasingly select parents.

And this was the science of eugenics. For a while it went very strongly, but it sort of died out. I haven't heard much about it anymore.

I think maybe Hitler sort of killed that, because Hitler took it seriously. He believed in the super-race. He even went so far as to say that certain select men should be picked out of the populace and made the fathers of all the generation.

And thus you would increase your stock and raise its level by breeding from good high stock. That is well known to farmers, but it took Hitler to apply it to humanity. But the science of eugenics, or the doctrine of eugenics, though not quite so crass as that, nevertheless taught it, and said that we should pick out only those fathers and mothers from the general populace who had such health and such fine traits as we would want to breed into the generations to come.

And then, of course, that meant that all of us that had anything wrong with us, we would remain childless by law. So that's eugenics. Now, I don't suppose that'll ever be tried, because humanity just won't allow itself to be thus reduced.

Hitler couldn't make it work, and the Communists couldn't make it work, and I doubt whether our friend Dr. Wiggum will ever be able to make it work. But even granted that such a thing might happen, granted that everybody under six foot should be legally declared as a celibate, but that he shouldn't marry, and that

every young woman that had anything wrong with her eyes or wrong with her at all should be compelled to remain childless, and the future Americans all should be great stalwart fellows, arrow-taller ads. Now, you know what would happen at last? I'll tell you what would happen at last.

Every one of those super babies would die and corrupt. Because here are your two catchwords, corruptible and dead. Corruption and mortality, there are your two words.

They're the words that the devil put in, and you can never get them out. You can breed a race of giants, if you will, but after they have run their course, they'll die, and they'll rot. And the Holy Ghost here contrasts the birth from above with any birth from below.

And he says, being born again not of corruptible seed, but of the incorruptible by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man, even the glory of the eugenic man, is as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever.

It takes God to put everlastingness into anything. It takes God to shoot the basic element of eternity into anything. And if God doesn't do it, the two curse words rest upon it, mortality and corruptibility.

Whether a race be plain people like us, or whether they might be some superior race of supermen dreamed by a Nietzsche or a Hitler or a Wiggum, they'll die sometime. For it's written, it's appointed unto man once to die, and after that to judgment. And the richest parents in this world today, the best educated, and those with the highest IQ, they may hold in their arms this morning a baby that may have a future, a wonderful future.

Health may be bred into it, and intelligence may be bred into it. And in addition, it may have all opportunities for improvement, cultural improvement, intellectual improvement. But God Almighty has said, the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

And it's appointed unto man once to die. So the most cultured parents and the healthiest parents cannot take the word die out of their baby's heart. Love it and weep on it and baptize it with their tears.

All they will, they can't take the word mortality out of its life, for it is there. Mortality and corruption. These follow like some dark shadow every human being.

These twin clouds, mortality and corruption, they rest above the perfumed boudoir of every Hollywood actress. They rest like twin clouds of doom above the chair of the White House laundry, where sits our President. And wherever men are found, if we could only see it, we would soon see these two weeping clouds above them.

Mortality and corruption, they'll die and they'll rot. To get away from the long, resounding Latin words and get down to plain Anglo-Saxon. Mortality and corruption are beautiful words, but when we throw the Anglo-Saxon at them and say, die and rot, they're not so beautiful, are they? That's what it means.

Latin always has a way of rumbling along like a music wagon, and they say some beautiful things that are terrible things nevertheless, but the blunt Anglo-Saxon always pulls it downward below. So men die and men rot. And the Holy Ghost here contrasts the birth that dies and rots and the birth that is incorruptible and never dies.

Thank God. Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. And that is the word of the gospel which is preached unto you.

Now he said, because this is true, wherefore? That's what that word wherefore means. All I've said up to now, what wherefore means. Therefore, because this is true, therefore, laying aside all wickedness, that's what the word malice is, wickedness.

Not malice, but wickedness. And it says here, laying it aside. Now, I've looked this up very carefully.

