

# (Hebrews - Part 25): The Holy of Holies

by A.W. Tozer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of experiencing God's presence and the need to remove the veil of self to access it.*

**Duration:** 32:10

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:1, Exodus 25:22, Psalm 19:1, Psalm 27:4, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 10:19-22, Hebrews 13:8

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses his commitment to preaching about God and the Holy Trinity. He emphasizes that God reveals Himself through nature and the scriptures, using various names to depict His majesty and glory. The speaker also shares his admiration for the love and joy experienced by parents when they have a baby, highlighting the beauty of this relationship. He concludes by mentioning his recent trip to Mexico City, where he was invited to speak about the deeper life and the presence of God.

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## Transcript

In Hebrews, in the 9th chapter, and a little over in the 10th, now you will remember that there was a tabernacle made in the Old Testament times. The first wherein was a candlestick and a table and a showbread, and that tabernacle was called the sanctuary, that section. Then after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all.

Sometimes that's called the holy of holies, sometimes people call it the sanctum, or sanctum sanctorum, the holiest of all. Now, over the, now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, busy in the service of God, but into the second, that is, clear in, went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the heirs of the people. The Holy Ghost this signified that the way into the holiest of all was not made yet manifest, while the first tabernacle was yet standing.

Verse 11, But Christ, being come in high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. And over in the 10th chapter, a little exhortation there based upon all this teaching, verse 19 and on, Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. And having an high priest over the house of God, let us, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, having our

hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Now, you have in your mind, no doubt, the Old Testament tabernacle, with its outer court, with its holy place, and with its holy of holies. Now, priests could come to the outer court and they could come to the holy place, but inside the holiest of all, the holy of holies, they could not come. Only one man could enter that holy of holies, and that was only once a year.

And then he came with the blood of bulls and goats, which he sprinkled upon the mercy seat where the fire burned. For now we are taught that by the death of Jesus, the rending of his flesh, which was the tearing of that veil that separated from the holy of holies, now anybody, all of God's people, can come in. Now, what I most particularly want to emphasize is this holy of holies.

You see, there was a golden chest, a sort of cedar chest affair, and it was plated outside and inside with pure gold. And then there was a lid on that chest, also made of pure gold. And then there was a collar around that lid, with the four corners sticking up a little to give it artistic beauty.

Then on that lid there were two figures made of pure gold of the cherubim, holy creatures. And they stretched their wings and their wingtips touched. And then between the wingtips there burned and glowed an awesome, awful, holy fire, which the ages have called the Shekinah, meaning the presence or the face.

And that was God. That's why the careless crowd couldn't see it, couldn't come in. That's why the average rank and file of the clergy couldn't come in, only the high priest could go in there and with a verted face look on that awesome presence.

Once a year, while he held in his hand a basin of blood, saying, O presence, I ought to die. O Shekinah, O God, I ought to die, but I bring this blood as an evidence that I ought to die, and that another has died for me. Now it's this holy presence that we want particularly to talk about, and why so many Christians are shut away from it.

I read recently and carefully checked again, though I've preached this truth lots of places, I carefully checked again to know that the words in the Old Testament, the word that is translated presence and face is the same word. The face of God in thy presence is fulness of joy, he said. And you'll find all through the Psalms the worshiping man of God celebrating his entrance into the presence, and his looking forward to the presence of God, and he talked about the face of God.

That passage, for instance, when thou saidest, seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord, will I seek. Now that same word is presence. In thy presence is fulness of joy, thy presence, Lord, will I seek.

When thou saidest unto me, seek ye my face, my heart responded, thy face, thy presence, Lord, will I seek. It is the same. And what I'm trying to present is that there is an unseen presence which is God, that holy one, that one in the midst of us, which theology sets forth in the doctrine of the divine amendments.

It says that that holy presence, that one time localized himself there between the wings of the cherubim, is wherever his creation is. But there is a difference between a presence and a manifest presence. I have said this before, and I don't hesitate to repeat it again, because a thing like this ought not to be tossed out and forgotten, that there is a difference between the presence and the manifest presence.

It is the fine shade of difference between a man's presence and his face. The same word, and relative, very nearly the same meaning, but not quite, a man comes into the room and keeps his back turned to you, you can say he was in my presence for half an hour, or I was in his presence for half an hour. But you don't have much fellowship with a man who keeps his back turned to you, it is when he turns his face to you that the fellowship begins.

So it is different, there is a vast difference, all the difference perhaps in the world, between God being present and God's face being manifest to his people. Now Israel knew that God dwelt in the midst of them, that the high priest was able to go in and look on the face once a year with blood. Men come back out and pull a heavy veil, they say it took some men to push it aside, and that veil was there to shut out the unprepared from that holy face.

