

Attributes of God #10 'The Perfection of God'

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recapturing the concept of the perfections of God in modern Christianity.

Scripture: Psalm 50:2, Psalm 90:17, Isaiah 40:25

Topics: "Perfection of God", "Divine Majesty"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the perfection of God, arguing that true beauty and excellence can only be found in Him. He reflects on the gains and losses in modern Christianity, noting that while church attendance has increased, there is a significant loss of reverence, awareness of God's presence, and the concept of divine majesty. Tozer calls for a return to understanding God's perfections, asserting that only by recognizing His holiness and beauty can the church regain its true glory. He urges believers to seek a deeper relationship with God, moving beyond superficial religion to a profound worship of the perfect God.

Transcript

"The Perfection of God"

Sunday evening, December 7, 1958

Message #10 of #10 in Attributes of God Series

Tonight, I want to speak on a subject never attempted in my hearing by anybody. I want to talk on the perfection of God.

In the book of Psalms, the 50th Psalm, verse two, we have the words, out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. We have three words in close relation to each other, perfection and beauty and God. And while it is Zion that is called the perfection of beauty, it is the perfection of beauty because God shined out of her; she is, because God shined out of her.

Now, I'd like to make some introductory remarks first and say that in trying to understand today's Christianity as we have it all around about us. By that, I do not mean liberalism or modernism. I mean evangelicalism, or whatever you want to call it, gospel Christianity. We must take into account two things which have happened over the last, say fifty years. We must take into account the gains we have made and the losses we have suffered; and that the churches have made some gains in the last fifty years cannot be denied. I'm sure by anyone who wants to be truthful.

For instance, there are greater numbers now than before; a higher percentage of the total population go to church than used to, and there are larger numbers of people calling themselves Christians. And then there are multiplying theological schools, seminaries, Bible schools, Christian colleges of various sorts. And there is an ever-swelling flood of Christian literature which is being published and spread abroad. Then there's the popularity of religion in our time. I suppose it's easier when things are popular to propagate them than when they are not; and certainly, Christianity and the gospel is greatly popular now.

Then we have to our advantage better systems of communication. We have now radio and television if you would like it, and telephone and all other modern means of communicating. And then we have stepped up transportation that will allow a preacher to preach in Chicago in the morning and in New York in the evening.

And then we have various evangelizing organizations that have sprung up over the last years. I was thinking that there isn't a single group, linguistic group nor ethnic group, nor social group; there isn't a group anywhere that doesn't have somebody bent on evangelizing it. We have those who want to evangelize the Jews, business men, professional men, students, those in hospitals, those in jails and everywhere, everybody. We have evangelistic groups and we cannot deny that a lot of good is being done and the gospel is being spread around. Those are the gains that we have made and that is not all; there are many others.

But we have suffered some losses in the meantime. These losses, I want to name before you. We have lost from our gospel, Christianity almost all together, that men used to call religious fear. We have practically no religious fear in our time. And along with our loss of religious fear, came a corresponding flippancy and familiarity toward God that our fathers never knew. We have lost also, an awareness of the Invisible and the Eternal. The world is too much with us and we have it with us all the time and all around us, so that the Invisible and the Eternal seem to be quite forgotten. At least, we're not aware of it. We're only briefly aware of it when somebody dies.

Then, the consciousness of the Divine Presence, the consciousness of God; the churches have lost that and the concept of Majesty. I said, after Bakht Singh had spoken last Sunday night, that we had so organized our churches that God could leave and we wouldn't find it out.

During the week, I received a call from a lady who had been here and heard Bakht Singh. She's from another part of the city and attends a different gospel Church. And she was not critical nor harsh, but seemed to be very much brokenhearted. She said Mr. Tozer, I heard what you said that God could leave a church and we would not find it out. She said, I would like to tell you that God has left our church. Well, I tried to smooth it over for her a little. I didn't want to be guilty of speaking against the church or of helping her in her criticism of the church. So, I said, well, perhaps the Spirit is grieved in your church. She said, oh, it's long past the Spirit being grieved. She said, God the Spirit has withdrawn. Now, I don't know how true her judgment was about it. She was very kind and tender. She was not criticizing so much as simply stating what she believed to be a fact. And this consciousness of the Divine Presence seems to have left the churches to a very terrible degree.

