

(Hebrews - Part 13): Hear the Word of the Lord

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the transformative and protective power of God's Word in guiding believers away from sin and towards salvation.

Duration: 55:09

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-3, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 4:12-13

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching the truth of God's Word. He compares it to telling the same story in different ways, like weaving threads to make cloth. The preacher highlights the reality and power of God's Word, stating that it is the ultimate reality that cannot be escaped. He also mentions the universal voice of God's Word, which sustains, transforms, and speaks through creation. The sermon concludes with a call to listen and heed the word of God, as it has the power to bring about significant change in the world.

Transcript

But it's always running head-on into its parents, who intersect its self-will all the time. And the better job the parents do of intersecting the self-will of the child and turning it around into righteousness, the better the child will be, and the more the child will thank God when they get older. I have a son who is a lawyer, and he told me that he was so grateful to me, grateful to us, my wife and myself, for our always insisting he ought to be right about things, always insisting.

He said, there were times when I didn't like to do it. He said, I remember when the yearly prom, whatever that is, I guess it's a dance, I never went to one at my age, I don't plan to, but he said when there'd be graduation and I'd get my diploma at one of the schools, and then everybody else would go to the dance and I'd come home alone. He said, I'll tell you, that was pretty hard.

But he said, I'm grateful now, and he said, when you used to make me go and pay back things if I took something that I shouldn't have taken, he said, that was hard to do, but I'm grateful now. Now, I believe that our children will thank us if we stand in the way of their self-will, and they'll be grateful to us for all the world and all time to come that we didn't let them have their way and let them go on in their dead ways. So it is with the Word of God.

The Word of God has crossed my path many times, and where my path went this way and the Word of God went this way and where we crossed, there was trouble, real trouble and heartache and misery for me, but I'm very thankful now for it. I'm glad God didn't let me go the way I was going. I'd have been in hell now, but God in his kindness crossed my path with his kind words and his severe words and his certain words, and the words that I could not negotiate with and that I couldn't in any way, I couldn't compromise them.

And there they were, living reality, God's Word, there it stands, living reality. I'd tell you that if we were to believe that this book is filled with words that are not negotiable, words that cannot be compromised, words that can never be changed, and that we'd go to this Word and read it with reverence, its transforming power would be beyond all understanding and belief. Men try to deny and cover up and get away from the Word of God, but it can't be done.

Well, this revealing Word strips away, strips the life bare and strips everything away from the life, and all our deeds are naked and open. You know that we are marvelous rationalizers. We want to do something and then we rationalize.

That is, we get excuses for wanting to do what we want to do. A simple explanation is a man wants to go to the circus and he has an eight-year-old boy and so he says to his wife, I haven't really time, honey, but I'm sure Junior would love to see the circus, so off they go. He wants to see a hockey game and he hasn't time, but he says to his wife, I think Junior ought to see once, so off he goes.

That's rationalizing, that is, having a secret reason for doing something and then finding a good, sound, logical reason to support your secret desire. We find that everywhere. Men do things and then they excuse themselves and say, well, this is why I did it, when deep in their heart they know it was for some other reason.

The Word of God reveals that and strips it all away, and the deeds, says the Scripture, are naked and open, no secrecy, no dissimulation. Nothing can cover over this, for the Word of God reveals there is no deed but what is known to God, and every word is a deed. I was reading this morning in an exposition of the book of Hebrews by an English preacher that to the Jews a word was considered a thing, and when a word was spoken it was a thing.

You and I consider a word nothing, but the old Jews believed that when a word was spoken it was an entity, it had reality, and when it was once spoken you had it to deal with. Our Lord Jesus seemed to teach the same thing when he said, Every word, every word, that idle word that men speak they shall give account of in the day of judgment, that word will be there, not a breath but a hard thing, a reality, something of that to deal with. And every word is there a deed, and every deed is there a deed, and every door is open, and nothing can hinder God Almighty's eyes from seeing through.