You may think I don't have very much to do and may say what a cinch this man has. Get up and talk for three quarters of an hour and it's all over. But I have examined words and searched and prayed in order that I might get proof.

And I have examined Peter's words laying aside here. Of course, it's English. Now, what did Peter really say? He used a word that can mean one of two things.

It means either taking off and changing like a garment, or it means cleansing away defilement as you might wash a garment. So what he said was, putting away from you, either by taking it off and throwing it from you, or by purging yourself from it, all malice. And it is something that you and I can do.

Spineless Christianity says there's nothing to do. But the word of God doesn't go along with that. The word of God is always putting you as the subject of the sentence, always.

If you read your Bible and you will be sharp enough to read in the taken-for-granted subjects, they are very often you. They are very often you. You lay aside.

You do this. You are the subject of the sentence. You are the one who activates the verb.

You are the person who does it. Here it is, you lay aside. You are the subject of the sentence there.

And he says that it's something that we can do. Now, you say, Mr. Tozer, how can a man cleanse his own heart? How can a man purge his own soul? Well, I might ask you, how can a man wash his own hands? He can't. He can only subject his hands to water and detergents, and they do the washing.

But if he does not subject himself to water and detergent, he won't be cleansed. So, just as a man is clean by washing his hands, and yet he can't wash his hands, so a man's heart is cleansed when he cleanses himself, and yet he can't cleanse himself. There's no contradiction.

It's a question of understanding. When you say to your boy, Johnny, wash your hands before you sit down to this table. Johnny disappears, and pretty soon he's back holding up white hands, before they hadn't been white.

Now, did Johnny wash his hands? No, and yet he washed them by bringing them into contact with water and detergents, and they did the washing. God says to a sinner, cleanse your hands, you sinners, and be purified, you double-minded. What does he mean? Well, he says, before you sit down to the Father's table, go wash your hands.

And yet that sinner can't wash his hands. Not all the water in the world can wash him clean, only the blood of Christ can do it. Why then is he told to do it? For the same reason the boy is told to go wash.

There's water that will cleanse him, but if he doesn't use water and soap, his hands will be as dirty, and when he rubs them, he only rubs the dirt in. You who are fathers or mothers, or brothers or sisters of small boys, know that that's often the result. He tries to wash his hands, and usually the towel gets part of it and the rest stays on.

But if he'll allow water and soap to get to him, he'll get clean. So when we're religious and we hear the voice of God say, lay aside all impurities, we rush to lay them aside, and we don't go where the blood is, for only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us. And yet if we withhold ourselves from that blood, we'll be unclean forever.

For it's only the blood of Christ that can cleanse. So he says, here's what he says we must cleanse ourselves from, or put away as dirty clothing, all wickedness. Now, wickedness means all vice.

And vice means whatever is not of virtue. And right here, the liberals hurt themselves. Sometimes I talk to students, and I shake my head and turn away, and I feel like saying, go thou from the presence of a foolish man, when thou seest not in him the lips of wisdom.

Because instead of turning from all wickedness, they ask the question, what is wickedness, or what is virtue? The sincere Christian never asks any hypothetical questions. A boy that's dead hungry and has two bears and makes a beeline for the table, when he's told, Tommy, you can't eat like that, go wash. How would you like it if he stopped and said, Mother, would you please define dirt? And what would you mean by it? Give me a definition.

You'd soon drive him off to the bathroom, wouldn't you? And yet we treat God like that. God says, get rid of all your defilement, and we write books to show what defilement is, and write chapters showing what virtue is. And when it's all over, we're just where we were before.

Socrates, the blunt-nosed philosopher of Athens, centuries ago, had a little sense of humor, quite a sense of humor, as well as, of course, a very profound mind. And he used to gather a lot of young fellows around him and take a walk. They didn't know in those days, I might say aside and in brackets, thank God, that youth should be led by youth.

They didn't know that. They thought youth should be led by age and wisdom. But then they were old-fashioned.