And then that would I call it concept of Majesty. We seem to have gotten away from it altogether. This is the age of the common man. And along with the common man has come the common God. We have no heroes anymore, because everybody's equal everybody else and the common man is now in control. But along with the common man, I say is the common God. And then, of course along with the loss of Majesty,

a loss of the whole concept of Majesty. But you say, Mr. Tozer, is there not a concept of majesty left? Didn't the whole world carry on when the Queen was crowned here a few years ago. That circus that they had on television; they had no sense of majesty at all in it. There was no majesty there. We have crowned pumpkin queens and cotton queens and other kinds of queens in this country. And it was the same mixture of showmanship and sex that is found every place. If that girl had been a homely old lady, there wouldn't have been much done. But she was a beautiful young lady and so we had a big time. But majesty was missing. They can say, Your Majesty, but they don't feel it. They can't fool me.

So, worship has gone along with that concept of majesty, and of course, reverence. And the modern Christian has lost this. He has lost his ability to withdraw inwardly and commune in a secret place with his own soul and with God in the shrine of his own hidden spirit. It is this that makes Christianity and we have all but lost it. Added numbers yes, but lost fear. Numbers, multiplied schools, yes, but the loss of the awareness of the Invisible. More tons of literature being poured out? Sure, but no consciousness of the Divine Presence. Better communication? Certainly, but nothing to communicate. Evangelizing organizations? Yes, but the concept of majesty and worship and reverence has almost left us.

Now, the total result then of these gains and losses, the total result has been that our gains have been external and our losses internal. This is the great tragedy of the hour that our religious gains have been external and our losses have been internal. And at last, our gains may prove to be no more than losses spread over a larger area, because anybody can see that if the quality of our religion is impaired, while we are nevertheless extending it to more people, we are losing instead of gaining. If we have only so much glory and we spread it thin, we have spread it so thin that we have not gained anything. And I believe that, that is where we are. I believe that we never can recover our glory until we are brought to see again the awful perfections of God.

It has been for many years, and it's growing on me, my conviction that we must recapture the concept of the perfections of God. We must see again how awful God is, how beautiful God is, how perfect God is. We must begin to preach it and sing it and write about it and promote it and talk it and tell it and pray it until we have recaptured the concept of Majesty; till the awareness of the Divine is back on religion again. Until we have regained the ability, even the desire, to retire within our own hearts and worship God in the silence of our own spirits be times.

I have tried to turn the direction of the people away from the externals of religion, to the internals of religion. I have tried to take away the clouds and show God in His glory as I go here and there preaching. Brethren, I have stood almost alone in it. That's been a strange thing, that I have stood almost alone in it. It is very rare, rarely that you hear a man preach anything about God the Holy One. They like to hear about it and they invite me here and there to preach on it and many are waiting for me to write a book about it, but why don't we get hold of this idea? I don't know why, but I'm not discouraged. We will continue, if we continue as we are spreading our impaired religion, our weaken Christianity over a wider area; thinning it out. If we continue until the Lord comes, the Lord will break through the clouds and will show Himself majestic and wonderful. And in heaven above and earth beneath and in under the sea and everywhere, they shout "bow" and own Him to be Lord and King. But I'd like to see it brought back to the church before that dramatic hour comes. I'd like to see it, as know it now.

Well now, what does perfection mean? Well, according to Webster, perfection means the highest possible degree of excellence. That is, perfect, which lacks nothing it should have, and has nothing it should not have. That is perfection. Perfection is the fullness, the completeness. It's not lacking in anything and it

doesn't have anything that it shouldn't have. And this is a relative word, this word "perfection," or perfect. It's found in the Bible quite a little, our English translation of numbers of Hebrew and Greek words. But as we have it here, it means that which is excellent, which is the highest possible degree of excellence. And then of course, it's a relative word, and we use it variously. We talk about this being perfect and some other thing being perfect, and we're referring to earthly things.