And then, when Jesus, our Lord, died, it says that when he gave up the ghost, the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. God himself rent with his finger from the top to the bottom, not from the bottom to the top, then it might have been done by a priest or an enemy, but from the top to the bottom down, and was forever removed. Poor old Israel, they say, sewed that veil up and used it again, sewed it back up again, to try to undo what God had done by the death of his son.

And so they have wandered all these centuries, shut out from the presence by sewing a veil up again, when God was telling all the world that my son, my eternal son, is the renting of his flesh, the tearing of the veil, and now there's nothing to keep you out of the Holy of Holies, where only a priest could go before. Now all of God's people can go. So the Bible teaches that God's presence is everywhere, but the Bible teaches that God's face, God's realized, manifest, and joyed presence may be the precious treasure of all of the people of God.

Now what is this, and who is this? Who is this? Am I preaching about God too much, friends, am I? I preach about God an awful lot. Am I preaching about God too much? Do you want to hear something else? If you want to hear something else, let me know, and I'll know what to do about it. But I won't change my preaching, because I must preach about God, I must.

I don't know how long I'll have to preach yet. The way I feel now, it'll be 20 minutes. But what the doctors say, it'll be a good many long years yet, so we'll take the doctors for it.

But anyhow, I can't preach anything else. I can't preach anything else. I must talk about God, God the Father, God the Eternal Son, and God the Blessed Holy Ghost.

And as God reveals himself, he reveals himself in nature as the Strong, the Mighty One. And he reveals himself in the scripture by various names, Elohim, and Jehovah, and Jehovah-Nissi, and Jehovah-Jireh, and Jehovah-Cain. He has these various names, setting forth various facets of his majesty and his glory.

I had read again in the Psalms this morning, before I came down, the beauty of the Lord our God. One man said, I'd like to enter into this one thing I've sought after, that I might enter into the presence of God to enjoy the beauty of the Lord. And I looked it up to see what it was, the beauty of the Lord.

Well, in the Hebrew, it's beauty, it's grace. One translation says, the grace of the Lord. Anything that is graceful is beautiful, and the person of God is beautiful.

And this beautiful, awesome presence was dwelling there, and the priest could push in past that veil, but nobody else could. He could only once a year, I repeat. But that presence has revealed in Christ.

Is there ever, is it ever possible to overdo the talking about the glory of Christ? My wife and I are reading every morning a letter, one of the letters of Samuel Rutherford. We've read, I guess, maybe 300 pages now, and are on our way through to the end, which will be another couple of hundred, of the letters of this holy man. His love for Jesus Christ is one of the most awful, wonderful, beautiful things in all Church history.

His wonderful love. He loved Christ to a point where he embarrassed her with the warmth of his devotion. He had no hesitation, this wonderful Scotchman.

He had no hesitation to plead that the Lord might allow him to kiss him. He wanted to love him so much. And as the woman who came into his presence and kissed his feet, anointed and kissed his feet, and he honored her because of it, so Rutherford honored the Lord and kissed the feet of the Lord the best he could in what he called his prison in Aberdeen, shut away from his pulpit.

My brethren, this Lord Jesus Christ, this wonderful, loving, self-sacrificing Lord Jesus, who is said to be a star and a sun and a light, who's called the Prince and the Lord and the Beloved, and as revealed by the Holy Spirit in human experience, unutterably holy and unspeakably adorable. I don't want to be hard on people. You'll say, now look who's talking.

I don't. I really don't want to be hard on people, but I'm afraid that our lukewarmness about the person of Christ is a great proof that we don't know very much about him in personal experience. I tell you, I tell you, we can't keep still about that which we love.

We can't keep still about it. That which we love supremely and first above all else, we're going to talk about a lot. I never get over it.

It's still a delight to me. It's still a pleasure that I cannot get over it. I don't try to get over it.

I just enjoy it, to see young parents with their baby, particularly their first baby. It's just something now to see a young father. We had a certain baby born into the midst of us here a little while back, and I told a number of people about it.

This young father was walking exactly four inches off the sidewalk when he talked to me out in front here about it, and she was, I think, maybe two weeks old, and he told me with enthusiasm that she could turn her eyes and look at him. He said, you know, she can turn her eyes and look at me. Astonishing, isn't it? There are just three billion people in the world, and all of them have turned their eyes and looked.

But that father, now that's love, my brethren, and I think we ought to take off our shoes in the presence of that burning bush, because it's one of the few beautiful things left in the world of selfish men and women, that we can love a baby like that, that we can love somebody like that and then not be able to keep still about it. When our seventh baby was born, a girl, little Becky, into our home, I had pictures of her taken in all stances and poses and directions, and I carried them around, and all anybody had to do would be to say, how's Becky? Out of thing. Instantly and at once.