I want to live with those X-ray eyes seeing through me. That word persists, I have this to tell you. That word persists, and has it not to do with time, but it doesn't relax its insistence even at death, but out there where the dead live again, that word will be there, and out there where heaven and hell wait, that word will be there.

The books are open in the book of the words and the book of deeds and the book of life. And our Lord Jesus said, The words that I speak unto you, the same shall judge you in the last day. So those living words will be there, those persistent, immortal words.

We'll find the word that we tried to escape from and get away from here, we'll find it there to judge us in that day. But there's a happier side, and I want to close on that note. That happier side is that the word of God, when we're Christians, when we're following the Lord, when we love his Son, when we're trying to follow the best we know in the way that he takes, the word of God is on our side.

Some years ago I was reading Psalm 71, and I came to that passage, Thou hast given commandment to save me, and I broke down and wrote a poem about it. I don't intend to quote the poem to you, because that's one thing I won't do, quote my own poetry. But it says, Thou hast given commandment to save me, said the scriptures, and I wrote about that, and it warmed my heart, and my heart has been warm ever since with the thought of it.

To whom did God give commandment to save me? I believe that the word of God has gone throughout all the earth to save me. And put that where you please and do what you will with it theologically, but it says that he has given commandment to save me. When I believed on the Son of God and turned myself over to him for salvation, I believed that the word went throughout all the earth, and I believe there isn't an angel in heaven that heard it, and I believe that it was heard by the very worms that crawl and the very birds that fly, and the very atoms that make up our universe, and the very stars that shine in their courses as they fight for the ones God loves.

Now, let's give him commandment. God's word has gone out throughout his whole world, and his word has picked you out. If you are a true Christian and say, Here is one of my Mountaineer members, save him, keep this man.

Just as God put a mark one time upon the people in Jerusalem, and just as God put a hedge around Job, I believe God puts his living word around his people, and that we are there and that we are safe and that there isn't any wild, stray thing in the universe that can come leaping through and strike us. A man can walk across a meadow, and one chance in several million he can be struck by lightning and killed. There is not in anywhere in all God's mighty universe, neither in space nor time nor eternity, any stray, uncontrolled stroke of anything that can take eternal life away from the child of God that has it.

But God has spoken and said, Thou hast given commandment to save me, and I believe in that commandment. So the word of God gets on your side. When the word of God is not on your side, it can only make you miserable continually.

But when the word of God is on your side, it can only keep you continually. And the living word of God has charged himself with the responsibility to keep you, to forgive you, to cleanse you, to perfect that which concerneth you, and to keep you in the way everlasting. He has done this.

So let's not underrate the word. Let's thank God for the word. Let's live by the word, for the word of God is quick, that is, living, and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. I do not want to leave the impression that the word of God is a terrible book, and that we can only approach it in shivering fear. That's true only of those who love their sin and hate their Savior.

But if I hate my sin and love my Savior, then the word of God is not a terrible book, but a wonderful book, and it speaks life to my soul in protection and cleansing and deliverance and sanctification and healing to my soul and mind and body. So let's thank God for the word, and let's see to it that these summer and winter days come on now and fall days, and we have a little more time. Let's see to it that we get through the book.

Let's see to it that we read it, read it and meditate upon it. George Mueller said he read the Bible through, was it 50 or 150 times, and then he added with meditation. Not simply reading it through, but reading with meditation.

So let's thank God for the book, for this book is an inspired book, and its voice sounds throughout all the world, and it'll keep us if we're on his side, and it'll destroy us if we're not. Common sense and moral wisdom tell us that we ought to be on the side of Christ, for all the mighty power of the living word protects us like a fort and keeps us and shields us for eternity. Amen.

This is the end of sermon number 13. Sermon number 14 to follow. In the 5th chapter of the book of Hebrews, the first 10 verses.

For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins, who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is encompassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought as for the people, so also for himself to offer for sins. No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my son, to-day have I begotten thee, saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek, who in the days of his flesh, when he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared, though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him, called of God and high priest for ever, a high priestness which omits forever, after the order of Melchizedek. Now one of the major doctrines set forth in the book of Hebrews is the high priesthood of the Eternal Son.