Well, the Bible does the same thing. But you know, perfection is to be complete in your nature. That is, it is to be perfect as it touches you. If something else of another nature were to be like you, it would be imperfect. Let me illustrate it like this. When the new baby is born, one of the first things the doctor does, and one of the first things the anxious mother does, is to look him over and see whether there's anything missing, or whether as sometimes happens, there's more than should be. For some times unfortunately, little chaps are born into the world deformed. Now, we look for the legs, two. We look for the arms, two. We look for the eyes, two, or the ears, two, the nose one. And we find that everything is the right number and in the right place, we smile and say, well, thank God for a healthy little baby.

Well now, that's perfection to a man child. But suppose that on the farm, a little colt is born. That little colt is looked over by the anxious farmer. And he doesn't look for two legs; he looks for four. And if the thing had only two, it would be deformed. If the baby had four, it would be deformed. Perfection is having just what it should have being what it is; being a man, it only has two legs; being a horse, it has four. And if it were turned around, the horse would be deformed and the man would be deformed. Perfection in that relative way would mean a completeness and fullness of what you are. Now, I think you see that all right. A wheelbarrow has one wheel, then it's a perfect wheelbarrow, if it has one wheel. And an automobile has four wheels, and it's perfect if it has four wheels, at least that far it's perfect.

Now, you know we can't think of God like this. If perfection means the highest possible degree of excellence, then we cannot apply this thought to God at all. When we think about God, we say the highest possible. How can you apply that to God? Is there anything that isn't possible with God as though God had been created that He had done the highest thing possible, that He was as perfect as it was possible for Him to be? No, no, no, you can't apply that to God. That only applies to creatures, then the highest possible degree.

When I was preaching on the infinitude of God I pointed out that there are no degrees in God, that God is not at the top of the heap in an ever ascending perfection of being, up from the worm on up through until finally we reach God. No, God is completely different from, and other than, and separated from, so that there are no degrees in God. God is simply God in infinite perfection of fullness; and we cannot say God is a little more or a little less, for more and less our creature words. We can say that the man has a little more strength today. I think he's going to make it. We can say the child is a little taller this year. He's growing. We can say the man has more of something or less, but you can't apply more or less to God, for God is the Perfect One and He's just God.

And then we have the word excellence here. Did you ever stop to think what the word excellence means? It means being in a state of excelling, and therefore, you have to excel something or somebody. Excellence in a musician means that he is a better musician than the other musicians. If he has a high degree of excellence, we could say he has perfection in his field. Well, he doesn't, but we can use the word. It means that he excels, that he does better than somebody else. So, excellence is by comparison. If there are five, poor pianists, and they all test out, the one who's the least poor will be said to be excellent in that he excels the other four.

But when you come to God, God says, to whom shall you liken Me? Or to whom shall I be equal says the Lord. You don't compare God. We say that God is incomparable. And what do we mean by that? We mean that God stands alone as God, that He is incomparable and that there's nobody that can be or nothing that can be compared with Him. Isaiah was very strong here. And he wrote some very beautiful and eloquent language telling us that we must not compare God with anything or anybody or any being in heaven above or on the earth beneath. And Moses' law said, you shall not make any comparisons. You shall not make any images. Some people thought that meant that you should never make any art works of art. But the fact is, there were works of art in the temple commanded by God.

So, God was not against works of art. He was against ever thinking that they ever reminded anybody of God or they ever substituted for God or are we ever put them up there as being like God. No, to whom shall you liken Me, says God. And yet the Bible uses this word, these words, this word, perfect. The Bible uses it all the way through, applies it to God and applies it to things that aren't God. For instance, be ye perfect for I am perfect. So, it's the same, exactly the same word in the original so that the same word that applies to God applies to people. Do you know why God uses it? Because there isn't any other word. There aren't any other words. You can go through that great dictionary, this heavy and this thick, and you cannot find language that will tell what God is. So God does the best He can considering who we are and what we are, to make Himself known to us. You see, God is not limited in Himself, He's limited in us. Paul said, you are straightened in your own hearts. He said, it's yourself that you're narrowed in your own hearts. So, the inability of God to get through to, is not the imperfection of the Great God, but the imperfection of the man to whom He's trying to get the truth through.

