

A Pastor's Telling of the Life of a.w. Tozer

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon reflects on the importance of true submission to God and the contrast between authentic faith and contemporary Christianity.

Duration: 1:04:20

Scripture: Exodus 23:20, Luke 18:13

Topics: "Biography"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of effective and impactful preaching. He discusses the need to avoid cliches and repetitive phrases, and instead focus on delivering a clear and powerful message. The preacher shares his own experience of conversion and how God used the words of an old man preaching on the street to bring him to faith. He also talks about the temptation to preach sensational sermons for larger crowds, but emphasizes the importance of staying true to the Word of God. The preacher encourages the audience to discipline themselves and learn from the example of Abraham Lincoln in their pursuit of spiritual growth.

Transcript

So let us begin with God, back of all, above all, before all, first in sequential order, above in rank and station, exalted in dignity and honor. As the self-existent one, he gave being to all things, and all things exist out of him and for him. Every soul belongs to God and exists by his pleasure, God being who and what he is, who and what we are.

The only thinkable relation between us is one of full lordship on his part and compassion on ours. We owe him every honor that is in our power to give him, our everlasting grief giving him anything less. The pursuit of God will embrace the labor of bringing our total personality formity to his, and this not judicially but actually.

I do not here refer to the act of justification by faith, I speak of a voluntary exalting of God to his proper station over us, and a wonder of our whole being to the place of worshipful submission, which the creator, creature, circumnavigates, makes proper. That's Tosa. Remembering my own deep imperfection, I can speak with charity of all who take upon them the worthy name by which we Christians are called, but if I see aright, the cross of Poplar is not the cross of the New Testament, it is rather a new bright ornament upon the bosom of a self-assured and carnal Christianity, indeed the hands of Abel, but whose voice is the voice of Cain.

The old cross slew men, the new cross entertains them. Demned, the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh, the new cross encourages it.

The old tears and blood, the new cross brings laughter. The flesh, smiling and confident, preaches of the cross. Before that cross it bows, and towards that cross it points with carefully staged, but upon that cross it will not die, and the reproach of that cross it stubbornly refuses to bear.

I well know how many smooth arguments can be marshaled in support of the new cross. Doesn't the new cross win converts, and make many followers, the advantage of numerical success? Should we not adjust ourselves to the changing times? Have we not heard the slogan, new days, new ways? And who but someone very old and very conservative would insist upon death as the appointed way to life? Interested in a gloomy mysticism that would sentence its flesh to a cross, and recommend self-effacing humility to actually to be practiced by modern Christians. These are the arguments, along with many more flippants, which are brought forward to give an appearance of wisdom to the hollow and meaningless cross of popular Christianity, and that is Tozer.

We're familiar with those themes, and many like them in the Christian publications in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and of course Tozer will live on through those. But who was A. W. Tozer? And he was born on a farm in April 1897, in a small community in Pennsylvania. The third of his grandfather, Gilbert, had emigrated to America from England 40 years before his birth.

He was called A. W., named after the husband of the closest friend of his mother, a shopkeeper. Tozer disliked the name, yet he named one of his sons Aiden. So he always used the initial, A. W. I come from a fiery, nervous English strain.

Father had a temper like a trigger on an atom bomb, and he could blow up. I've seen him take a shovel and beat a wheelbarrow in anger. Just a wheelbarrow.

There was something in the line from which I came that was almost anti-religion. Moral, but not religious. Attitudes were cold, earthy, profane.

But this I must say of both my high human standards, morality, but completely without any thought of God. God might have existed. My appearance appeared to be without a spark of desire after God.

So what you hear from his father was, why did God create mosquitoes? So he had a tough happy on a farm, certainly the first ten years of his life, and went to a single-class country school team, and that was his entire education. He had little Christian influence, except it appears from his father, who might have been a Christian, but little is said of her. But his mother's mother, she was a powerful woman.

She had a dream book, and all her confidence was in this. The first thing she did every morning before her cup of coffee was to take up her dream. She would have one or two dreams every night, and the first thing she did in the morning was to check this book.

It was in alphabetical order, so she'd look under A and turn to apples and find out what the dream would say of what was to happen that day. She had a sharp tongue, a lever in dog barks. So if a dog barked outside her window, she'd know someone would surely die that day.

That was the one influence of the supernatural or preternatural world, then, that he was aware of constantly. When he was ten, his older brother, Zene, went to Akron, Ohio, to work for the Goodrich

Rubber Company. So he left the senior boy on the farm working, plowing.

There was a great tragedy when the farmhouse burned through the pine chips on the fire, and the spark set the shingle ablaze, and he led his younger brothers and sister to safety. He lived there five more years, and then in 1912, all the family followed Zene to Akron, and totally went to work at 15 years of age in the Goodrich Rubber Company with his father and his sister. There was a streak of cynicism in him in those days.

It was completely eroded from him. He took it into the kingdom of God with him. He got it from the agnostics in his school and in his place of employment.