It was introduced in chapter 2.17, and we are told in chapter 3.1 to consider the apostle and high priest of our faith, and again it is mentioned in 4.14. And now in chapters 5, 6 and 7, particularly 5 and 7, it is fully developed. What it means is high priesthood as God ordained it, and the fulfillment of that priesthood by our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I should talk a little bit about the ideal of a priesthood, because there are few things in the whole circle of religion that gets more abuse and has suffered more abuse and has been a source of more abuse than the priesthood.

Every base, unworthy religion to be found throughout the world has the idea of a priesthood attached to it, and there are various priestly rites throughout the various religions of the world that have offended and shocked mankind. And the priests themselves have often been corrupt, cruel and hypocritical. If you want to get the shock of your life, you ought to read the story of the religions of Mexico, held by the Aztecs and the Toltecs.

Twenty thousand human beings, for instance, were offered in sacrifice at the dedication of one temple. Twenty thousand human beings were stretched out on a slab, alive, and their hearts cut out with stone

axes and offered in sacrifice to the death God of the Toltecs and the Aztecs in the olden days in Mexico. And it is unspeakable what they did, the evil that they did.

And when you consider that you don't have to go back very far to find priests who habitually lie around drunk, you will know how many abuses have attached themselves to the idea of the priesthood. Some have been self-righteous and arrogant, and many intimidate and exploit their poor people. And yet the idea of a priesthood was not thought of first by man, but by God.

And it is dimly seen in the praying father of the family who assumes responsibility for his family, who teaches his family by example and precept, and who prays for them. Job was a good example of this. Job went before God after a party that his children had had and offered sacrifice, or at least he prayed and asked God to forgive them and cleanse them because he was afraid they might have sinned.

He was a priest to his family. But it is more clearly set forth in the Levitical priesthood as shown in Exodus and Leviticus, and in Numbers and the Old Testament. And it is set forth in perfection in Jesus Christ our Lord.

I have said that the idea of the priesthood, or a priesthood, is ordained by God, and it must therefore have a need. And the need for a priesthood arises from man's alienation from God. It assumes that man is away from God.

This is an intriguing part of truth, as hydrogen is a part of water and you can't have water without hydrogen, so you can't have Bible truth without the doctrine that man has broken with God in what the Bible calls alienation, in the great fall. And any religion that ignores that man has fallen and that he is away from God, that he is like a little island that has been pulled loose from the continent and has drifted out to sea and is lost from the attraction of the continent. So man has morally pulled away from God and has pulled himself completely away in fellowship so that he is said to be alienated from God and without hope and without God in the world.

And somebody has to make reconciliation between God and man to bring them back together again. And there is where the idea of the priesthood lies. Now, even granted that man would return, man can't return to God because there is that which is in the way, there is sin in the way, there has been a moral breach, there has been a violation of the laws of God.

Man is a moral criminal before the power of God. And until there is satisfaction made, until this breach is healed, until justice is satisfied, man can't return to God even if he wanted to come. Now this is Bible doctrine, and anything else is less than Bible doctrine.

If I did not believe this, I would close my Bible and I would preach from William Wordsworth or from Shakespeare or Milton. And you couldn't preach from Milton because he believed the Bible and wove the Bible into much of his poetry. But you know there is a fatal error among religious people, and that is Christless mysticism, a kind of nature mysticism.

In the fall of the year it comes around and we imagine a little man with a paintbrush outpainting the leaves, and we get very, very watery-eyed about that time. And again in the spring when the frogs begin to make their music in the little ponds and man's thoughts turn to love and all this kind of thing the poets tell us about. Well, that's very dangerous because if it's crossless and without redemption and without Christ and without a proper reconciliation it can be deadly.

Yet there are churches and they spend millions building those churches and they never hear a thing year in and year out. I stopped in Chicago on my way through here to Toronto from St. Paul. I had to wait three hours in the airport to catch the plane here.