Now, as we apply perfection to God and the thought of perfection to God, we mean when we say that God is perfect, we mean He has unqualified plenitude of whatever He has. That He has fullness and completeness of whatever He has. That He has unqualified plenitude of being. He has unqualified plenitude of power. He also has unqualified fullness of wisdom. He has unqualified knowledge. He has unqualified holiness. By unqualified I mean that there are no qualifiers in it. When I say that a man is a perfect singer, I qualify that in my mind.

When I say that God is holy, I do not qualify it. It is, I mean it fully, completely God is what He is, and that's it, and there are no qualifications; so that God's power and being and wisdom and knowledge and holiness and goodness and justice and mercy and love and grace, all of these and more of the attributes of God, these are in shining and full and created perfection. They are called the beauty of the Lord our God. In the Old Testament that the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, Moses said in the 90th Psalm and in the 27th, David said, one thing I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple.

So, the beauty of the Lord means that God has all He should have of everything; that there is a complete fullness of everything there. If it is love, then there is no limit to the love of God. If it is mercy, then there is no limit to the mercy of God. If it is grace, there are no bounds to the grace of God. If it is goodness, there's no limit to the goodness of God, and so with everything. And so this is called the beauty of the Lord our God; out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined. Why was Zion the earthly perfection of beauty? Because her beauty came from the shining God who dwelt between the wings of the cherubim. She was not only architecturally beautiful, but all the concepts of her were beautiful. Her hymnody was beautiful. Her ideas of worship were beautiful shining there in the sun, knowing that God was there between the wings of the cherubim dwelling in this Shekinah. She was beautiful above all the earth.

So out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined. All things as they move toward God are beautiful, and they are ugly as they move away from Him. The older I get, the more I love hymns, and the less I love secular music, because secular music, however beautiful artistic it may be, and however it may express the genius of the composer, because it is secular music, has one jewel missing from its crown. But even if your hymn is not the result of the same degree of genius; and even though a good musician might find fault with this music, still is beautiful, because it has God there.

The song that honors God is bound to be beautiful, because it does honor God. That's why the 23rd Psalm is so beautiful, because it honors God. And so, with the whole Bible itself; this book I hold in my hand is a shining, beautiful book. It is lovely no matter whether it is bound in the cheapest paper or whether it is bound in the most expensive leather. Whether it is printed on plain paper or whether it is printed on the finest India paper, it is nevertheless a beautiful book.

And I'd like to say this to you, not very many people can hear it, but I will say it to you because I pay you the compliment of believing you can or you wouldn't be here, that theology itself is a beautiful thing. Theology is beautiful because it is the mind reasoning about God. It is the mind down on its knees in a state of breathless devotion, reasoning about God, or it should be. I know, it's possible for theology to become a very hard and a very aloof thing; and we lose God right out of our theology. I know that's possible. But the kind of theology I'm talking about the study of God is a beautiful thing. And that's why I suppose that as a man gets older, he goes to David more, and to Plato less. That's why he goes to Aristotle less and to Paul more, because there is beauty in Paul and David, for Paul and David celebrated the perfection of God, where the others dealt with other matters all together, the perfection of beauty. I say as we move toward God, we become more beautiful; all things become more beautiful as they move toward God. And they become more ugly as they move away from God.

You see, heaven is the place of supreme beauty. I think that we ought to begin to rethink the whole concept of heaven. I think we ought to begin to pray and to search the Scriptures about it. If you were moving to Florida, you would want to get at least a folder or two about where you were going. And if you're going to Paris, you'd like at least to look at a brochure to know where you were going. And if you're going to heaven, I think you ought to know something about it.

There's a lot told about it in the Scriptures, but we're so busy living down here that we're not too much concerned about it. And I'm not going to try to describe it tonight. Any man that attempted to describe heaven, I'm afraid that his mind would go bad on him for the very heaviness, for it cannot be done. But it is the place of supreme beauty, that much we can say and why? Because the perfection of beauty is there. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.

