

(Hebrews - Part 17): Faithful in Truth and Love

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon emphasizes the necessity of preaching truth in love while encouraging believers to diligently pursue spiritual growth and heavenly treasures.

Duration: 35:29

Scripture: Hebrews 6:10-12, Hebrews 6:18, Hebrews 10:23, Hebrews 12:5, Hebrews 12:11

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of Christians actively engaging in their faith. He criticizes those who are hesitant to put effort into their Christianity, comparing them to chickens running away from their responsibilities. The preacher urges believers to be diligent and pour themselves into their faith, as the world is growing old and judgment is approaching. He highlights the need for Christians to seek the excellent riches of heavenly gifts and not settle for mere scraps, encouraging them to have faith and patience in inheriting God's promises.

Transcript

In that ye have ministered to the Saints and do minister, and we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, and that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Now, I hope we can hear the Holy Spirit speaking to us this morning. If not by means of the Preacher, then in spite of him, for these words were written by the pencil of the Holy Ghost, and just above he had dealt with a very sticky and a very unpleasant subject.

Now he says, Beloved, we are persuaded that there are things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. Now, the writer has been faithful to his readers. He has been faithful in two things.

He has been faithful in truth, and he has been faithful in love. Now, if I were preaching to preachers, young preachers particularly, I would say to them, There are two things required of you before your congregation. One is to speak the truth always, and the other is to always speak the truth in love.

You have heard the truth spoken in a hostile manner. You have heard it spoken so that the one speaking it gave the impression that he was very angry with the congregation, and that if they were going to hell, it was all right with him, and if they were going to backslide, he would wash his hands off of them. This the

man of God never does.

He preaches the truth in love, and no Christian is ever required of God to listen to a man who does not preach in love. But there are efforts made sometimes to preach in love at the sacrifice of truth, so that we are in danger of going off either end into the deep water. We are likely, in order to be kind to an audience, not to preach the truth to them, or if we want to preach the truth, we are in danger of doing it in a harsh, unloving way.

Now, the writer was faithful to them both in truth and in love. He had pointed to their failure above and their retarded growth, and it wasn't easy for him to do it, but he did it, and he showed the grave danger they had placed themselves in. Apostasy and shipwreck could lie ahead, he said, if you don't watch out, because it has for some.

And then he set out to rescue them. And you hear, or feel, rather, the eager yearnings of the man of God. And yet I do not give the credit to the man who wrote the book of Hebrews only because I hear the pulse beat of something bigger and grander than the man himself.

It is nothing else than the love and care and compassion of the holy God who is looking down upon us with all the anguish of the Father over his lost son, and all the anxious care of the lost coin. We find it all here. There is one thing we may always be sure of.

Whether we listen and heed the word of God or not, God is always brooding over us with the anguished care of the triune God. And then this writer becomes a physician to the souls of these men and women. He speaks to them with tender affection.

He encourages them with thoughts of God's fairness to them. God is not unrighteous, he says, to forget your work and labor of love. I remember sitting once and then listening to a man preach.

In fact, he was preaching in the church of which I was pastor. He'd been invited there and was preaching. He spent a week with us, and the week was spent in proving that we didn't have anything at all, that we were spiritual paupers, hopeless, worthless, and that nobody there was at all a spiritual person, that from the pastor to the janitor we were all a bunch of backslidden, carnal, worldly, deceptive, double-dealing people.

I sat there and kind of closed up on the brother. He had not been there long enough to know us that well. Even if we were that bad, he had no way of finding it out.

So I sort of closed up on him. The physician never does that. A physician never tells a man he's sicker than he is.

He deals with the man where he finds him as near as he can. And this man of God spoke to these people with tender affection. You'll find it here, but ye beloved, he said.

And he encouraged them that God hadn't forgotten them and that he would remember what they had done. Maybe they weren't praying as much as they should, but they were praying more than they used to. Maybe they weren't giving as much as they could, but they were giving more than they had before.

Maybe they weren't all they should have been, but they weren't what they had been before they were converted. Maybe even they'd slipped back a little in their way, but they still weren't way back yonder in

Adam's graveyard. God had brought them out and made something out of them.