One of my boys came out to have a chat, brought his girlfriend out and we had a nice chat together, and he is the only single one of them all. And he told me this. He said that a year ago during Keswick in Chicago that there was an agnostic friend of his, he's a member and active in the Presbyterian Church there, that is my son is, and he said a friend of his who was an agnostic and a scientist decided that to please my son he'd come out to hear me preach at Moody Church, and he did.

I preached and then I was followed by the pastor of Calvary Church, Stephen Oldford, so I don't know which of the two or both. But anyway, this scientist sat there, this agnostic who didn't believe anything and believed that you couldn't know anything, he sat and he heard those two sermons. And then he said to my son, You know, I'm bowled over, I'm astonished.

I said, Why? He said, I didn't think preachers ever said anything. He said, I never heard a preacher say anything before. He said, These two men said something.

And he was greatly moved by the fact that we'd had something to say. Well, the upshot of that is, he said, Now that agnostic scientist has become the tome heir of the Presbyterian Church. Can you imagine that? In just a year's time he's now praying warrior, leading the rest of them in his fellowship with God.

That's the difference, and it isn't good preaching, it's preaching about something good. There's the difference. I never have claimed, never in my life have I claimed to be a good preacher.

But I will take second to nobody in my desire to preach about good things. And if you preach about good things, a man came down to the front, a fine-looking middle-aged man, after I had preached on the Lord Jesus, high and lifted up, and they were asking me to autograph books. And he came to me and said, I have no book for you to autograph, you've written your autograph in my heart.

And I was rather moved by that, because I hadn't preached good at all, I know. I hear myself on tape. But I know I'm preaching about something good, and that's all the difference in the world.

You see, if a cook is a good cook, and a cook knows how to cook good food and wholesome, delicious food and serve it well, she doesn't have to be a bathing beauty. She can just be anything, but you don't say you're a beautiful bathing beauty, you say you're a good cook. And all I claim to be in the wide world, I serve up good food, and I talk about God, and that's what's good.

And that's what every preacher ought to do. He doesn't have to have a voice like Billy Graham, and very few people do. That gentle Southern accent of his that charms people, I don't have it, and very few people do around the world.

But if they set up good food, they don't have to look like a Greek God. And if they provide good truth, they don't have to preach like Spurgeon. Anything will be all right.

I remember that a man came up to Mr. Spurgeon, I believe it was, and said, I can't preach as well as you, but I preach about the same Lord you do, and that's all that's necessary. So there's danger in the churches of a crossless Christianity. And the preacher gets up and talks about the Great Old Father.

You used to hear them over the radio, preach about this we ask in the spirit of Jesus. He didn't ask it in the name of Jesus, but in the spirit of Jesus. He was a nice fellow.

Well, this is false, and we've got to get back to this idea of a priesthood, this idea of God here and man here, and the two of them alienated from each other, not by the fault of God, but by the fault of man, getting back together by a sacrifice, and a priest who could come between God who is holy and man who is unholy and bring the two of them together. That's priesthood, and that's what is here. Now, the scripture tells us that a priest could do this.

A priest had to have several qualifications. A priest had to be ordained of God. No man taketh this honor upon himself.

He had to be ordained of God. Nobody could come out of the bush and say, I'm a priest, rub his face with some kind of paint and say, I'm a priest. God had to ordain the man, or else he's a false priest.

And all the false priests around the world are self-ordained men. But there had to be a priest in Old Testament times whom God ordained. And then he had to be ordained for men, it says here in the text.

God appointed him to help men. God needs no help, and there is no priest that can give God any help, but man needs help. And the work of the priest was to atone for sins.

Now, the formula is given over in the book of Leviticus, the fifth chapter, where it says, And the priest shall sprinkle of the blood of the sin offering upon the side of the altar, and the rest of the blood shall be wrung out at the bottom of the altar. It is a sin offering. And he shall offer the second for a burnt offering, according to the manner.

And the priest shall make an atonement for him for his sin which he hath sinned, and it shall be forgiven him. There is the idea of the priesthood. An offering was made for man, to God, by the priest.

And the priest had this to do yet. He was to represent God to man and man to God. Before God, he pleads for the man he represents.