Anyway, he used to take a bunch of young people, and they'd gather around this wise old brother, and they'd go for a walk. And they'd just talk and talk and talk. And if you had time to do it, it'd be well worth your while to sit down and read some of those long dialogues.

Plato, they're called, but really they're the doings and talkings of Socrates. I remember one of them, I forget the name of it now, but they all have a little short name. This one had to do with friendship.

And they walked and they talked and talked and walked and sat and got up and talked and walked some more. And all the time they were walking, they were talking. And what do you suppose they were talking about? They were talking about friendship.

And they were inquiring what friendship is. Somebody would suggest that friendship was this and this. Then Socrates would quietly go to work and devastate that argument and show that wasn't friendship at all.

And when it was all over and they were dead tired and hungry, they hadn't arrived at any conclusion. And Socrates laughed and said to the young fellows around him, well, boys, he said, it's astonishing, isn't it, how good friends we are, and yet we don't know what friendship is. Boys thought that was an indication of the overall wisdom of the man, as well as a pleasant sense of humor.

They were all his good friends and not a one of them knew what friend meant. Now, brethren, it's entirely possible for a man to put away all vice and dedicate his life to the cultivation of holy virtue and not know what vice and virtue is philosophically. You don't have to know.

Every born-again Christian knows virtue and vice by the light of conscience and the clear light of the scriptures. The light of conscience, if it has not been degraded by miseducation, will tell us what is vice and what is virtue. And if we subject our conscience to the searching discipline of the scriptures, we'll soon know.

We'll know what is right for us and what is wrong for us with not knowing what right or wrong is philosophically. And I might add with Socrates, it's wonderful how holy a man may get without knowing what holiness is. So he says, put away all vice.

Don't argue about it, put it away. And then he says, put away all guile. And that word guile there comes from hunter catching a bird with bait.

And every mouse thinks for a few terrible seconds that the housewife loves him, because he's a great lover of cheese and the housewife, or usually the husband, has to do it. The housewife sets a feast of cheese before him. And I suppose that if two philosophical mice were to be seen scrambling across the kitchen on their way somewhere, discussing how they were in bed with the housewife, and then when they saw this huge, succulent piece of odoriferous cheese all waiting for them there, they might look at each other and say, we've wronged her.

She really remembers us, God bless her. She put out a little meal for us. And if one of them was as wise as he should have been, he just said, honey, watch that cheese.

I know that lady, and she is put here before you, not a meal, but bait. This isn't food, this is bait. The headstrong mouse says, I have misjudged the whole human race.

Why, this was set for me. Click, and it's all over with that mouse. The next day he's picked up one more victim of his own credulity.

Now, guile, says the Holy Ghost, using the Greek word for mouth bait. And he says, put away all guile. In other words, don't put one thing before another to fool anybody.

But be exactly what you are. Isn't that wonderful? That's so practical, that's salty, brother, that's salty. So he says, put away all guile.

The Pharisees were the most guileful of all people in history, inasmuch as they would ask a question, and then follow that with another question, all the time hiding bait underneath it, in order that they might catch something that came out of his mouth. And the Bible uses those very words. It said this, they said, to catch him.

They were setting bait before their Savior. He never fell into it. But he says, put away all guile.

A Christian never ought to say one thing in order to mean another. And he never ought to mean another thing when he says one. And he never should two-time or double-talk, but always be just what he is and mean what he says.

The Quakers reacted violently from the speech of their day among Christians, and they carried it so far that they wouldn't even use the word Mr. or Mrs., Master or Masteress, Mistress, because they said, we don't know he's a master, so they just called him John. He walked up to a lady, she might be 104, and he said, Good morning, Mary. Because Quakers didn't believe in giving any title that might mislead.

And they wouldn't even say you, because that was plural. They said thee and thou, rather than you, because they said he's not two people, he's one. And that was carrying it too far, of course.

That was getting under bondage to words. You never should get under bondage to words, but we should be without guile to mean exactly what we say. I don't know that I ought to take time, but it is altogether possible for Christians to get under bondage to language, and to get under that which one man called, Stuart Chase, called the tyranny of words.