And this is what the man who wrote this says to them. He's their physician. You notice that beautiful word found among our Anglican friends, the word curet? I don't know how they use it or what it means now, but I do know the origin of the word.

The origin of the word is a curer, somebody that goes about and cures people. He's a curer of souls, he's a physician of souls. Through the gospel he preaches, through prayer and through love, he cures people.

He's called a curate. He cares for them as a physician cares. And so that's the word curate.

Now, I don't want you to call me a curate, and I don't give full approval to everything I have heard about curates, but that's a good word to start with anyway. This is the work of God. Always remember my friend, if the Lord smites you, he smites you that he may cure you.

If the Lord rebukes you, he does it that he may teach you. If he disciplines you, he does it in order that you may be holy, that you may be partakers of his holiness. And he says now in the text, we desire that every one of you, we desire, verse 11, we desire that every one of you do show yourself, show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.

Now in every religious company there are likely to be three kinds of people. He said he wanted every one of them to be in the first class. But in all their companies wherever I have been, I find there are three classes.

There are a few who find the excellent riches of the heavenly gifts. They do find it by the word of God and prayer and by surrender and faith. They do find the excellent riches of the heavenly gifts.

And then there is a larger number satisfied with the crumbs. Moody tells about a man who had a dog, and he fed the dog crumbs and scraps, just nothing but crumbs and scraps. And the dog would sit patiently, sad-eyed, over there on the floor, and when the meal was over they would pile the scraps up and he would go out in the kitchen and have his meal.

He waited. And one day that company and this man who was there were talking about the dog-eating scraps, and they suggested that as a trial they would offer him a steak. So among the others they prepared a plate and there was a nice, well-done, sizzling steak on it.

And the visitor said, I'll bet you the dog won't eat it. Oh, he said, he surely will, he'll eat it all right. He said, he'll be so glad to get it after these scraps.

So they set the plate down containing the sizzling steak, and the dog looked at it and then looked up questioningly into the eyes of the Master, and then turned around and sat down a little way off. He had lived on the scraps until he couldn't even believe there was such a thing as a steak. Now, I believe that this is possible, that we can be satisfied with crumbs.

God will feed us according as we're able to take it. And if we have been used to scraps and we've lived on scraps and we've developed an appetite for scraps, you know if you don't eat much your stomach shrinks so that you don't feel as hungry as you would if you ate much. The stomach stretches, and that's what gives the pangs of hunger.

And when it collapses, that's what gives the pangs of hunger. But if after a long while of living on little bits, the stomach shrinks and we don't have that feeling of hunger. Now, I'm not a master on this, but I have read Reader's Digest, and they tell us about those things, and when we read Reader's Digest we get all we ought to know about such things.

Anyhow, that's the second class. The people, they are the Lord's people all right, but they always are second-class Christians. They just won't, they just haven't found and aren't particularly looking for the excellent riches of the heavenly gifts.

But there's a third class, and still a larger number, I'm afraid, in many churches. They have only vague intimations of divine truth, shadows instead of realities, groundless hopes instead of guaranteed possessions. Now, the Apostle desires here that every one of them should come into the first class.

He's not satisfied that we should classify ourselves as very good Christians and not-so-good Christians and poor Christians. He wants us every one, he said. Now, suppose that in this church, one out of a hundred only should fail, only one out of a hundred.

The 99 should make it through into the excellency of the riches of Christ, but one out of a hundred, that would be a most marvelous thing, and it would be a statistical triumph to find 99 percent of the membership of the church were blessed, Spirit-filled Christians. Only one out of a hundred was failing. But that would be a statistical triumph, but for the one who failed, it would be a personal tragedy.

It's possible to have an airplane crash and only one person be killed, and if there are 70 on board, the newspapers happily report only one was killed. But if that one was your husband, it would not be a statistical triumph to you, it would be a personal tragedy. If a boat sank and there were 12 people on it, and all escaped safely to shore, but one, that would be a statistical triumph.

