

Doctrine of the Remnant - Part 1

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon emphasizes the alarming truth of the remnant doctrine, highlighting the vast majority of mankind's lost state while affirming that a small remnant will be saved.

Duration: 41:13

Scripture: Isaiah 1:15, Ezekiel 9:4-8, Matthew 15:8, Romans 11:4, 1 Corinthians 9:27

Topics: "Remnant"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by praying for mercy upon America and for people to turn away from idols and serve God. He emphasizes the importance of not just worshiping God with our lips, but also with our lives. The preacher urges the listeners to have a personal relationship with God and to seek Him before they sleep. He then references a passage from the Bible about a remnant of people who were marked for their sorrow and disgust over the abominations in their city. The preacher encourages the audience to be like this remnant and stand against the sinful practices of the world.

Transcript

I want to talk about a doctrine in the Bible that is very alarming. And I am afraid, I am very much afraid, that the Bible is a more alarming book than we know. I love this little number we sang tonight, but I'm afraid of it.

That is, I'm afraid of what we'll do with it. Thy word is like a garden, Lord, with flowers bright and fair, and everyone who seeks may pluck a lovely cluster there. Thy word is like a mine, for there are hidden jewels for searchers.

Thy word is like a starry host with a thousand rays of light. Oh, that is true. I like the song, I recommend it, I enjoy singing it, I enjoy hearing this song.

But I'm a little bit afraid that that is the attitude we take toward the scriptures, that it is a beautiful jewel to wear around our neck or on our finger, or a corsage to wear to dress up occasions, that it is a star to shine on, that it is fragrant, it's all that. But it is something more than that, and in our sinful arrogance, I am afraid we're not getting the word of God mean to us what it ought to mean. Now, listen to what Esaias said.

That was the way Paul said it. Esaias also cried concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved, for you will finish the work and cut it short in

righteousness. Because the short work will the Lord make upon the earth.

Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a wren shall be saved. And here is the doctrine, and whatever the educators may be saying, whatever the current religious mode may be, here is the doctrine clearly taught in the scriptures. The doctrine which partisan called teachers have misread, have rested to their own destruction.

For every fighter says that I'm the landlord, and every group that meets says we are the people. But I refuse to reject the doctrine because somebody else has rested the doctrine, and I have no sky hopes tonight for you to admire, nor any posies for you to smell. But a terrible doctrine that hurts me, and that bothers me, and that makes me weak and be disturbed, it is the doctrine of the Roman.

And what is that doctrine? It is simply this, and it's all through the scriptures taught, that our blind, foreign, sinful world of mankind, at any given time, that I repeat, in our foreign world of mankind, at any given time, the vast majority, the overwhelming majority, is lost. And by lost we mean not that they've missed their way, or come short of the mark, or been less than they wanted to be, or failed to fulfill their dream, or any of that. By lost we mean alienated from God and enemy, Julian.

We mean by lost, without pardon, without life, and without hope. Now, hear me, because I am not repeating words, but telling you seriously that the Bible teaches this, that at any given time, the vast majority of mankind is lost, alienated from God without pardon, without forgiveness, and without hope. Yet a remnant shall be saved.

That's the other half of the doctrine. Yet a remnant shall be saved. Now, what does a remnant mean? It means a small fragment.

It means a surviving trace. It means something that yet remains when the larger body is somewhere else. So that this is the alarming doctrine taught in the scriptures, that in this hour, 1957, closing weeks of the year, that the vast majority of mankind is lost, but that there is a remnant saved.

The Romans text deals with Israel, but I take it because it sets forth clearly the doctrine as taught as applied to all the human race and to the church, too. Now, this was true among the nations before Abraham, that only a few were saved. It was true of Israel after Abraham, and it's true of the church since Pentecost.

You see, we believe what we want to believe, and we don't want to believe anything that disturbs us. When someone blows a fuse, we say he's disturbed now. That's our word.

He's disturbed. But the old Lutherans said, faith is a disturbing thing. Perturbing, they called it.

To believe the bible is not to wear a flower on your buttonhole, on your coat, but it is to be disturbed and alarmed. And I'm alarmed, my friends, because it's been true since Pentecost that of the vast number of people who call themselves Christians, the overwhelming majority are nominal, and a remnant is saved. That of all the Jews who were born of the seed of Abraham, the vast majority is lost, and a remnant is saved.