Was there ever anything more beautiful in the story of Jesus birth? Is there ever anything more beautiful than the picture of Jesus walking up and down among men in tenderness or humility, healing the sick and raising the dead and forgiving sinners and restoring poor, fallen people back to society again? Is there anything more wonderful than His going out to the cross to die for those who were crucifying Him? Anything lovelier than to be the Creator of His own mother; to have made the very body that gave Him protection and bore Him at last into the world? Is there anything more awful and awesome and mysterious than that Man of God, that God-man walking about among men saying, I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven, or before Abraham was, I Am, and the Son of Man is in the bosom of the Father. No, no, all beauty centers around Jesus Christ.

That is why apart from the commercialism, Christmas is such a beautiful thing, and that is why Easter is so beautiful. And to me, Easter is more beautiful than Christmas, because Easter celebrates a triumph and Christmas celebrates the coming of someone who hadn't yet fought. He had to have been born to fight, but He hadn't fought. But, when Easter had come, we can sing the three sad days are quickly sped, He rises glorious from the dead, and there's beauty there. And it's not the beauty of color, and it's not the beauty of outline or form; not the beauty of physical proportion. You can worship Him in a stable. You can worship Him in a coal mine. You can worship Him in a factory. It's not the external beauty that is beautiful, but it is the internal beauty.

Heaven is beautiful because it is the expression of that which is the perfection of beauty. And while that is true of heaven, I must say that hell is the place of unrelieved, monstrous ugliness because there is no perfection. There in hell there is only monstrous, moral deformity and nothing beautiful in hell. There is only monstrous ugliness and deformity. And in Heaven of course is supreme beauty. Earth lies halfway between. Earth knows ugliness and earth knows beauty. It's halfway between heaven and hell. And the inhabitants of earth must decide whether they are to seek the beauty of heaven or the monstrous ugliness, the unrelieved ugliness of hell.

Oh, my friends, people are worrying about whether there is fire in hell or not. I have no reason to not to believe that there's fire in hell for what the Bible says, I take it as the truth. And so, I would not hesitate to refer to the fires of hell, for the Scripture talks about the Lake of Fire. But if there were no fire in hell; if hell itself were our country, if it were a habitable country, if it were all land, it still would be the ugliest country in the universe; still the most monstrously, shockingly, deformed place that is known in the creation; because there is none of the perfection of beauty. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined. And only God is absolutely perfect.

Do you know, it is not possible for anything bad to be beautiful finally. For the Scripture says that we're to serve God in the beauty of holiness. It's possible for an unholy thing to be pretty. It's possible for an unholy thing to be attractive, even charming. But it's not possible for it to be beautiful. Only that can be beautiful ultimately which is holy. The beauty of holiness, worship God it says in the Scripture, in the beauty of holiness. And that's no casual remark. No, no casual relation of word to word. The beauty of holiness and the perfection of beauty and the fact that only God is perfect, they all fit in together as beautifully and drop into place. For God is beautiful beyond all description. How beautiful, how beautiful the sight of God must be, says the hymn. How beautiful the sight of God must be. And when we say how beautiful the sight of God must be, we must remember how unutterably ugly must the sight of hell be.

If you could think of a prison. If you could think of a place where all hope had fled and all mercy had fled, then you would be thinking of hell. If you could think of a place where all moral wisdom was absent, and all holiness gone, and all goodness absent, where there was no justice, no mercy, no love, no kindness, no grace, no tenderness, no charity, but only multiplied, monstrous fullness of unholiness and moral folly and hate and cruelty and injustice, then you would think of hell. My Brethren, God calls us to Himself. He calls us to Himself.

When are we going to raise up a crop of preachers? When are they coming? Who will begin to preach the perfection of God and tell the people what they ought to hear? That Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary to suffer under Pontius Pilate, to die and rise again. That He might save us from the everlasting monstrosities, the uglinesses that are away and from God that are not God; and to bring us to the beauty that is God. He came to call us away from all evil, and away from the deformity, from the eternal ugliness

which is hell; and toward holiness and perfection and eternal beauty.