But if that one was your teenage boy on a fishing trip, they had to drag the lake to find him after several days, they pulled him out with drags, that would be a personal tragedy. So it's entirely possible for us to have a high number, have a high percentage of spiritual people in a church, but if there's even one that isn't, that is a personal tragedy for that one. And if you should be that one, I say you would be visited with a tragedy greater than was ever conceived by the mind of a Shakespeare or an Aeschylus.

Now he tells us that we are to seek these treasures, and we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. That ye be not slothful, but followers of them that through faith and patience inherit the promises. No sloth, but diligence and followers of the best Christians, the best people.

Now, I think of the treasure hunters. A year goes by, I suppose there's never a year goes by, but the newspapers and the radio come out with the story of some new treasure that is being hunted. Some vessel has been reported to have sunk off a certain shore, and they go out and with radar and other electronic equipment try to locate it, and then with deep-sea divers they go down, hoping to discover something.

Explorers have left their homes and have suffered and labored and even died in order to find treasures, and adventurers have dived to the floor of the ocean, and prospectors have searched for a lifetime. You go down into the southwest of the United States, and you will find old desert rats, they call them, old desert rats. They've lived in the desert and have panned for gold for a lifetime.

It's in their blood, they say, and they can't escape it. They're after gold. Maybe they find enough to keep their soul and body together and the skin to cover it, but not enough to get a shave or a haircut or a decent clothing or a decent anything.

They're desert rats living there, prospectors searching for a lifetime for gold that they never find or find in quantities to do them any good. And the few that do find these treasures, these adventurers and explorers, what kind of treasure do they find? Well, there's the Spanish doubloon that we read about in the books, stained with human blood. Or there are pearls and diamonds once worn in scornful pride by some beauty who has long been dead and turned to clay.

Or there are sacks of gold dust to be wasted in rattus living or hidden away in the depths of the earth. I suppose that if there's any humor in hell, I don't know whether there's any humor in hell or not, but if there should be any humor in hell, I can imagine that there would be roars of demonic laughter to see human beings made in the image of God, digging for a lifetime for gold and then melting it into gold bars and hiding it back in the earth from which they spend a lifetime to dig it. It seems to me that for men made in the image of God and made to seek the high heaven above as their home, that this is one of the supreme tragedies of the world, that we dig it out of the ground at great loss and sacrifice and then bury it back in the ground again, down at Fort Knox.

Everything they've buried in the ground there somebody dug out of the ground before. What good is it lying down there? You can't eat it, you can't wear it, you can't inject it into a dying man to bring him back health, you can't pull it over his cold baby at night, you can't live in it. There it is, sacks of gold to be wasted or hidden, I say, and riches that could never bring peace and never bring rest or safety or life or happiness.

You no doubt have been reading, as I have, about the governor of New York, one of the richest men in the world. Not all his money can give him peace now. Not all his money can take the pain out of his father's heart.

Michael, his son, 23-year-old adventurer, over there seeking treasures, strange treasures, shrunken heads and such treasures for museums. But not all the money in the world could give Nelson Rockefeller that which a man wants the most, peace in his heart and the happiness of having his people safe and his friends around him. Yet men have forsaken all and searched with great diligence for these things.

But the Holy Ghost says, we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end, that you be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. What do we look for? Why, I read here in the book of Ephesians, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. And in Paul's prayer, he prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe according to the working of his mighty power. These are the things that matter. And though you are as poor as a church mouse, and though you died in a concentration camp or a prison, and though your poor body was dragged out and thrown over a cliff for the buzzards to pick on, you are still richer than any riches could make you that is found by explorers or adventurers or prospectors or financial geniuses.

What treasure do we look for? Inward freedom and endless life and a glorious home and immortality at last. And we even know where it is. We don't have to prospect for it.

I never liked the word adventure used in religion. Men sometimes get poetic and they talk about the adventure of religion, the adventure of knowing God. No.