Now, look at the examples in the bible. Jesus said, as it was in the days of Noah, and the flood was upon the world of ungodliness. Now, according to the scripture, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and there were seven members of his family, and Peter said that Noah, the eighth person, there were seven

other members of his family, and they were saved out of that whole population.

I do not know what the population was, but I know that at the time of the flood, there were eight persons saved out of a whole population, and I know that it is written as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man. And then frequently we find in the scriptures where Israel is referred to, though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant shall be saved. But somebody says, don't you remember, Mr. Closer, you're taking it too seriously.

Don't you remember when Elijah felt the way you feel? And Elijah called out and said, O Lord, I alone am left. Then God said, Cheer up, Elijah, I have news for you. Seven thousand there are in Israel that have not bowed the knee to Baal, nor kissed his image, and that sounds like an awful lot.

That would fill the biggest church. I could twice fill Yerlimuti Church, one of the largest, if not the largest church in the city. So, isn't that encouraging to know that you were with them? There were in Israel seven thousand true Jews who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Well, suppose the population of Israel at that time was seven million, and I think that's a very, very conservative count. Suppose that the population of Israel was seven million. That would mean one-tenth of one percent had not bowed the knee to Baal, and all the rest had.

It would mean one in a thousand. If you were to take, at that time, a thousand Jews, nine hundred and ninety-nine of them were weakly bowing the knee to Baal to keep out a couple, and only one man stood boldly among one thousand. But suppose, for the sake of absolute fairness, we cut the population of Israel in half and say there are only three million, five hundred thousand, half of that.

Well, it then only means one in five hundred. It means that every time you saw a synagogue, or a building with five hundred Jews reading the Torah, or listening to the chant of the priest, that you had four hundred and ninety-nine of them that were secretly following Baal, and one that was saved. Now, I'm not saying this.

This is written in the book. One in a thousand, or at most one in five hundred. And at Christ's first coming, remember my friends, at Christ's first coming, there were only a few that recognized him.

We take it for granted just as Israel did. Israel believed that when Messiah came, they would know it. They believed just what Samson believed when he went to sleep with his head in the lap.

I love it. He believed that he was well set for life, and that he had had some experience in religion, and therefore there was nothing to worry about. But when he woke up, he found that he had been captured, and his eyes were soon put out, and he was grinding at the mill, and they would make him squawk forth in the name of Dagon, the false god.

He took himself for granted, which always is a bad and dangerous thing to do. We either take ourselves for granted and are at peace, or we get disturbed and then pray to find peace. Most believers today take themselves for granted and have a false peace, where if they did what the Bible, this doctrine alone would teach them to do, they would be bothered and alarmed about themselves, and then they would go to God with an open Bible and let the Bible cut them to pieces and put them together again.

Then give them peace, and the peace they have when they have been chopped to pieces by the Holy Ghost and by the sword of the Spirit, that peace then is a legitimate peace. There are two kinds of

tranquility, don't forget it. Well, maybe there are three kinds now.

There are the kinds of bottles, and then there is the kind that you get from taking yourself for granted and believing good things about yourself that are not true. That brings a certain tranquility to the mind. Then there is the tranquility that comes following a disturbance of the soul that shakes it to its foundation, that shakes it to its very foundation and drives the man or the woman to God with an open Bible, to cry, O God, search me in, O my heart, search me until there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.

And then when God does that and gets done with it, then we have an experiencing God that gives us tranquility that's grounded upon the rock. But most of evangelical Christians today, the leaders go out to bring them tranquility. They go out to bring them peace, and the Lord does not at first offer us tranquility at all.

The Lord at first offers us deliverance and forgiveness and renewal and the making of things right, and following that comes tranquility. But we are purveying tranquility now and sharing it like soul, and asking our people in the name of John 3.16 to come and get tranquilized. And so we have a tranquilized church that is enjoying herself immensely at her banquets and her times of fun and her coffee clutches and her fellow trips.

And then she's singing about the word of the Lord that's like a flower garden. Now, I believe it, and I hope we sing it every once in a while, but you've got to know what it means when you sing it, my brethren, or it leaves you stressed. So will the psalms, for that matter, and the words of Jesus and Paul.

Only call attention to it because there's danger that we make the word of God to be something to give us tranquility. Go into the churches, the ones that are left open all day in the busy sections, you'll find people come in and sit down. They'll do it just as the poet said, they'll open and invite their souls, and call in their thoughts of home abroad and get still.

Well, you know that businessmen do that, and advertising men do that, and mystics do that from India and from Burma. That getting a hold of yourself and getting still in the middle of the day, that's not necessarily a Christian thing. It's a good thing, but it isn't enough.