He always approached people with a question mark. When he went to attend church in Akron with his younger brother and sister, he went to the Sunday school. And then, in 1915, just before his death, he was converted.

The human instrument was an old man, standing on the pavement of the street, preaching to people as they passed him, and urging people, what he could remember of it, urging people to cry, merciful to me, a sinner. And God used those words. He went home.

When he tells it himself, speaking of the mystery of God's dealings in bringing us all to a knowledge of himself. Can you tell me why, then, at the age of 70, boy surrounded by unbelief 100%, I could find my way to my mother's attic, kneel on my knees, and give my heart and life in Christ? Can you tell me how I could be thoroughly and completely converted without help from anyone on the outside? When I came to faith in Jesus Christ, there wasn't a single human being to help. There was nobody with a marked New Testament showing me how easy it is.

No friend placing an arm over my shoulder to pray beside me. I can't answer the question, why? I can only testify that Jesus Christ was as real as any man's conversion has ever been. You tell me why.

I don't know why. I can only say there's such a thing as the secret working of God in a human being. And then he applies it then, he's preaching this, oh man, you feel the tug of God in your breast.

What a happy man you should be. What a marvellous and mysterious privilege, if you feel the inner tug of God in your bosom. Whisper.

There are not many men here to be on God's prospect list, to be on God's active list for inner working and do something about it. Remember, a thousand men work where you work. Perhaps you're the only one who feels that tug.

God yearns over you. Listen, they won't hear. They kill it within them.

If it's still alive and tugging at your heart, thank God, follow the light. From every soul, by sin oppressed, there's mercy with the Lord. Well then, he joined Grace and Akron, and then he was baptised in the Church of the Brethren, and he began to witness street preaching groups, prayer meetings.

And then a period of coldness then came into his life. He decided he'd run away with a friend. They went on a little boat on the river.

Downriver, they weren't sure where they were going, till the boat capsized, and he lost all his possessions. He came back a humbler boy. His sister, Essie, was also converted at that time, and said about him, he

lived the most consistent Christian life I've seen.

The Methodists frowned upon him, and there was tension, and so he transferred his membership to the congregation of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. And the pastor of Gation, Gero, had a considerable influence over him. And Tozer was very typical of the best of the CNMA.

It was the only board he ever served on, the board of management of the CMA. He was the vice-president from 1946, and he resigned in 1950, when there was talk of making him president. From 1950, he was editor of the national paper, the Alliance Witness.

Now, the Christian Missionary Alliance, it really comes out of the 1850s, and what followed in those next 40 years in America, it was founded by A.B. Simpson. A.B. Simpson, who was a Canadian, and ministry at Knox Seminary in Toronto, graduated in 1866 at 23 years of age, and went then to Knox in Hamilton. And he was one of the Victoria phenomena.

In three years, the growth of that church, he brought in 750 new members in three years. When he was 30, he went then to Louisville, was involved there in evangelism, healing after the Civil War. 36, he went to the 13th Presbyterian Church in New York.

And there was tension in the first year in that congregation, as Catholic working class people were converted, and came into the church. And within two years, he resigned and started a new work in the Caledonian group. So, eight years later, the great gospel tabernacle was built for him as an independent evangelical work.

And around that time, two societies were formed that he was connected with, the Christian Alliance and the Evangelical Missionary Alliance. After 10 years of independence, they merged in 1897. And so, they went, would say, they did not want to be known as a denomination.

They were not a denomination, they always said. But of course, they were. And the gospel tabernacle, and there the fourfold gospel of the Christian and Missionary Alliance was preached, Christ the Savior, birth sanctifier, and coming King.

The entire sanctification of believer, body, soul, and spirit, the crisis of the deeper light, no eradication of the sinful nature, that was the strand then of second blessing teaching. For the sick with anointing of oil, the premillennial return of Christ, and it's Bible colleges then, the NIAC, and then St. Paul's Minnesota. It has about 1500 churches now, 100,000 members.

That's the Christian and Missionary Alliance then, of which Coase was such a representative personality. So, Coase with the thought life of that group, but he was far broader than the theology of that group, and it was to the church fathers and to the evil writers that, of course, he found the experiential Christianity that his heart yearned for, and of course, some seriousness with which he always viewed a Christian thing. When he was 21, he married his wife Ador, sons, and finally a daughter came along when he was 41 years of age.

And his mother-in-law was a very godly woman who had influence over him. He saw in the next couple of years both his father and mother, and two of his sisters. And shortly after he was married, he was called up and served then in the American Army, a year at the end of the First World War.

When he returned home, his gifts were recognized in the denomination, and in February, he was appointed as a pastor in the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in West Virginia. He'd been converted four years, and he had nothing whatsoever. He was 22 years of age, and he was pastor of a church in West Virginia.

And you find in his writings all these warnings, giving young, professing Christians tasks and duties and responsibilities straight away. Anyway, that's what happened to him, and it happened to many people in the New Testament, too. So, his first pastorate, three years.