An adventure means that I go out not being sure what I'm after, or what I'll find, or whether I'll find it, nor where I'll find it, and that there will be possibilities of great danger to me. Maybe I'll not find anything, and maybe I'll die in the attempt, and maybe the buzzards will pick my bones on the desert, and all that will be left are the buttons of my clothes and a bit of leather the buzzards couldn't eat that were my shoes. Or maybe I'll get some treasure, but on my way in I'll be overtaken by bandits, and they will kill me and take my treasure and leave my bones there.

That's what adventure means. It means going out looking for trouble, joyful, thrilling trouble, with maybe a bit of reward attached. No, let's not think of religion as an adventure.

There is no element of uncertainty in following Christ. He is victory. He has won, and the battle is his, and there is no possibility of loss or failure.

I know where to go. I don't go out looking with a diving rod as the farmer does for water. I don't go out with a geiger counter as the man does looking for the metal to make these bombs.

No, I know where to go. I don't look for it. I know where it is.

I know that Jesus Christ has made unto me wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. I know that God has put in his Son, Jesus Christ, all that I need for now and forever and for all time and for eternities and millennia to come. I know that, and so I know where he is.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden. If you would wash your hands, ye sinners, and turn unto me, I know where he is, and so I don't have to search. I know who has my possession, I know who has my treasure.

And I go to him, and I mine for it, yes, but not uncertainly. I go and I dive for it, yes, but not uncertainly. I go and I seek for it, yes, but not uncertainly.

I know where it is. So the great, all-important question is not, Where is it? We know where it is. We know that there is nothing in all this vast world that we need that Jesus Christ can't provide.

We know it. We know that he is the eternal God made flesh to dwell among us. We know that time and space and love and life and hope and peace and riches and bliss and all that the human soul could need or crave are found in the person of Jesus Christ.

Our mistake is that we think because it's there, we have it, when the fact is, we may not have it at all. It may be in Christ, but not in us. But the man of God, the Holy Ghost, through the man of God, urges us that we be not slothful, but be diligent and press on to the full assurance of hope unto the end, through faith and patience we might inherit the fulfillment of the promises.

Now the Holy Ghost says, Put away sloth. I don't know whether the half-dead animal that spends its lifetime in a state of coma, hanging upside down by its heels, I don't know whether that is named after the word slothful, or whether somebody looked at it and named it sloth because of the word slothful. I don't

know which is the horse and which is the cart.

But if you want to know what slothfulness means, look at that poor creature that hardly knows what it is, and the scientists hardly know, hanging upside down practically all the time. Sloth. Look in your dictionary or in some encyclopedia or look somewhere where you can see a picture of this thing, and then hear the Holy Ghost say, Don't be a sloth.

Don't hang there in a state of semi-activity, but be diligent, earnest, eager, careful. Think of what scientists have to go through to escape, to get rid of yellow fever in South America, or not in South America, in Panama. To get rid of yellow fever when they are putting the Panama Canal through, scientists went down there, and they said, We think maybe, we're not sure, but we think maybe that yellow fever is being carried by mosquitoes.

So they said, All right, now we'll put a man in a cage and screen him in, and then we'll release some mosquitoes into the cage who were taken out of a room where a man died of yellow fever, and then we'll see what happens. And one young man, a couple of them, I think, volunteered, young doctors. He said, I'll go in.

They went in, and they were sanitary, not exposed previously. But these mosquitoes were allowed to come from the sick room and go into the screened-in enclosure where the two doctors were, and in a few days both of them came down with yellow fever, and one of them died. But the scientists learned what caused yellow fever, so they went throughout all that area, and they put oil and other things over the water, and they killed the mosquito larva.

And when there were no more mosquitoes, there was no more yellow fever. But somebody died to find that out, and other men got desperately sick, and others exposed their lives. If we would give half as much attention to our Christian lives as scientists do to test tubes, we'd blaze with the love of God.

There are students, I have known students, I know a family named Bell, the Bell family in the city of Chicago, Illinois. Bob and Clarence and Fred, and I think one or two others, they come from a home pitifully, tragically poor. But something in here burned like a light.

And the Christian boys, too. But those boys wanted education. They would have it, they would have it.