And we dear our services so to tranquilize people and paralyze them. Well, we ought to be alarmed by this doctrine of the remnant. We ought not to allow ourselves to take ourselves for granted.

We ought to be alarmed about it, and I ought to say, Tozer, does this mean you? Are you in this, or where are you here? For there were seven thousand who didn't bow their knee to Baal, which may have been only, I repeat, one-tenth of one percent. It may only have been one in a thousand, and if that's true, then what about me? If you say, I think Brother Tozer, you ought to be satisfied and restful about the whole thing you preach. Paul says, After I have preached the word, I myself, I fear lest I be made a castaway.

I'm not talking for the moment about eternal security now, I'm talking about what Paul said. Paul said he was afraid that he could preach and be cast away. And I have known preachers preach a lifetime and end up dirty, storytelling, filthy old men.

And it's possible for us to teach Bible school and be on boards and sing in choirs and take part in church services, and then find at last we're castaways, and that we have never been of the remnants at all. I'm afraid that's an alarming thing, and I don't apologize for alarming you. I'm afraid that we're not alarmed

enough.

We ought to be disturbed about this, for it is here, and it is sung up there in the text, O the number of the children of Israel, be it the sands of the sea, yet a remnant shall be saved. And a remnant means a small fragment, a surviving trace shall be saved, just a little bit of the greater number. Now, when Christ came to the world the first time, he found them taking themselves for granted.

They said, we will know the Messiah when he comes. Are we not taught in the scriptures? Have we not listened to the rabbis? Are we not of the fundamentalistic persuaders? Do we not know the truth? And therefore, when he came, they looked straight at him and said, thou hast a devil. They looked straight at the one that they'd been reading about in their synagogues and said, this fellow has a devil.

Not all of them said it, but a tragically high percentage of them thought things like that about him. Well, there were a few old friends of God. I've preached here and then on the radio about God's ancient friends.

There were a few. But when you think that the population of Jerusalem alone at the time of the Passover was a million, and at Pentecost there was a million people in that city, every place was crammed full, wherever they could bed down and tent around, and 3,000 got converted. We say what a vast harvest it was.

Well, 3,000 out of one million isn't a vast harvest, I would say, my friends. No wonder if there's ever been a time when there was a really vast harvest. I know there have been times, I know it was said of John Paton that he went to the New Hebrides and found not a fiction, and when he came a walk away there was not a heathen.

But I've always caught my fingers when I read that statement, because it isn't according to the doctrine of the remnant. For the doctrine of the remnant is that the number of the religious people should be as the sands of the sea, yet only a remnant shall be saved. It isn't they couldn't be, it isn't that God doesn't want them to be, but it's just that they're not.

Well, when Christ came, there were the shepherds and there were the wise men, and we're going to be walking with shepherds and humping along over the desert with the wise men now for another six weeks, and it's all right, we do that once a year. Call it the advance season, and we'll hear about these friends of God, and there were a few of them, and we're glad for them. But the point is, they were pitifully small as the world says percentage-wise.

Then at the second coming of Jesus, he says that because iniquity shall abound, the love of the many shall wax cold. Now, it doesn't say the love of many only, but every student of the Greek will tell you the same thing. There's an article, a positive, definite article, and there's these.

The love of the many shall wax cold, and Jesus said, sort of flung it off from him as a shrugged it out of himself, so to speak. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, will he find faith on the earth? He didn't say he won't find faith, but he said, will he find faith? So that at the second coming of Christ, it will be as it was at the days of Noah, and in the days of Noah, nor the eighth person was saved by water, by the earth, and the rest of the population drowned. Then if you want still more support for the doctrine, read Church history and see.

The small fragment, a surviving trace, always kept the faith, while the others took these for granted. You know what's wrong with us as a church here. We're taking ourselves for granted, that's all.

We are assuming that which may not be true at all, which is founded upon wishful hoping and not upon sound biblical experience in many cases. We have not been disturbed enough. We have not allowed God to plow furrows on our backs.

We have not dared to go before God and have the examination made. We've been afraid of what God would find, and we'd rather wait and wait and wait and wait and wait. And so, we've waited and settled down, and there's always been a small fragment, our remnant, and they have been in the midst of all the rest.

