

# (Hebrews - Part 4): He by Himself Purged Our Sins

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer's sermon highlights the unparalleled significance of Christ's sacrifice in addressing the problem of sin and restoring human dignity.*

**Duration:** 33:19

**Scripture:** Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:1-3

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

The sermon transcript discusses the concept of evolution and the progression of life from a mud puppy to a bird to a monkey. It emphasizes that humans are constantly evolving and moving forward, not being the center of anything. The sermon also highlights the importance of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the one who purged our sins. It concludes by questioning the quality of men in government and comparing them to the leaders of the past.

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## Transcript

God, who at sunlit times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who, being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he hath by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Here is an example that any young men listening who are preachers or plan to be, here is something well worth noting, that in preaching through books of the Bible, it happens so often as to be more than a happenstance, that just when you should preach on a certain topic, it will be right before you without shifting or in any wise moving the scriptures about. I began four Sundays ago to preach on the book of Hebrews.

This is Communion Sunday, and on Communion Sunday we come to these words. When he hath by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. If I had been selecting a year ahead for the Communion sermon, I could not have in any wise bettered this choice.

We have here, in 19 English words, set forth the greatest event in human history. There can be no doubt about that, that no other act in the history of creation has ever had effects so beneficial to so many people for so long a time. As this act of our Lord, which is said so simply, almost quaintly here, he by himself

purged our sins.

I say that this is the greatest act ever done, the greatest event in human history, because it is so far-reaching, it reaches so many creatures, and it is so beneficial to those creatures, and the benefit it brings is so long-enduring. I don't think that I would ever have made a good politician for the reason that politicians deal with time. And if you were to create on the North American continent a utopia, a government equal to Plato's Republic, or more a utopia where there was perfection everywhere, even banished disease from the realm, and crime and illness and pain, and all these things, still it is appointed unto men once to die.

And the citizens of this utopia would have died one after the other, so that the greatest statesmen, and we honor the statesmen for what they do, but what they do is only temporary in that each one must die and leave the nation which they gave us. But our Lord Jesus Christ gave us that which is not only long-enduring, but eternally enduring, and I am very grateful to my Father in Heaven that he allowed me to have a part in that which you can't die and leave, and that which is not temporary but will last while the ages endure. Now, it is written that he, Jesus Christ our Lord, purged our sins.

And if that act of sin's purgation was the greatest event in human history, the problem of human sin is the most imperative problem in human life. It is not sickness, it is not war, but it has to do with the soul. Sickness and war and prosperity and all these things have to do only with time.

But the problem of sin has to do with time and with eternity. Sin has to do with this world and with the world to come. And the gravity of the sin question cannot be overstated.

Nobody has ever overstated it. Calvin never did, Whitefield never did, Paul never did. No one has ever overstated the seriousness of the sin question.

It gives precedence over all other questions that can face human life. What am I going to do about sin? I have been involved in it, I have played along with it, I have taken it into my bosom, it has stung me, it has gotten into my blood, it has affected my nerve ends, it has conditioned my mind. I have been a collaborator with it.

Not only I, but all of us must say this, so that this is a fatal disease, or as I said last week, that while sin is a disease, it is the only disease which we deliberately bring on ourselves and are responsible for. But it is more than a fatal disease, it is a capital crime. It is a deformity in that part of man's nature which is most like God, his spirit.

It is deformity of the spirit. It is treason against the great God Almighty who made the heaven and earth, and it is a crime against the moral order. If you want to know what a crime against the moral order means, let us put it this way.

That granted that God is moral, he is moral, and granted that nature that he made is a moral nature and that his kingdom is a moral kingdom, then every time I strike at that, I am striking against the government of the universe. I am striking against the moral government of the universe, and sin is all this. Now, what man's moral conscience requires is a fund of merit that could pay the debt of sin.