Second, third pastorate, five years. Then in 1928, he came and began his great long ministry of 31 years outside Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Chicago. It was the very blessed ministry, the capital of the North of America, north of the USA, a city where Moody College is, and Wheaton is, Fort Wayne College is, and later the Evangelical Divinity School, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Naturally, there, Wheaton gave him a doctorate in 1950. It's a very educated, cultural city of second-hand bookshops. It's a city with a marvelous symphony orchestra and universities, and he read so widely, compensated for the lack of education that he had had leaving school at 14.

He gave himself to preaching. He rarely visited, he rarely called. Once, when he called, an elder who was shot up in bed and said, I'm not that sick, am I? Never took a vacation.

In 1941, they built a new auditorium there, and then when Wilbur Smith went off to Fuller, placed him on the Moody Bible Radio program each week, a very popular program, talks from a pastor's study, and he would always stand in the study in the church to give those talks week by week. A bit of a loner as a personality, but often withdraw old family. A married monk, he was described as.

Didn't have a car, never bought a car. His chauffeur would drive him around, he'd go with his books, and he would read to the assistant from the books, and they would discuss Shakespeare, and as they drove. Never owned property, never involved in business, and sometimes would refuse in salary, and of course he had strong opinions about absolutely everything.

In 1959, his own ministry had come to an end in Chicago. There was a new building program. It was the South Side there, and racial things going on in that area, and they were talking about a new site and moving out, and he felt they needed a younger man, 62, and he accepted a call to Toronto, to Avonlea Road Christian and Missionary Alliance.

I saw the building in April. Out to me, it's now the Hare Krishna building for Toronto. They moved out to the Christian Missionary Alliance to a suburb, and there it was.

Then after a three-year ministry there, he died on May the 12th in 1963, thrombosis, as in the morning, was taken to hospital, and he died that night. Let me say something to you now about his ministry. Chicago Church was in a downtown area.

It was a blue collar area, white collar area, people of stances around that church, the church building which was erected during the years that he was there was very plain, not quite stark, completely functional. The essential simplicity of the building emphasized the seriousness of mass in that church, and the serious intent of the man who was there bringing that message. Tosa was slight, not striking at all in his appearance, always wore very plain clothes, browns, greys.

His close friend once, you've got the expression of a hound dog, and you walk like Mickey Mouse. I once asked Dr. Lloyd-Jones if he'd heard him, and he said to me, no, I never heard him, but friends of mine from the chapel, they heard him, and they were a bit disappointed because the humour that he used after the articles that they'd read, they expected it to be very, very serious. Well, my friend who was a member there for three years, Joe, told me that he had a terrific sense, not really on himself most of all.

He spoke, for example, of a woman who wrote to him when he was editing the Alliance, but she looked forward to the paper every week because his pages exactly covered the floor of her Paris page. The worship services were devout and dignified, but that feeling that the Lord was present in the midst. My friend can remember one morning service when he finished, not with a prayer even, and not with a closing hymn, but wanted the impact of what he'd said to them, with them.

He loved, of course, the great hymns, and those were always his choice, and would listen in tent Sunday, and kept a vial of oil at the front of the church for anointing in their understanding of James chapter 5. But there was no evidence that he ever asked for anointing himself when he had his heart condition. He was a respected heart specialist in Chicago. His daughter Becky was the apple of his eye.

He wasn't pleased when she began to wear lipstick, and one day he went into a room, and he put himself, and came down, and smiled across at her. She was furious, but she continued to her, I think. And the effect of his ministry then was very varied.

Some didn't understand what he was saying, year after year, but many were affected. My friend was one such, and he tells me, it was in that church that I met laymen who, I could feel instinctively, had an intimate working relationship. Three persons of the Godhead.

One man was a foreman in a large machinery factory. The workers were organized by the most aggressive military in the USA, and yet Neil managed these men. He kept his shop on schedule, without a cross or loud word.

He was respected by his men. His calm, holy aura was with him, at home, at work, all due to a close walk with God. Tosa would say that he was a preacher.

You often hear that. You often hear ministers saying they don't feel themselves at ease with people. They're not a people person.

With their books. I doubt them. Once they say that, they know what is to be expected of them, and I think that Tosa was wonderful with people.

He was very acceptable to people. There was a young people's convention in Chicago, with a thousand people attending it. A thousand teenagers.

1962, half-past, they met. One who attended it wrote him a letter, and you know, you think of this young teenager who's heard this man speak and writes to him. I wish I could have gone with you and your dad hunting deer.

Many deer down in Pennsylvania. I wish I could visit you in California and see your new rifle and bike. That 4-H is a fine organization.

Each year, some of those boys and girls exhibit their steers. Two years in a row, the same girl won the blue ribbon for the best steer. She received a lot of money for it, about fourteen thousand dollars.

Said she was going to lay it aside for a college education. Never worry about losing a basketball game. The best teams lose at times, but in the long run, the best ones win most frequently, and the worst ones lose the most games.

I've really enjoyed you, and hope to hear good things about you as the years go on. Learn to discipline yourself, like a prize fighter or a big league. Ball boys are too soft.