Now I say that He has come to us. Jesus Christ is God come to us. Always remember that. Jesus is God come to us and He has come to us, for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Oh, how beautiful, how beautiful is the thought that God came to us in that holy manger bed. How beautiful that He came to us. He came and walked among us. He came with our shape and form, bearing our humanity that He might cleanse that humanity and purify it and purge it and remake it and restore it, and take it back with him again to that place which is the perfection of beauty, the perfection of beauty.

I don't know where heaven is. I read that they shot a gold-plated arrow up sixty-some thousand miles into the air. And somebody is wondering if they might not be reaching heaven at last. We have to smile my brethren, because God does not dwell in space. And space is nothing to God. And the great infinite heart of God gathers up in Himself all space. And for man to be shooting at the planets yonder, or even at the sun would be like a little one year-old baby playing with a rubber ball in Wrigley Field. What can he do, bat it around here and then crawls and gets it and when he bats it away two feet, he squeals with delight. He feels that he's really hit a homerun. But, way out there four hundred feet stretches the field and beyond that the bleachers, and it takes strong men to knock a ball over the fence.

And so, we think about God. We think of man. We send up our little arrow and it reaches the moon, and goes into orbit around it. And then we boast about it for years to come. Go on little boy, go on. Play with your little rubber ball. But the great God who carries the universe in His heart and smiles. He's not impressed. But He's calling you to Himself. He's calling you to His holiness, to His beauty, to His love and mercy and goodness. And He's come to reconcile us and call us back. What has the world to offer I ask you? If the world could give you everything, what has the world got now? There is nothing.

We are being bombarded constantly by advertisers who are trying to make us believe that the gadgets they manufacture are worthy of our attention. If you want to keep your food cold, they found a way. Okay, get one. Don't imagine it's wonderful. If you want to go someplace and need a car, get one, but don't imagine it's wonderful. If you want to fly to San Francisco, fly, but don't imagine it's wonderful. Don't imagine anything is wonderful. His name shall be called Wonderful. And only He can engage and excite the wonder of angels and seraphim and cherubim and archangels and all beings and creatures. Only He can do that. Only He is wonderful. And He came to us to reconcile us unto Himself; how beautiful, how wonderful. So, we sang in the song, what were those words? Take all my mortal interest and let them die and give me only God.

So, my friends, if you want to pray and you want to pray strategically, and you want to pray in the direction I believe would please God, pray that God might raise up men who would see the beauty of the Lord our God and would begin to preach it and hold it out to men, instead of offering peace of mind and deliverance from cigarettes and having a better job and having a nicer cottage. Well, God delivers men from cigarettes. And He does help businessmen and He does answer prayer. And I don't deny any of those things. But they're only incidental. They're the trivialities we might say. They're the little things. They're the kindergarten stage of religion.

Why can't we go on beyond it and say with the old Jew out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined. And look there on the hilltop and see in the city of our God, the New Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the golden. See it to be what it is, the shining city of God; and what it is, because God is in it, being the Wonder of the universe, because God is shining out of it. And all of busy religion, what is it after all, all of

busy religion? What is it if God isn't in it? What is it, if we've lost majesty, if we've lost reverence, if we've lost worship, if we've lost an awareness of the Divine, if we've lost a sense of the Presence, if we've lost the ability to retreat within our own hearts and meet God in the garden. If we lost that, why build another church? Why make more converts to an effete Christianity? Why bring people to follow after a Savior so far off, that He doesn't own them?

No, my brethren, we need an improved quality of Christianity. And we'll never improve the quality until we raise our concept of God back to where apostle and sage and prophet, and apostle and saint and reformer held it. And when we put God back where he belongs, we will instinctively and automatically come up again. And the whole spiral of our religious direction will be upward. But we try to work it out by methods, try to produce it by technology, try to create revivals by publicity stunts, try to promote religion forgetting that it rests down upon the character of God and it can only be what I conceive God to be. And if I have a low concept of God, my religion can only be a cheap, watery affair. But if my concept of God is worthy of God, then it can be noble and dignified, reverent, profound, beautiful. This is what I want to see once more among men. Pray that way, won't you?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/attributes-of-god-10-the-perfection-of-god/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net