For when we strike against the kingdom of God and against the moral order of the universe, we put ourselves in debt to that moral order, and we become debtors to the great God who made the heaven and the earth. And sin is a debt that must be paid, and what the moral conscience of the man and of all men

requires and cries for is a fund of merit sufficient to pay that debt. We must have it, but that wouldn't be enough.

It wouldn't be enough if someone were, say, to pick a criminal who was a tramp off of the street, out of the slums, and he would get ambitious to stand before the Queen and would want to be admitted into her presence. Well, that might be arranged, it could be, because many have been welcomed there, but something would have to be done first before that criminal could be admitted into the presence of the Queen. You couldn't admit a criminal there, someone who by his act had struck at the safety of that Queen and of all that she symbolizes, so he would have to be pardoned.

Somebody would have to straighten that out, that would be the first thing. You couldn't have a rebel come into the presence of the Queen, it would have to be someone who was yielding allegiance. And then that wouldn't be enough either, because though the government of Canada would pardon this man so there was nothing on the books and strike from the record, all counts against him, and restore his citizenship so that he were a reborn Canadian once more, he still couldn't walk off a skid row unshaven and dirty into the presence of the Queen.

He would have to be washed, and the human heart knows this, or what this illustrates. The human heart knows that he cannot enter into the presence of God a rebel against that God. There must be something done that can make it possible for that rebellion to end and the rebellion itself to be forgiven, and the act of rebellion to be pardoned completely, and that rebel restored to full citizenship in the kingdom of God, to be made a child of the Father.

That is done in Christ. But that's not enough. Just as that man could not walk dirty and smelling and unshaven into the presence of the Queen, but would have to be groomed and cleansed and dressed, so we cannot enter the presence of God with the foul effect of sin upon us.

There must be something provided, some fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness, that we may not be only forgiven, but that we may be cleansed. And the blood of Jesus Christ takes care of that. The Eternal Son accomplished this.

This stupendous act, he accomplished this, and this is the message of Christianity, my brothers and sisters. This is what Christianity teaches. This is the witness the Church gives to the world.

If she were giving the witness she is supposed to give, this would be it. That man's moral conscience that cries for pardon and cleansing before the presence of the great God, is now founded by an event, by an act done by the Eternal Son, who is the image of the invisible God and the Firstborn of every creature, and upholds all things by the word of his power. He turned aside to do this awful act, this awesome, this amazing, stupendous act, and by himself he purged our sins.

He alone could do it, so he did it alone. And I want that word alone, that little word alone, the poet Keats says, alone, alone. The word is like a bell.

And I want you to hear that bell ring in your heart today, that he did it alone because he alone could do it. I noticed that in other things Jesus Christ willingly accepted help. I noticed that when he was to be born into the world, he accepted the help of the Virgin Mary who gave her pure body to God and brought him into the world, a man born a babe in Bethlehem's manger.

I noticed that he wept in her arms and nursed at her breast and was taken care of and fed and loved, and he accepted the help of his mother. And he accepted the help of his supposed father Joseph, the simple carpenter who worked from sunup to sundown in order that he might make money to buy food and clothing and shelter for his wife and the boy, the boy Jesus. So he willingly accepted help from Joseph, his supposed father.

The time came when he would be baptized, he accepted help from John the Baptist and presented himself and said, Be it so now, it behooves us to fulfill all righteousness. And John baptized him. When it came that he must have a garment, the women went together and made him a garment without seam, and he wore that garment, a gift of the women.

And when he was thirsty and sat on the well, he said to the woman, Give me to drink. He would willingly accept water from a woman, even a woman like that woman. And when he would ride into Jerusalem, he said, Go into the city over against you and you'll see a colt.

I'd bring it to me. The Lord had need of it. And he willingly would accept a colt's help that he might ride triumphantly into Jerusalem.

And when he was going up the hill carrying his cross, tradition says, staggered under it, Joseph of Arimathea picked up that cross. So our Lord was not averse to having help in what he did, as long as anybody could help him, or there was anything anybody could do. But he had come to the world to perform an act that nobody could help in.