Don't like to do anything they don't enjoy doing. Sometimes we have to do what we don't like, and that's good for us. Lincoln started young to learn everything he could.

He read and fought and got ready. If he'd wasted his time loafing, he wouldn't have become what he was. Another letter comes in then, and he replies again, I was converted at 17 and served the Lord.

In addition, there are seven children in our family, all of whom have passed through the teenage period. So you see, I should know quite a lot about the problems of young people. Your ideas of right and wrong will develop as you go on with God, and some things you'll undoubtedly drop, and some things about which you now have a conscience you may later see as being completely harmless.

To obey the scriptures where they're plain, and obey your conscience where the scriptures are not plain. Further light may come and change your attitude towards such things, but no amount of light can change the plain instruction of scripture, for they are themselves light. When you say the Christian life is hard, you're merely repeating what the saints of the ages have found.

To follow Christ is to carry a cross, and a cross is never easy. Read these two following passages prayerfully. Exodus 23, 20 to 33, and Isaiah 54.

I shall pray that God may give you a heart, and make you an outstanding Christian, and a light to your generation. Well now, that was a wonderful letter. A man with a pastor's heart, who can find time to write like that, to a teenager who's heard him speak, and when he says he was a preacher at home in the pulpit.

I know all of us can say that, but when you read his writings, he's writing with a great sense of pastoral responsibility and care for the church of Jesus Christ. About his preaching, he never shouted. He had this clear voice, and it carried its message to a building, so that no one present could miss it.

There are cassettes available now. I've got a cassette here. Let me just give you a sample of him.

We could cassette the sermon, de-unctionize some days of preaching. There's something missing when a man had to speak, and you only hear his voice. Let me just put on 20 seconds or so of Tozer preaching here.

And these religious cliches that we have, these cliches, just repeating the same old cliché again. Well, one of the things I do is not do that. And some people are startled and run and never come back, but others come to see this great sight, and wonder how it is you can say something and not sound like a preacher in saying it.

Well, I've worked on that all my life. I was 18, but I sure tried hard not to sound like one. I like this of his preaching.

Leisurely and easy to hear, not constantly looking down to a manuscript. A leader has to speak out of himself, doesn't he? Not out of a script. This is of his audience.

And pause, be kind, and be still. Carry on with the flow. And I like that about Tozer's preaching.

And you can only do that sort of thing if it's absolutely natural, if the concepts are your own. The power of a spoken word, how immense it is. You know, in Goebbels' diaries, even in the days of the bunker, Goebbels is writing in his diary, and he's saying, to make a speech, has the Fuhrer decided to speak? It was like a call to battle.

Germany was, Third Reich was collapsing all around. The only hope that the Fuhrer would speak. Words of Churchill that could save Britain, words that destroyed Germany.

No words of Ceausescu at the end could save himself in Romania. Once that's sighed and hooted at, he was a dead man. The massive revulsion against him and his words.

Let me say something about his attitude and church discipline. If there was a weakness with him, it was his love of peace, his hatred of controversy and division. He'd seen enough in fundamentalism.

My friend told me that there was, in 1954, a young married woman in the church who left, who was also in the church, and went off with another man who was in the congregation. There was a relationship then with him. He was her boss.

It was a very serious situation, and Tosa went and talked to my friend and even used the word pig to describe the woman and her behavior. And he was asked about church discipline. But he said that if the church was at a proper spiritual level, then those sinners left, or they would leave the church to follow their sinful ways.

They did disappear. They'd been under that ministry, and he reckoned they were responsible for their behavior, and theirs, and theirs alone. And that's how my friend recounts that.

Well, I'd like to ask a lot more questions about that. What went on behind the scenes, and what visits were made, and how were the broken partners in those marriages pastored during that time? Certainly today, church discipline seems so ineffective, even in as blatantly sinful as those that were described. Let me say something about his emphasis on holiness.

All his writings, his complaints about the 20th century, that Christianity was carnal and worldly. And one of his reasons was that the Schofield Bible had Christians into two groups, carnal Christians over whom Christ was not Lord, sinning Christians, and then who knew the Lordship of Christ. He was bitterly scathing of Christianity, not because of its eschatology, but because he was convinced its morality was defective, and made men come with their sins, gave them a theological reason for their sinfulness.

You know, one of his sermons, 1 Peter, a book of sermons on that is called, I Call It Heresy. And he has a sermon on, as obedient children, not fashioning according to your former lusts in your ignorance. And he's very scathing in that sermon, was that, say they have taken Christ as Savior, and then later on in a separate act of will, take him as Lord.

And he says, how can we insist and teach that our Lord Jesus Christ can be our Savior without being our Lord? How can we teach that we can be saved without any thought of obedience to our sovereign Lord?