Somebody wrote in to a gentleman, he called me on the phone from an office downtown, to want to know what to reply to this man. He said, I have been reading the Bible, and in the Bible I have come to the word ankle, spelled A-N-C-L-E. Now, he said, that's in your King James Version, and that isn't true.

There's a K in it. And he said, how is it that a Bible, a book dedicated to truth, should have a lion? He said, if A-N-K-L-E spells ankle, why do they spell it A-N-C-L-E? And this fellow called me on the phone and said, what'll I tell him? Well, brother, I could have told him something myself, I think, but I was nice as I could be under the circumstances. But there was a fellow who made the whole word of God stand or fall on an old-fashioned spelling.

Silly, isn't it? You wouldn't do that, would you? Neither would I, but there aren't many like us. We are different. But it's entirely possible to get under bondage to language.

Don't do that. But on the other hand, never use words as bait, nor conduct either. Then hypocrisy, as he said, that lies close to Gal, but it's not the same.

Hypocrisy is to act in another's character, to pretend to be what we are not, or to pretend not to be what we are. A true Christian never hides anything. You might mark that down.

A true Christian never hides anything, because a true Christian never needs to hide anything. And if there's anything in your life that you need to hide, then you are not living the kind of life you should be living. For no Christian, if he's right with God wholly, ever should need to hide anything in his life.

Now, that doesn't mean that I must publish the amount of my income tax, and that I must tell all of the embarrassing intimacies that go with any human life. That's another matter. But it does mean as far as moral conduct is concerned, there isn't anything to hide.

Don't be any hypocrite. Be exactly what you are, and do not pretend to be what you're not, and do not pretend not to be what you are. And then envies.

I looked up the word envy in one of the best commentaries in the world. You know a good commentary better than Fawcett and Brown and all the rest. It's just a good old-fashioned dictionary.

I came to the word envies here, and I said, Now, I just wonder what Noah Webster said about it. Well, here's what Noah said. It may make some of us squirm, but here's what he said.

Envy, chagrin, mortification, discontent, or uneasiness at the sight of someone else's excellence or good fortune. He said, You see somebody else having excellencies or good fortune, and the effect it has upon you is to make you uneasy, or discontented, mortified, or chagrined. Now, that's envy.

One fellow is asked to play a solo. The other one sees him and immediately feels rising within him chagrin, discontent, and uneasiness. One man gets a call to a big church, and the other members of the conference feel within them chagrin, discontent, and uneasiness.

One man gets a long car, and the other one feels within him chagrin, mortification, and uneasiness, and so on, through all of the ramifications of human life. It is to feel uneasy when somebody else is being praised. Now, I've noticed that envy never crosses a line.

One man is a painter, another a pianist. And the painter hears the pianist's praise without a ripple. He can just join in the praise.

He doesn't mind that he joins in the praise, because he's a painter, and they're out of his field. But let some other painter be praised in his presence, and he's very likely to feel rising within him emotions consisting of discontent, chagrin, and uneasiness, because it's in his field. You can praise a politician to the sky, and it doesn't bother a singer.

But if you praise another singer, unless he's a very good Christian, he may squirm. And so with everything else we do, it is when somebody in our field of interest is being given a place that we're not being given, then it is that uneasiness comes. The Holy Ghost says, put that all away.

Say, what do you do with it? What do you do with dirt? Take it and expose it to water and soap. What do you do with the dirt of the heart? Expose it to the blood of the Lamb and the fire of the Holy Ghost. And again, all evil speaking.

I was thinking yesterday as I ran over these words how humorously wise the English language is. The word gossip is, of course, a gossip. And a gossip is defined as a defamer, a belittler, or a backbiter.

Let's just break those words down and kick them around a little bit here. Defamer. Fame, of course, is a high reputation somebody has.

And then along comes a fellow and defames him. He just cuts the horns off, dehornes that fame. And there we have the word defame.