So when they nailed him on that cross, God pulled the blinds down all around, and in darkness, with the sun hidden and no moon and star to shine, and with no one looking on, he by himself purged our sins. He could receive no help there. Nobody could help him there, because he alone could do it, and he did it alone.

Now, that act was done without assistance, and it's an act never to be repeated. You will notice that though I have my convictions about Roman Catholicism, you will notice that I do not say unkind things about the Romanists. I do not want to do it, I do not feel anybody should say unkind things about others, even though they are tragically and terribly wrong.

But I cannot refrain from pointing out the difference between the Protestant position and the Roman position here. It is a difference that between the two positions there is a great gulf fixed. Why does that separate Lazarus and the rich man? The Romanists say that the sacrifice of Christ is a perpetual sacrifice and must be repeated, and is repeated, every time the priest speaks the words that turns the bread into the body of Christ and the wine into the blood of Christ.

I have read some very clear teaching on this by the Roman friends, and they tell dramatically how Christ dies over and over and dies every Sunday and dies every time that mass is said and every time the sacrament is taken. I think this is one of the most tragic errors ever to creep into the faith of the Church. For what the scripture teaches is not a perpetual and oft-repeated sacrifice.

It teaches one finished sacrifice with perpetual efficacy. You see the difference, sir. If Christ had to die every Sunday, then his sacrifice would only be good for a week, or good until the next time a priest elevated the host and whatever they do.

But if he performed one act alone by himself in the darkness, and that act was good for all eternity, there is a difference between those two positions. Not a trifle, not something simply to divide unnecessarily, but it is basic and final. Does Christ die every Sunday, or did Christ die once for all that just for the unjust that he might bring us to God? The answer is, he died once for all that he might bring us to God.

And that sacrifice has perpetual efficacy. Though we are reminded of it and we celebrate it when we take communion, if we never took communion it would still be efficacious, because we do not slay our Lord again when we break the body here, and we do not shed his blood again when we drink the wine. That was once done and can never be repeated.

But its efficacy lasts while the ages endure. Now it says that he purged our sins and sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. I have told you about the great loss we have suffered, the lost concept of majesty.

You see, it has come about by a slow decline in our appreciation of ourselves. Remember the day when they believed the earth was the center of the universe and that all the heavenly bodies revolved around it? It was a simple error, and very easy to explain, because we go by our sight, and by our sight the earth is still and everything is traveling around it. They believed that until the time of Copernicus and Galileo.

They came along and said, You are all wrong about this. The earth isn't fixed at all, the earth is in motion around an orbit, and therefore people said, Well, then we are all wrong about anything being fixed. We don't believe in it anymore.

So they stopped believing that there was anything fixed in the heavens, or at least that the earth was fixed, and they said, Well, we are riding around on earth's diurnal course. Then they said, Well, if the earth isn't the center of the world, man is the center of God's creation. Surely not only the center, but the top of man's creation.

They said, Man is the top of the world. God made him and made him in his image, and that's it. Then along came Charles Darwin and said, You have that all wrong.

Man is not the center and head and top and final finished product of the creation, and furthermore it isn't a creation at all, but it just happened to be here. It is simply a purpose, a moving purpose, and man is simply parked way up from where he used to be to where he is going to be. He was once moved about in colloidal ooze, and oozed and crept and sloshed about in the deeps of the sea.

Then the sun struck him and he took on an eye and he became a mud puppy. Then the sun did some more, and after the passing of a few more million years he became a bird. Then after that he became a monkey, and he was on his way.

And here we are now, D.D. and L.L.D. and all the rest, but we are not where we are going and we are not where we have been. We are not the center of anything. We are simply taken off.

We are in motion. So at long about the turn of the century or a little before, the world suddenly drew its deep breath and said, Why, can it possibly be that we are struggling upward and that all this they used to call sin is not sin at all? It is something else. It is simply the residual twitchings of the old mud puppy.

It is the residual remnants of that which used to be in the man, and little by little we are purging him out. Look at that baboon, they said in effect. And then look at that college professor, quite an amazing

difference.