I'm satisfied that when a man believes on Jesus Christ, the whole Lord Jesus Christ, not making any reservations, I'm satisfied that it is wrong to look upon Jesus as the kind of person to whom we can go when sin has made us sick, and after he's helped us to say goodbye, and go on our way. Brethren, I believe in the deeper Christian life and experience, oh yes, but I believe we are mistaken when we try to add the deeper life to imperfect salvation, obtained imperfectly by an imperfect concept of the whole thing. I know it of God through such men as Wesley, no one ever dared to rise in a meeting and say, I'm a Christian.

If he hadn't surrendered his whole being, and had taken Jesus Christ as his Lord, as well as his Savior, and had brought himself under obedience to the will of the Lord, it was only then I'm saved. Today we let them say they're saved, no matter how imperfect and incomplete the transaction, with a provisor that they tacked on at some time in the future. Can it be that we really think that we do not owe Jesus Christ our obedience? Have owed him our obedience ever since the second we cried out to him for salvation? And if we did not give him that obedience, to wonder if we were really converted.

This is bad teaching, brethren. It's deception. Let us look unto Jesus our Lord, high, holy, wearing the crown, Lord of lords, King of kings, having command, full obedience of his saved people.

And then he says the same thing about the phrase accepting Christ. So concerned about that then, how you don't find that phrase in Scripture. Spiritual life has been in a low state, and in many cases people are passing along the word about prayer for revival.

But here's an odd thing. No one can raise the question such as, perhaps the reason we need revival so badly is the fact that we didn't get started right in the first place. Question the wide use of this soul-winning catchword.

Will you accept Christ? Just bow your head and accept Christ. I actually was told of a group of preachers in a hotel dining room, and when the issue of soul winning came up, one of the preachers said, it's the easiest thing in the world. I'll give you a demonstration.

This brother said, can I have a minute of your time? The preacher said, yes sir. Are you a Christian? The preacher asked. No sir, I'm not a Christian.

Wouldn't you like to be a Christian? I haven't thought too much about it. You know, all you have to do is to accept Christ into your heart. Will you accept him? Well, I guess so.

Alright, then bow your head for a moment. So while the man who had been placed in a corner, and is thinking most about his tip and a praise, now Lord, here's the man who wants to accept you, and he's taking you now as the Savior. Bless him real good.

Amen. So the waiter gets an enthusiastic handshake. His job, and he's just the same as when he came into the room.

But the demonstrating preacher turns to the group and says, it's a simple matter. See how easy it is to lead someone to Christ. I think there are matters about which we must be legitimately honest, and in which we must seek the discernment of the Holy Spirit.

I hope that that waiter had better sense than the reverend. Because if he did not, he is dead. There are things about which we cannot afford to be wrong.

To be wrong is to still be lost, and far from God. This is death and eternity. When we are considering the importance to any human being of a right and saving relationship to Jesus Christ, we can't afford it.

I think there's much abuse, and that it's a great misconception to try to deal with men and women in this shallow manner. Show the great importance of conviction, and concern, and repentance when it comes to conversion, regeneration, being born from above by the Spirit of God. So that then is sight, and insistence that he has.

The theme of godly living, the failure of Americanism. His final message on the last Sunday of 1956, which my friend heard, he said there that evangelical Christianity is, and the man who would be God's man must stand up, be counted, and get out of it. He lacked the gift to be really effective.

There was more humility in the pub, he said, than in evangelicals. He said it seemed to him that seminaries were teaching students courses in how to overcome humility. Evangelicals had been so suspicious of good works and righteousness.

Who is then from the pulpit? Self-righteousness. And puppets were saying, good people go to hell. Heaven.

And that's a great distortion of Scripture. It's those who admit their sin, and confess their sin, and sin, who are saved. Those who refuse, and claim to be good in themselves, can't be.

So sin in these ways was being made acceptable. There was biblical risk being given for sin. Protos are always speaking out against carnality and worldliness amongst evangelical fundamentalists.

The obligation of the church, he said, was not first to speak the gospel. That wasn't the first obligation of it, but it was to be spiritually worthy to spread the gospel. I remember Carl Henry wrote the book, American Fundamentalism, and 40 years ago, what was that crisis? Well, that crisis, there was no social conscience, social action.

That was the crisis of American fundamentalism. And talked about that with Dr. Lloyd-Jones once, and he said, I mean, he thought then fundamentalism was worldliness. Well, that is exactly Toser's emphasis.

Now, his split with Billy Graham was on a different, his split was in 1954 over Graham's insistence that he had to work with all kinds of theological underleaves when he came into a town to take an evangelistic crusade. And Toser, and he was repeatedly phoning him and seeking to get his backing, asking him, is this the will of God? And when Toser told people that he had his discernment, and Toser then finally told Billy Graham not to phone him again, it appeared that Billy Graham was going to come and take a crusade in Chicago. He joined a group of ministers that signed expressing their opposition to the methods of Billy Graham's crusades.

In fact, Billy Graham didn't lead the crusade in Chicago until 1962 when Toser had left and was then in Toronto. He had the same opposition then to the Christian and Missionary Alliance entering the Association of Evangelicals, the sort of Evangelical Alliance of America. And he opposed very strongly this DNM because it consisted of many men who were in denominations and didn't seem to be doing anything to combat the dominance of modernism in those denominations.