He instructs, he exhorts. And with complete sympathy and understanding, he goes to God for the man. And this he can do because he is himself a man.

But the breakdown, the scripture says in the Old Testament, was that the priest, when he went before God to stand in between a holy God and fallen man, the priest was embarrassed. Always he was embarrassed because he had to atone not only for the sins of the people that he was reconciling, but he had to atone for his own sins as well. This was where the breakdown was.

That is why Isaac Watts could say, Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain would give the guilty conscience peace, nor take away the stain. But Christ the heavenly Lamb takes all our sins away, the sacrifice of pure blood and richer blood than they. Showing that the priest couldn't, by the sacrifice he made, take it away completely.

He partly took it away. God forgave it and covered it until the time that the great priest came. So when Christ came, he qualified completely.

He was ordained of God. That was qualification number one. Thou art my son, thou art a priest forever.

God said that. He reconciled. That's 2.17. He made reconciliation for the people.

He had compassion, 5, 7, and 8. That teaches us that Christ qualified as the priest and he became the author of eternal salvation. The author, the source, the giver of eternal salvation. You can talk, as I've said before, too much about almost anything.

You can preach too much about doctrine. You go to some churches and all you'll hear from the time you arrive until the time you leave is the second work of grace. I remember one fellow I heard was teaching.

He taught the three psalms that our brother Gray has taught so much about, those three psalms, psalms 22, 23, and 24. Here was his exposition. He said, In Psalm 22, My God, my God, why dost thou forsaken me? He said, That's the sinner at the altar.

And he said, The bulls of Bashan have stared upon me. He said, That's the people looking curiously on while the man prays at the altar. And he said where it says, My bones are out of joint and my strength dried up.

He said he would get helpless there at the altar. Then he said, I will sing among the brethren. He got through.

And he said in Psalm 23, The Lord is my shepherd. And the man in the 22nd psalm said, I am a worm and no man. He said in the 22nd psalm he was a worm.

And in the 23rd psalm he was a sheep. He had been converted. And he went through the valley of the shadow of death.

That was sanctification. And he came out into the 24th chapter and said, The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. And he was a man.

That was exposition. I heard that myself by a college president of a little holiness college. They see too much of grace everywhere.

I think that the Bible teaches that there is a baptism and anointing of the Holy Ghost after conversion, and I teach it. But I don't claim to see it everywhere. I heard a man preach on the text when Jesus touched a man's eyes and he saw men as trees walking.

Then he touched him again and he saw everybody clearly. He said, There you have it. The first time he was converted, the second time he was sanctified.

If you have to prove your case by that kind of exegesis, you have no case at all. If you can't go to Romans and Colossians and Hebrews and Galatians and find it, if you have to go and worm around like that, go teach it. I believe you can.

I believe in the New Testament we are specifically and clearly taught that there is such a thing as being filled with the Holy Spirit after conversion, and I have experienced it. But you can preach that too much, you can preach water baptism too much, you can preach anything too much, but there is one thing you can never overdo. You never can preach the glory of Jesus Christ too much.

You never can overdo the glory of the Son of God, never, never. I preached some sermons down in St. Paul on the man Christ Jesus high and lifted up, a series of sermons. I've never preached them here,

some day I may.

But the people were moved, and I know they were not moved by good preaching, but they were moved by the fact that I was talking about something that God had ordained that they should hear about and weren't hearing about. Now, not that that pastor isn't preaching, and he is, but I happened to strike a note that moved the audiences, because I talked about the Lord Jesus, and you can't overdo that. Dr. Simpson was not a great exegete.

The old fellow in his church, as I told you, said, Brother Simpson only has one sermon. Do you know what his sermon was? Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. Jesus Christ, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

Jesus Christ, Prophet, Priest and King. Jesus Christ, resurrection and life, the truth and the way. Jesus Christ, everything.

You can't overdo that. You can preach Christ continually and nobody will ever get tired, because he is new every morning, and he never gets stale. He became the author, the source, the fountain, the giver of eternal salvation.