And I did that so long innocently, not knowing I was making a nuisance of myself, until I was at a Bible conference one time where they had a little skit. I don't go much for them, but I was present and saw this thing. And a very, very large lady, very large, with a robe down to the feet, stood up to be a preacher.

She was a minister, and she was taking off on me, and somebody said something to me, and that sort of dampened me down. I didn't show them a picture quite so frequently after that, but I carried them around, and I believe in this. I believe this ability to love is one of the few desirable things left in the world.

And it's tragic how it has been dragged down. The world has made romantic love to be its mainspring, but the church has made the love for the Lord Jesus Christ to be its spring and fountain of joy. For me to live is Christ, said the man Paul.

For me to live is Christ. And isn't it true, then, that if it is the nature of love to be enthusiastic to the point of even being a bit of a nuisance about the thing it loves, or the one it loves, if we never mention the Lord in conversation with each other, is it not a proof that we are not much concerned about him? If we do not in our conversation ever have an impulsive, warm statement to make about our relation to the Lord, can we not properly conclude with charity that it is because we do not know very much about him? You couldn't talk to David long until the Lord was in his mouth. You couldn't read anything David wrote for one minute or one half minute or one quarter of a minute until you ran into the Lord is God.

And so it is with Paul. Paul was the man Jesus man, and I like it that when missionaries go to the foreign field they're known as Jesus people. They're known, the Jesus man was here, Mama, they'll say.

The Jesus man just passed the village. That's exactly what we ought to be known as. Now he waits for us to enter, not in theology only, but in experience.

This is what I'm trying to do, and it happens occasionally, once in a while it happens, occasionally, that somebody will pass through theology by means of theology and through experience. I got a very wonderful and lovely letter from a young man attending one of the institutions of learning here in the city, and he told me that he felt his experience was quite like the number of others about the city. He said, I went over to hear you and left determining never to come back again.

He said, I was irresistibly drawn, I had to, and then he went on in an exuberant, enthusiastic letter to tell me what the Lord had done for his soul. Now God was blessing his soul and leading him on and leading him in. I hope that there are many others like that, because what I'm pleading for is that we learn to know the Lord in living experience for ourselves, that we are not forced to go to theology to prove something but that we can say, I know, I know.

Seeing the man that was healed standing among them, they could say nothing. And there's always an answer to any theology that you present. Somebody has an answer, but there's never any answer to your glowing face.

There is never any argument that is valid against the glowing, throbbing heart of a man. I can prove to the young father that his baby is only one more baby among millions, but I can't stand up before the face of the glowing face of a happy young father. And the mother that looks down upon that baby is not going to help her in her name or the world to say, listen, you're looking down in joy on the face of your baby, but don't you know that twenty-six or three or five or whatever years ago, your mother looked down on you like that, and so back to Adam when she looked down on Cain and Abel and smiled and held him in her arms.

That doesn't mean anything to somebody who is enrapturously loving someone. So there's lots of theology that can be brought up to prove that a man like me, there's something wrong with me, I know it. But, my brother and sister, uh, before, before the glowing face of men and women who have been in the

presence, ah, my old friend Tom Hare, I often talk about him.

An old Irish plumber, not much education, but he's been educated where it counts. God educated him. And I was talking with old Tom once and I said, Tom, do you know that there are certain scientists who have a different view from you on this? And they don't accept what you have to say.

He bowed his old white head and said, but they haven't been where I've been. Ah, that's it, brother. That's it.

They haven't been where I've been. And the man who's been there, scientists can't argue him out of anything. They can get into rockets and go around the earth and kid from a hundred miles up this glen, very funny and very wonderful and, and, and very admirable.

But they don't change a man who's been in the presence. The man who's walked in there and looked down that awful fire, even for a brief second, is able to say, show me thy face, thy one transient gleam of loveliness divine, and I will never think or dream of any love save thine. Well, now, why do we stay outside so much? Why do most people not enjoy the presence of God? I think it is because there is a veil.

But you say, you just said that there was a veil was taken away. Yes, there were two veils. God took one of them away.

There was one veil that God had put up. That was to keep us out. He took that away and says, let's enter Bali now.

He's taken his veil away. But there is another veil, a veil that he did not make. It is the close-woven self-veil, the veil of carnal self.

Just as the sun shines in its brilliance all day, but a cloud can shut out a city from its rays, so the veil of self can shut out the face of God. And I believe that most Christians, I don't hesitate to say it at all, I believe that most Christians spend their lifetime outside the veil. Though the veil that shut us out has been rent away and is not there anymore, God has taken away that veil.