So there were these great themes, ministry, holy living, obedience to Christ. And he preached through the books of the Bible, the attributes of God for 30 years, but always centered on the Bible. He told a graduate

of a theological college who came to him for advice about preaching about the Word only.

This young man, he said, was in a church and the crowds were average and he was preaching much growth. Then one day a cyclone hit the little town. So he yielded to the temptation and put a big notice outside the church, Why God Owns the Centreville.

And the church was passed that Sunday. He shook the young preacher then and he went back to see his professor for further advice. He told him, should he continue then to preach the Word of God to smaller crowds or should he try to fill the church by preaching sermons that were more sensational? And the old man looked at him and shook his head and said, if you preach the Word, you'll always have a text.

Cyclone, you won't have enough to go around, he said to him. All right. The first book in 1942 when he was 45 was called Windspread and it was a popular biography of A. B. Simpson and the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

That was his first biography. And a few years later then, one of the missionaries that had gone out from them, Robert Jaffray, missionary to the Pope, his biography. And then there were really the three books then that you will all have, I'm sure, that were written as books.

The Pursuit of God, The Divine Conquest, 1950, and then finally Knowledge of the Holy in 1961. When he died, there were two chapters written of a book called The Chief End of Man about God creating man as a worshipper, that important theme. Well, just look briefly at those three books, my thoughts about them.

Pursuit of God. The center of that book, it seems to me, is the question, why do some persons find Christians don't? Why does God manifest his presence to some and let multitudes of others struggle along half-lives of imperfect Christian experience? He's asking that. Of course, there's an element of divine sovereignty in it.

But this is what he says, I venture to suggest that the one vital quality which they had in common was spiritual captivity. Something in them was open to heaven, something which urged them Godward. Without a profound analysis, I shall say simply that they had a spiritual awareness and that they went on to cultivate it until it became the biggest in their life.

They differed from the average person that when they felt the inward longing, they did something. They acquired the lifelong habit of spiritual response. They weren't disobedient to the heavenly vision.

As David put it, so said, seek ye my faith. My heart said unto thee, thy faith, Lord, will I seek. I think that's, again, a very helpful insight.

But behind all our goings on, there is God coming to us. When we find ourselves dry, when we find ourselves restless, when we find ourselves at the Lord's house and longing to hear his word, a longing to meet with his people, that eagerness for God's blessing again to be renewed, behind that there's a God. There's a God who's created those things in us that he is to meet in our life.

We are simply to the initiative of grace. And then in the book, The Divine Conquest, the first on the weakness and the sinfulness of the church. Those chapters are very fine.

I found on being filled with the spirit. I didn't find those so helpful. I'll come back to that in a moment.

And then the third book on the knowledge, it's a book on the divine attributes. And he seeks to explain in about 20 short chapters what each chapter tries to apply. I don't think it is so effective.

I think there isn't just enough tangible application and exegesis of Scripture. I think he's been let down. The mystical writers, the father that he goes to and quotes to you, I think that's the way, you know, I think if you're dealing with the faithfulness of God, I think you go to something as tangible as Scripture.

I think you go on his Word and you look at the faithfulness of God in ways like that. I miss that concreteness. But I think on the attributes of God or if in a series you come across, I think it's worth consulting what he says.

And all his other books then are collections of articles from his editorials in the Alliance. And then there are the books of sermons that have come out since his death. And I don't find them, that I don't read so well.

They ramble more than the limitations of an editor and print. He took over that magazine in 1950. It was a weekly magazine, you see.

So he was under pressure all, it's nothing like that. And then after eight years, it became a fortnightly magazine. And he has a voice, you know, it develops.

You can hear, you recognize his tone of voice. And then in 1959 here, Sir of the Life of Faith asked if he could print simultaneously in the Life of Faith appeared in the Alliance Witness. So then from 1959 onwards, people who, evangelical Christians from that whole Keswick group, taking that weekly Christian paper, were reading Tozer then every week.

I think articles are important. I think we demean articles at a risk to ourselves. I think we've all been held, perhaps some of our lives have been changed by articles that we've read.

One of the great themes in all these writings, I noticed, was his insistence on private religion. Now that comes through in those editorials again and again. And he says, we fear that we are magnifying private religion out of all proportion, that the us of the New Testament is being displaced by us.

Has it ever occurred to you that 100 pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually. So 100 worshippers met together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other. How possibly be were they to become unity conscious and turning their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship? Religion is perfected when private religion is purified.

The body becomes stronger as its members become stronger. The whole church of God gains when the members that compose it begin to seek a better and higher life. I think that's very important.

I was reading the articles in the New Dictionary of Theology there, and I came across Andrew Kirk's article on myths. Now, Andrew Kirk is the Associate Director of the London Institute of Contemporary Theology, you know, the institute in London that's connected to Stott. And he's got an article on the mission of the church, and he says the church's mission has five tasks.

Every one is important, and you must not make one more important than any of the others, because when you do that you get division. This is what you have. Groups go after one.