After my article, I can't give you the Latin or the Greek. But salvation, you know where it comes from. It comes from selus.

It comes from you, the selus, as they would say in Christianity. It means health and welfare and well-being. He became the author of man's eternal health and man's eternal well-being and man's eternal welfare.

Salvation means more than getting your sins forgiven. Conversion means more than giving up smoking. I'm sure it will mean that, too, if you get converted.

But salvation means that God brings to you in Jesus Christ eternal salvation, which is the health of the soul, the welfare of the spirit forever, and the well-being of your total life, worlds without end. The word is eternal here. Eternal forever and ever and ever and ever.

You can keep on saying ever and ever and ever. Somebody wrote me a letter and said, King James version of the words of Greek and Hebrew, by the word forever. I said, there is no such meaning in the Bible.

The word forever isn't there at all. No such thing as endless existence. How silly can you get? Of course it's there.

The eternal God, the everlasting God. You think that God is going to get old and die? The everlasting God? As long as God lasts, the life of his people will last. And as long as God lasts, the salvation and welfare of his people will last.

And since God is not wearing out, and since the eternal God is self-existent and self-sufficient, and lives with time in his bosom, and knows no abrasion from the passing of time, but remains forever the eternal God, when I hear the word eternal salvation, to them I believe that salvation will outlast the sun and the moon and the stars and the galaxies and all the worlds. And the day will be when God will take the stars of the heaven above and throw them over his shoulder as a woman might throw a garment with sequins on

it, shining and flashing. Throw them over his shoulder, and they shall be chained, says the scripture, like a garment.

But thou remainest and thy years fail not. Sure there is eternity in the Bible, and it's the devil that tells us there isn't. And I don't care who he uses to say so.

It's the devil that says that one of these days God is going to reach over as a woman reaches over after a dinner and snuffs a candle and says, That's the end of him. There will be no end to me, there will be no end to you. And that's just why we ought to be right with God.

That's why we ought to live, not for now, not for today, but forever, because there will be no end to us, thank God. Salvation forever and ever unto all them that obey him. Now how's that? Unto all them that obey him.

I thought you got salvation by believing him. You'll find in the scriptures there's very little difference between believing and obeying. You'll find in the scriptures that the man who isn't obeying isn't believing either.

And the fellow who says he has faith but doesn't obey God is fooling himself. There's a little song that's been sung to death and all that, and it's not a high-class song, but it says something very fundamental, and that is the simple song, Trust and Obey. I believe that trust and obey are two wings of a bird.

As the old writer said, two wings of a dove don't weigh her down. They don't weigh her down. She rises by means of them.

And trust and obey are the two wings of the Christian. We trust and we obey, and we obey because we trust, and we trust in order that we might obey. And if we try to obey without faith, we get nowhere.

If we try to have faith without obedience, it ends in nothing. So he's given eternal salvation to them that obey him and them that believe him, for obviously the two are synonymous, if not identical, synonymous. And they're like two sides of a coin.

Here I have a coin. On one side there's an elk, I think, or a deer or something, and the other side's a cameo of the Queen, a quarter, it says, or whatever it says, I don't know. But there it is.

Now, I can't split that thing edgewise with a fine saw and go down and buy anything with it. A fellow would see one side of it and think it's all right, but when he took it in his hand he'd say, what did you do, what's the matter here? That's only half a coin, he'd toss it back. You can't pass one side of a coin, it takes two.

Trust is on one side and obey is on the other. But the Church has taken a fine saw and split them, and we put trust over here and obey over here, and they say, you don't have to obey, it's believe, everything's believe. You can't divide that coin, you can't separate it, and if you do it's no good.

Trust and obey, my friend, believe God and then go get obedient. You'll find it will work and it will become in your heart eternal salvation, and Jesus Christ will become your all in all. Well, that's all for this morning.

I want to continue in this, talking about that passage, that difficult passage about it's impossible for those who were once enlightened ever to be restored again. I know there are all kinds of opinions, but as we get to it I want to preach on this. God help us, it's necessary.

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