We have sewed a veil up with our own little busy carnal hands. We have put up a veil woven of self-love, self-pity, self-trust, self-admiration, self-defense, and these other self-sins. My friend, there is in every ransomed breast a flame.

And that flame came from that fire that was before the wings of the cherubim, our God is a consuming fire. And that little flame that burns in the breast of every redeemed man longs to be reunited with that eternal flame, the fire of his presence. But that little flame of ours is sheathed in clay and hidden behind the veil of self.

And the rank and file of Christians don't go along with this at all. They don't go along with it. They want me to come and tell them here and there all over.

Mexico City is my latest. They want me to go down there for a few days. People coming from all over Mexico, to Mexico City, they want to talk about the deeper life.

So I spend seven hours flying down there, and I spend three days there, and I spend seven hours flying back. And all I've done is tell them what I've been telling you these months. Is it unbelief or is it realism? It leads me to picture a lot of people traveling from all over Mexico to here, spending three or four days

together, and then going back just as they came with something else in their head but no change in their hearts.

The rank and file don't go on to enter. You've got to be holy to enter. I think if I might use an experience, an expression, it's like this.

I don't think that the members of the Commonwealth all around the world would very much enjoy spending their time in the presence of the Queen, do you? I think everybody would want to go in once and bow and go through all the protocol, and would be very happy and would tell it for the rest of their lives. I think they want to do that. But I don't think very many would want to live every day in the palace, because they'd have to be on their alert all the time.

They'd have to be dressed properly, they would have to watch their English, they would have to know all of the etiquette and procedures of courts, and it would just be a little too much for the average easygoing Canadian to want to do. Am I right or wrong? I think I'm right. Just as you don't want to always stay dressed up, you want to relax and fall apart and put on an old pair of slippers with a tear in the side and be comfortable, you don't want to stay always dressed up.

So I think we are not spiritual enough to want to live in His presence, because we've always got to be at our best. We've got to have the robe of righteousness. We cannot wear the old dungarees or the old sloppy shirt.

To enter that awesome presence and live means morally and spiritually we have to be right, we have to be clean. And that's why the average Christian is perfectly willing to wait for heaven, to have the experience of being always in the presence of God. I think if the average Christian would tell the truth in the deep of his own heart, he would have to admit that being in the presence of God all the time would be a bore.

Can't take it. We want to relax and go to the world and the flesh and go to Adam and back to the flesh parts of Egypt. Just a little too much to demand of us that we gird ourselves and go into the land and stay there.

And yet that's what the Holy Ghost is pleading that we do. Let us enter boldly to the throne of grace. Let us, he says, come boldly, having a high priest by a new and living way, having opened a way.

Let us draw nearer with a true heart and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. I say the rank and file, satisfied to live just a little veil removed from the presence of God. God has always had his Davids and his Pauls and his Stevens and his Rutherfords who would die to taste what one man called the piercing sweetness of the love of God.

So what can I do now? Well, briefly. First, hold faith and love. Hold faith and love.

These make a man dear to God. Come in full confidence. Turn your back on self.

As Fenelon says, cut and tear and burn and destroy and spare nothing of the old flesh and of the old veil. So take away that veil from before your face. God has taken away the one that he had up to shut you out.

Now you take the one that you have up to shut him out. Remove his experience. Tear and rend and cut and burn until there's nothing left of the old veil that shuts us.

We celebrate the Lord's Supper this morning. In one way, we're celebrating the rending of that veil, the tearing away of that veil that had shut men out from the Shekinah. How tragic, how deplorable that we allow the veil of self-love, self-pity, self-confidence to shut us out when God has never meant it should be so.

So let's pray that the blood of Jesus Christ might cleanse away that veil. We might mortify ourselves until as the sun shines this morning unhindered on Toronto, bathing it in its golden light, so the face of God should shine upon our hearts all the time. And we'd get ready for heaven, for that's the way it'll be there.

Lord, our Heavenly Father, we ask that thou wilt bless this meditation on this great book, Hebrews. How we thank thee that Hebrews was ever written. How we thank thee thou didst in thy kind love ever move a man by the Spirit, put down on parchment such golden words, such liberating sentences, such keys to the light in the Spirit.

How we thank thee. Lord, we pray that we might have this morning's faith to enter in by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he consecrated for us in his flesh, and we might not be guilty of allowing our own little veils to interpose. We would tear them away.

We would put under feet self-love, self-pity, self-aggrandizement, self-confidence, pride, and all these things to shut out thy presence. May this be our best communion service for a long time.

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