We've got to keep all five on the same level. Firstly, stewarding the material resources in ecology. Secondly, serving human beings' love distinction in health, education, and housing.

Third, bearing witness to the truth that's in Jesus Christ in evangelism and pre-evangelism, verbal and by our lives. Seeing that God's justice is done in society, in the family, against pornography, in encouraging the government towards the lonely, ending racism. Fifthly, showing what it means to be a reconciled and liberated community in the midst of the present world by sharing our goods and gifts and being servants.

Now that's the mission. Well, lots of good and important things there. But I wonder, could you get that from the New Testament? Those priorities, I wonder, we could lose ourselves in these five, twenty percent of our time.

I think there's a total absence in that analysis of personal religion, a man's relationship with his Savior, developing, loving, obedient walk with Jesus. My congregation and the needs in my congregation. I think of my elderly mother, and the old people, and the needy people in that church, limping, staggering people in that congregation.

I think if I confronted them with those five things, those priorities, we'd, how barren, what a chill it would bring. It seems to me so graduate-ish. And Tozer then, Tozer, Tozer's writings are helpful because it's on personal conversion.

Now I like conversion. And walking with Jesus. Let me just share with you some striking illustrations that I found when I did all this into Tozer.

A young minister goes to a dying lady, he says. He's trying to comfort her. He's nervous.

It's his first time. And she can sense it. There's nothing to be scared about, she says.

I'm just going to cross over Jordan in a few hours. And my father owns the land of the river. And something that was just helpful to me, he's talking about a big business man.

A sort of Rupert Murdoch figure. Cars and aeroplanes at his disposal. Thousands of people that work for him.

And he's got a three-year-old daughter. Does he say? Of course not. But he loves her.

And he wants her. And his heart responds to her. Now I just got from that, God doesn't need me in Aberystwyth.

God doesn't need any of us. My talents are not significant to him. God doesn't need me.

But he loves me. He loves me in Aberystwyth. And then he talks about how important it is that we be separated men.

Separated from trivia. You think if we stumbled across Albert Einstein and he was making cut-out paper dolls, he'd be disappointed. But no one would say to Einstein, that's a great sin that you're committing.

But we'd think with a mind like that. There are great minds in the world and he's cutting out paper dolls. And yet Christians whose minds are set on eternity.

In trivia. Jesus escaped the net of trivia. And then he's got an actual calling that I enjoy too.

He says, every year there's a royal command performance. There are many comedians and singers and dancers and they love to be there on the stage. Singing before the King and Queen.

But however gifted they are, however famous they are, they can't get on that stage. There's a royal summons. Only a royal invitation can bring you before the majesty.

Then he speaks about the ecumenical movement, liberals and modernists. He says that all was pleading for a united front. And he says, it's not organized in need the most.

The headstones in the cemetery present a united front. But they stand mute and held while the world passes by. And he's got a lovely illustration that he's got from C.S. Lewis on time and eternity.

He says, think of a paper infinitely extended and that's eternity. And then on that infinitely extended sheet of paper drawn and that's time. Time begins and ends on that expanse.

Time begins in God and it ends in God. And then he talks about the tyranny of material things. The party of sightseers are on the mountain and as they see all the waterfalls and the mountains and their little girl in emmits gets lost.

And the whole mental perspective he changes. No one now is admiring the views because the child is lost and they're all spread out and they're shouting and they're calling. This is still there but here's the curly head two-year-old girl and she's the focus of everyone's thoughts because she's more precious than the whole range of mountains.

The child's quality of being gives it worth. The soul of a soul. And then the tremendous eminence of the being of God.

He says he is as high above and as he is above a caterpillar. For the gulf that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is but finite. The gulf between the angel is infinite.

And then finally there's the thing I got also preoccupation of as preachers. And he says imagine a holy one who'd spent centuries by the sea of glass. Imagine him coming to this world.

Imagine him going along to a church and listening to the sermons that are preached. How empty, how flat, so much of what he heard would be. Imagine he enters the pulpit.

What does he speak of? What would he tell us about? Tell us of God. Tell us about the throne of God and the Lamb. Tell us of the glories.

Wouldn't it stir? Wouldn't it move us? Wouldn't it motivate us like nothing else? And after leaving here be full of God and full of Christ and the greatness of the Lamb. And wouldn't we say then to every, speak to us from the mount of divine vision or remain silent altogether. When he speaks finally about being filled with the Holy Spirit.

You know this so much a part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. This is part of their doctrine of sanctification. Some of you will know that Al Martin went for a while into a Christian congregation.

It was at one time. And his understanding of the doctrine of sanctilem meant a parting of company between them and the church there and the new building being formed. And I really find his sections on being filled with the Holy Spirit and rather killing.

And it's an awful thing that because here you are being taught but being filled with the Holy Spirit. And the result is perplexity. His background is finny and boring.

His background is catholic. And so he's saying things like let God work. Let him alone.

Take your hands off. It's God that works in you. And so he says be sure you can be filled.