While the millions worshiped with their lips, and there were always millions who worshiped with their lips, always, you don't need to imagine that it's any indication of vast spirituality or any piety degree of holiness when you see a church door open and fill out multitudes onto the sidewalk. Follow them around, follow them a half a block and see how they live. That's the way to tell, whereby you approach Yeshua.

Ask them to lead in prayer, announce a prayer meeting and see where they'll go, and announce a banquet and see how they'll come. You know, come and go, come and go, stop and go. In the church of God, the stop and go sign is when it says, go, banquet.

When it says stop, it's prayer meeting. And the church of God follows it, and we smile about it, but it's an aligning thing, I think. And I don't want to come up to the Lord having shoes and petties, and he's got a big gray cat at home, and she'll come and lie down in the middle of the floor and turn up wanting to tickle her tongue, and she likes to be played with and have her ears scratched.

Well, she just wants pleasure and wants to get fun out of living, and get just soothed, and we preachers are sent out to soothe. Oh, why do I preach like this? It was before I listened to the radio broadcast this afternoon, the religious broadcast this afternoon. I heard one preacher preach, and then I heard the rest.

A free Methodist preacher had something to say, and he was talking about John Wesley and Charles. Outside of that, my brethren, I don't believe it's worth a while you save your wadding, because you don't hear very much. I know Fuller preaches the word, and I know Billy Graham preaches it through his gospel, and there are a few who preach the gospel, but I know for the most part it's simply back-scratching and ear-tickling, and we are simply petting the old cat instead of giving her fifteen minutes to get out.

Well, read Church history and see. Read Church history and see. See the fragments that lived in the midst of it all.

Read about the Lominsians and the Friends of God and the Brethren of the Common Light, and how few they were, but how many went to church and fed my court, says God. Now, my brethren, it's possible to worship God with our lips, and not worship God with our lives. But I want to tell you that if your life doesn't worship God, your lips don't worship God and your heart doesn't worship him.

And I'm telling you, the most beautiful hymns in all the world. Ray, do you know what I grieve over? Now, maybe you won't like this, Ray, and I don't always agree when it comes down to music and things like that. We agree on hymns and the church music, but he's got a broader understanding than I have, and I've just got ignorance and a pugnacious disposition.

But do you know what I worry about? I'm worrying about Not too many people sing in the Messiah over the next five weeks that won't have the remotest notion of what it's about. They won't know what it's about! They'll stand and sing, come unto him, come unto him, and they'll just cry, and they won't know what it

means. I've seen them stand great, big, spangled, overstuffed, hard-voiced, fun-puzzles.

But, oh, the Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a child, that beautiful passage from Isaiah, where the very tone of the voice indicated she'd never been within shouting distance of the Virgin's son. Too bad, my brethren, too bad that we can sing the passion of Matthew and the Messiah and all the grand numbers. When Handel wrote it, I heard the other day, somebody was explaining over the radio about the great man Handel, he said, And when I was through me, hawk, I saw heaven opened, and all the angels of God gathered.

That's how he felt, that you can sing it and only enjoy its music. We can come and sing hymns here in this church and only enjoy the dignity of the music as a relief from rock and roll. Brethren, always remember there is a remnant in the earth.

I'm just going to give you a little talk about the remnant tomorrow. Next Sunday night, I'm going to talk about where is the remnant, who is the remnant. Tonight, I want to talk about the remnant just a little more.

Let me read you about the remnant once, about 900 years, 500 years, 600 years before Christ was born. He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near. Even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

Behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate which lies toward the north. And every man had a slaughter weapon in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen, with riders in corn by his side.

And they went in and stood beside the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the chariot where a horn was to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the riders in corn by his side.

And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city and through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all abominations that are done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city and smite him. Let not your eyes stare neither have pity, but come not near any man upon whom is the mark.

And then these terrible words begin at my sanctuary. We say, Begin in the Kremlin. O God, begin in the Kremlin.

Destroy those godless wretches. God says, Begin at my sanctuary. We say, Go down to the corner where men half-lighted rooms sit and slurp beer.

Go down there, O ye with the destroying weapon in your hand. God says, Begin at the steps of my church. Begin at my sanctuary.

We say, Go to the church where the pastor has nothing to preach but poetry. But God says, Begin at my sanctuary. But, he says, look out.

Watch for the mark on the forehead. That indelible mark. He sent the man, the white-collar man first, the man with the loom.

He sent him first with an inkhorn. Indelible ink. He said, Go mark them.

Mark them. And he said, Which ones will I mark? The ones that stand and pray the longest? The ones that give the most permission? No, no, he said, that's not the test. Here is the test in a day, in a day of corruption.