And they had no money. Parents had no money. Old, weary, deaf father had to do odd jobs for a living.

But those boys started in. And I know that Clarence Bell used to leave one class and without anything to eat, run for ten minutes to get to the next class, and go through days with nothing but perhaps a hot dog, if he could afford that, from early breakfast to late supper, and dress in the most ordinary clothes, those boys pressed through. Late at night they studied.

Early in the morning they studied. They withdrew themselves from ordinary social contacts. They were going to have an education.

The result is that Bob, the principal of a high school, Clarence, Dr. Clarence, who worked with highly classified scientific information for the government during the war, and is now teaching in the University of Ohio, they got their education. But they didn't loaf. They were diligent.

And they pursued it. And if we, if you young people listening to me, would give even half as much persistent and continued activity to knowing God as the Bell brothers did in getting education, you would be among the leaders of your generation for God. There are writers.

Writers go through God knows what to get down in print what they want to say. The long vigils, the exhausting corrections, the times when you get up from a typewriter and walk around in circles wondering where the sequence of your sentence ever disappeared to. Writers, if you're going to write anything that anybody will read, you're going to have to give birth to it.

And so it is with any profession. If you're going to make good, we're going to have to pour everything into it. Yet we stand and plead before Christians.

Christians say, We despise the world. We have eternal life. We are forgiven.

Heaven is our home. We're going to wear a crown some bright morning. But no diligence.

The scientists put them to shame, the students put them to shame, the writer puts them to shame, the very ball player puts them to shame. I came down in a cab and I talked to the young man who drove me down. He was, of course, all steamed up over yesterday's great cup and also over hockey.

And I asked him about those boys that guard the nets. I'm not too sure what they call them. Oh, he said, it's terrible before they get hit.

They get their faces literally dashed in, teeth knocked out and everything from those pucks. If I ask a Christian young man, Listen son, I want you to serve God now. All right, I'd like to be a Christian.

All right, what am I to do now, get baptized and join the church? Yes. And then I want you to put as much into serving God as a goalie puts into guiding a goal. And if they knock your teeth out, smile, spit the teeth out and guide your goal.

And if they bust your nose, all right. Look at these boys that are coming here tomorrow to fight it at, uh, where? Look at these two boys, the black boy, uh, Patterson and the Irishman are coming up from the States to fight here in Toronto. Look what it costs these boys.

Young fellow wants to become a Christian. And we said, well, now put away smoking and drinking and all that kind of stuff and live a disciplined life. And he whimpers like a baby and says, Oh, you want it so hard.

You'll drive everybody away. If you preach like that, those boys don't smoke, nor drink, nor run around nights, nor lie around nightclubs. They work like dogs.

What for? For the glory of getting in there and having a 50-50 chance of knocking the other man unconscious or getting knocked unconscious. While a few groundlings clap their cigarette stained hands and shout. But if we ask a Christian to put anything into his Christianity, they begin to run like hens thrown off the nest and cluck in every direction, make the feathers fly and say, Oh, you'll drive the young people away.

I don't believe it. I don't believe it. Young people, if they are worth their salt and are worth saving, are ready to put something into their Christianity.

So be diligent, he said, and pour yourself into it. God help us, my dear people. Amen.

Father, we pray that thou wilt help us. Oh, thou seest times are waxing late, and the world is getting old, and the judgment is drawing near, and the shadow of man-made destruction hangs like a cloud over the world. Great God, thou hast called us thy people to be a different kind of people in this world, to live disciplined, careful lives, temperate and brave and serious.

But also we thank thee, joyous, joyous with expectation of a victory that is bound to be ours, for we can't lose who are on thy side. And sin can't win what is against thee. Oh, Lord, we pray thee, help us this morning.

We can't ask that we might be worthy to receive of the communion, but we do ask that we might, in a worthy manner, receive it. Prepare our hearts, O God, to think seriously and reverently and with joy over thy blood and body and righteousness, which are to be to us glorious dress and a heavenly garb in that day. Bring on our minds from considering the world, and we will think only about thee.

Christ's name. Amen.

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