Now, that's a word almost funny, and yet how terrible it is, that there are persons who cannot allow another person to be well-spoken of in their presence. They will say, well, that is true, bah! And then start to defame the man. So a defamer is somebody that destroys fame.

And then belittle. That is, here is a fellow who is big, and a fellow comes along and belittles him. And then that word backbite.

I've always thought that God must have had something to do with creating that word. Backbite means to bite behind the back. If you try to bite anybody in front, you have to face their angry eyes and their two fists.

But it's quite safe to bite from behind. So we backbite the back. Brethren, I'm quite sure that if the envious and the defamers and the backbiters were taken out of the average church, there would be a revival overnight.

We backbite and defame and belittle and envy, and then piously blame our trouble on the liberals and the modernists. No liberal bothering this church, no modernist bothering this church. He'd die here.

The air is too rare. He couldn't take it. Bring a modernist into this church and turn him loose awhile and he'd hunt for cover.

Because just the atmosphere isn't conducive to modernism. He couldn't live in it. The air is too rare.

So don't blame the modernists because you and I are in the state we're in. We're to blame because we're guilty of guile and hypocrisies and envies and defaming and belittling and backbiting. And he said, having put these evils away, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby.

These sins are like children's diseases that retard growth and threaten life. But he says, put them all away and get healthy. Then proceed to live on the sincere milk of the word.

That word sincere is a tough one. Peter used the word sincere. That is, he used a Greek word that we've got sincere in our King James Bible.

And translators have a tough time with it. I like to my own amusement sometimes, about the only exercise I get, is to see how the translators get all confused over some Greek words. And sincere is one of them here.

They call it anything and everything. But the best explanation I ever heard of it was given by a man who was a student and a translator, and who had run into this word sincere. The sincere milk of the word.

Now he said, what does that word mean and how could it apply to milk? So he said he was visiting in Athens, Greece. And down the street of that ancient city there came a milk wagon pulled by probably a burro. And across the side of the milk wagon there was a sign written in Greek.

This man being a Greek student instantly, of course, read it. And the sign said, such and such an angle of populist milk company, and we sell only sincere milk. He said, I got it in a second.

Now I know what it means. It means unadulterated milk. No extra water in this milk.

He said, I knew instantly then I had it. For that's what Peter meant when he used that old Greek word. He said, feed yourself on the undiluted word.

Don't water it down. Take it full strength. That is, let the word of God say to you all it says.

Don't simply pick out the happy verses. It would be shocking to go through some Bibles and find how we underline only the happy verses. But back in old Israel they got up on two different mountains, and they said, Amen, to the reading of the scriptures.

Up on this mountain was one group, and up on this mountain another. And the old man of God would read all the blessings, and up here they'd say, Amen. Then he'd read the curses, and up on this mountain they'd say, Amen.

Then he'd read some more blessings, and they'd say, Amen. Then he'd read some more curses, and they'd say, Amen. In other words, they took all of God's word, both the blessings and the curses, both the admonitions and the encouragement, both the whippings and the comfortings, they took it all.

We must take all the word of God and not water it down. Live on the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby. So our growth is to be by the word, and it will be in exact proportion to the diet that we follow.

I sometimes deal with backsliders, they come sometimes to see me. Certainly not everybody comes to see me as a backslider. I might say it's a rare case where they are.

But when a fellow has slipped and he comes to see me, almost always it follows the same pattern. I can't pray anymore, I'm getting careless in the way I'm living. I don't care to go to church much anymore.

And then my one penetrating question, almost always it is, do you read the scriptures? The answer almost always is, no. They're not as much as they used to. That's the answer, brother.

That's the trouble. A child gets weak and run down, at least look about the diet, so that if we turn from the word, we can expect every kind of disease to begin to get a hold of us. But the unadulterated word of God will give us health and make us strong.

So we must eat the word and obey the word, and we'll grow thereby. Now there's no oratory there, that's just salty practical stuff that you might expect a fisherman to give us. Thank God for Peter, amen? Amen.

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