Here is the test. Then let's sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of Jerusalem. That's all they have to do.

Not for those that succeeded in stopping it. There are some things that are like a wave of the sea. You can stand there, and Paul himself couldn't shout it back, you know, engulf him.

But you don't have to. To get the mark of the remnant on your forehead, you don't have to succeed. And you don't have to be popular.

You only have to sigh and cry for the abominations that are taking place in the earth. I can't stop people from doing what they're doing. I can't.

I can't get people to stop, but at least I can grieve because they won't stop. And I'm going to do that. And I'm going to let my tears water the footsteps of those who go astray.

And when they will not, they will not, the churches will not come back to New Testament standards and worship the Lord our God in the beauty of holiness. If I can make them do it or persuade them to do it in this awful hour of crisis, at least I can weep because they won't come. And I can sigh if I can't weep.

I said Wednesday night, I'm not a weeping man. I wasn't born. The tears are not high up on my inside of me, and it takes something to make them rise and overflow.

But if I can't weep, I can sigh. They cry and they sigh for the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. It has become a positive burden to read these Saturday papers anymore, and to notice what my brethren are preaching about, and what they're doing to try to persuade a few people to come to hear them preach.

Well, I don't know what the future holds, but I know one thing. Rather than betray the sheep of God, rather than lie to them and deceive them and keep them agitated and stirred up with all kinds of popular topics, rather than take my material from Time magazine, I'll preach the word to empty seats, and sigh and cry for the abomination that is in the earth. So God says, begin at my sanctuary.

Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house. These young people are the trouble. These young people are filled with lust and wild ideas.

Scripture says, begin with the ancient men which are before the house. These old bearded pillars of the church, says the Holy Ghost, begin with them. And they went forth and slew in the city, and I was left, and I fell upon my face and cried, O Lord God, wilt thou destroy the residue of Israel in my pouring out of thy fury? He said, iniquity of the house of Israel, and Jacob's exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city is full of perverseness.

And they say, the Lord sayeth not. It is for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity. Behold, a man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as I commanded.

Some people have the mark, and you say, who are they? I won't preach about who they are next week. I'm only going to tip my hand on one thing. I'm not going to tell you it's this church, and I'm not going to tell you it's the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

After that, I want you, because I do want to talk about this terrible doctrine of the remnant, which teaches that in every generation and at any given time, the vast, the overwhelming majority of the population is lost, alienated from God, unshriven, unforgiven, and without hope for God and the world, or the world to come. But that there is a remnant according to grace, and that remnant is found with a mark on their forehead. A mark of success? Not necessarily.

A mark of signing for the state of affairs. Will you pray for me? They listen to me. I don't come in vast numbers to this church, but they listen to me.

And I can have entrees to almost any religious magazine published. Will you pray that the Lord will give me wisdom to know what to say and what to write, that there might be a stirring up and a perturbation and a disturbance, and that instead of thinking of the word of God as a beautiful, relaxing to read just before you slip away into slumberland at night, that we should begin to think of it as a disturbing book to drive up to our knees in tears and self-hypnosis? If the evangelical church, if the fundamentalist, believing church won't accept this, then I can at least sigh because they won't, and cry to God because they don't. So let's pray, and let's believe God together.

Now we're going to close, and when you go to the hidden things at night, don't sing junk. I know you don't think you do, but sing only that which warms your heart and makes Jesus Christ glorious, and then slip away home, and don't waste your time selling jokes and making quips, and lose everything you've got today in the house of God. Let us stand and sing.

Have dealings with God, won't you, friends? Have dealings with God before you close your eyes and slumber this night. Father, we pray. First, we want to thank thee that we have life on this.

We want to thank thee that in thine infinite mercy thou hast not let us go like cattle to the slaughter, not knowing where we're going because we're fat and sleep, imagining that we're all right when actually we've been fattened for the slaughter. We thank thee, Lord, that we've got light on this. Now help us to walk in it.

Bless us, everyone. Take away all false hopes and all unscriptural expectations, and pull us back to the word of the Lord. O Father, up as we go down the steps and on to this sidewalk tonight, mark the forehead of them that sigh and cry.

Great God, have mercy upon our America. Have mercy, we pray, upon our America. Will each dozen of God, at least a dozen of God, have mercy, Father, and help us to turn from idleness to serenity and to wait for thy Son from heaven.

And if this is now, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. I want to talk about the doctrine in the Bible.

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