You must desire to be filled. And then see you need it. And present your body.

You ask for it. You obey God. And then you receive him by faith.

Or even the invitation to the front. Be proud to come. And then working it through whole seminaries or colleges of young people.

Get them filled with the spirit. And not shed a few tears. They leave me cold because you do it and nothing happens.

Or you list to preachers who say that this has happened to them. They are struggling like all of us Christians. It's a very sort of pre-Royal sort of emphasis.

Pre-Owen emphasis. Now let me stick my neck out here. His emphasis of Torah or the possibility of becoming Christian.

A super, a hyper-Christian. It's not my understanding of the Bible. But I find another Bible not on super-Christians.

Not on hyper-spirituality. Not on a super church. I find nowhere in the Word of God that is a possibility.

No possibility of us becoming super-believers at all. But I find this in the New Testament. The possibility of becoming box-lidden believers.

The possibility of becoming lukewarm churches. Maybe there's this actual kind of structure. That the only believer is an extraordinary man in Christ.

And he's filled with the Holy Spirit. And there's the ordinary church which is an extraordinary fellowship of the Holy Spirit. In the Apostles doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread and prayer.

And all that believe are together. And they eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God.

And the Lord adds daily to them such as should be said. And then there's the other. There are box-lidden believers.

There are those clenching his cup. There are those they've left their first love. There are those who they've gone into doctrinal error.

There are those and they're tolerating growth and cleanness and wickedness in the congregation. There's a coldness. He's outside.

There's a loss of ardour. A loss of zeal. A loss of energy.

A church becomes it becomes lukewarm. A Christian falls into the hands of Satan. Iniquities prevail from day to day.

There are certain moments Satan drives him. He's dominated by him. He's responsible for the terror of his life.

We quench the Holy Spirit. Christians going on without the presence of the Lord Jesus. Going on without the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Behold I stand at the door. A knock. See there's a vast gulf between Peter warming his hands by a fire and cursing Pentecost.

There's a vast gulf between the church at Pentecost at the end of Acts 2 and the congregation of chapter 2 and chapter 3. I think you say, oh be aware of it. Be aware of it for you. Be aware of it for your fellowship.

And then I think then you can apply some of these exhortations of toasts, of parties, a living sacrifice. Ask for the Holy Spirit's presence and blessing. Return, O Holy Dove.

Be a messenger of rest. Obey Him. Trust Him.

Learn to depend on the Holy Spirit. You know everything depends on the Spirit of God for efficiency. At every level of our Christian lives, we are spiritually manned.

We are spiritually enabled men. And we must believe that. Especially in our witness, in our preaching, in our pastoring.

Conscious how much that it is impossible to be a Christian, let alone a minister without the Holy Spirit. Day by day of the Spirit of God. And you know when you depend on the Holy Spirit, marvelous things happen.

God comes with power and wisdom. Spirit of God gives you the very appropriate words for you boldness to speak to men. You know it's our experience.

It's the experience truly of every one of us. God meeting with us and blessing. Going along to the midweek meeting and feeling so heavy.

And God's there through the prayers of God's people. Preaching sermons on the Lord's day and finding ourselves exhorted and lifted by the Word. God meeting with us.

We come to a conference like this and bark again. But this tinderbox of our hearts so dry should know again, semi-fragile. He comes and blesses.

I must have it. We must have it. We must have his blessing.

We must have his presence with us. Not in the future. We must have him today.

We must have it. Let us close in prayer. Oh most we've looked at the life of a man who was a man of like passions to ourselves.

Oh Lord we recognize this. How frail we are we who would presume to speak to others. Oh how marvelous thy mercy.

Inveiling our sins from the eyes of those who see us and love us. For regeneration by the Holy Ghost. For washing.

For his presence. For making us new creation. Oh most thou shouldst have shown thy mercy to us.

Thy ways on us. We might this Monday morning be pushing pens in some office. This found in some occupation in some compromising circumstance to our shame.

And yet thou hast unhelped us and saved us and kept us. And when we've fallen has lifted us up. Forgiven us.

Blessed us with loved ones who love thee. Oh how favoured we are. Of all the moksha we're the most favoured.

Oh we thank thee for being our saviour. We thank you that we can say to thee that. We thank you for bringing us here these days.

Oh Lord forgive us if we come cynical about the Spirit. Forgive us if there's a coolness in our own hearts. Doubting the possibility.

Feed better days for the Church of Jesus Christ. Rebuke us. Oh Lord if those be our thoughts.

Keep us faithful. Keep us faithful till the end. Give us seriousness and joy with one another.

Oh to our fellowships. I'll be saved. Oh may we know thy blessing on us.

Today on our brother as he speaks to us in the brethren who bring their words to us. Our hearts are hungry for thee. Oh God.

Here we bless our conversations together. May it all be honouring to the name of our saviour. Modify our pride.

Deal with all those things that put self place except on the cross of Christ. Help us to die to ourselves and to live to be here. Our prayer which we ask in Jesus name.

Amen.

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