Look at him sit there with his dreamy look on his face while he listens to the Beethoven symphony. Do you see how far he has come? Yes, he has come a long way. See him two nights later when his wife calls him out and he turns on her and shoots her or stabs her or walks out on her.

He is a human being too, and his degree hasn't changed him in any degree. He will allow that. Then they said, Well, somewhere there is something fixed.

If it isn't the earth, it is the sun. Einstein came along and said, You have got that all wrong. Nothing is fixed anywhere, not even the sun.

For the sun is simply another star, and around it is gathered the solar system. But that isn't fixed either, because it is moving around another star further out, and then that whole thing is moving around another big one still further out. And then your head begins to ache, and you say, Please quit, let me alone, I can't take this.

So these people who have taught us these things, they have taken away all idea that there is any majesty about man. You can't believe this and then look at a man with any respect. You look at a man, no matter who the man might be.

I saw the pictures of your great Canadian founders and forebears here, very dignified old gentlemen they are. But if you couldn't look on them with respect, you'd see under their sight burns the marks of the mudpuppet gills. And you would realize they weren't dignified men made in the image of God at all, but that they'd craft up that far out of the gutter.

This is what they wanted to believe, and of course they've taken away all sense of majesty. You can't possibly respect that which crawled up from below. I respect mankind, I respect not only the dignified Canadian founders, but I respect the men down here on Skid Row.

And I respect the woman who isn't what she ought to be. And I respect the poor fellow whose mind has slipped and who goes about acting queer to the amusement of those whose minds haven't yet slipped. I respect everything human because it was once made in the image of God.

And I believe with all of my heart that man is the apex of the creation, the top of God's universe. And God made him for a little while lower than the angels, only for a little lower than the angels, that he by the grace of God might rise above the angels. There is a majesty there.

And so the concept of dignity has been degraded in the world. I've lived a few years and I have seen a change come over the civilized world, things they didn't used to talk about they talk about freely now. There aren't any secrets left, there isn't anything sacred left.

They even photograph childbirth and put it in Life magazine. There isn't anything that's left in the world that's sacred anymore. Art, sometime if you want a good laugh, go to an art institute and look at modern art.

Remember that famous thing I told you about, that cubistic piece called Nude Descending a Stair? There is no stair and no nude and no descent. One man said he thought it should have been called Cyclone in a Shingle Factory. It would have meant the same thing and been just as intelligible.

Down in one of the cities in the United States two years ago, a man by the name of Nicholson had a picture displayed on exhibit, and the old boys pulling on their little Van Dykes were going about looking all these pictures over, and they picked on this one. They said, This one by Nicholson, this will give first prize. But he in the meantime had to go somewhere else and couldn't stay around for the honor, so they wired him.

Your picture has been chosen for first honors. Please wire instructions. Which side's up? That happened.

It's not a story, that happened. Art, literature, and music. Maybe I'm wrong about this, I don't know.

It's easy to see the grass on your own lawn doesn't look as green as the grass a little further away across the street. I wonder if we have the quality of men we used to have in government. I doubt it.

A friend of mine in Chicago, incidentally, his brother is a Christian, you probably know him, Francis Chase. When Kennedy and Nixon were running against each other for temporary tenancy in that White House, Mr. Chase said, he was an artist before, and he looked at their two faces, and he said, Oh, brother, compare them with Washington and Jefferson, Webster. It doesn't look to me as if the higher type of men ran for office now.

Men you can't very well respect. I listen a lot to interviews where politicians are being interviewed. I've done that for years.

That's my humorous, relaxing work. It amuses me to say, Now, Senator, tell us, what do you think about this question? Oh, no, gentlemen, I stand on my record about that. I said in 1946, you'll remember that.

And he talks a while, and when he's finished, he said, Now, what did he say? He hadn't said a thing. We're putting men in office now who are adept at saying nothing and taking a long time to say it. But it's because a sense of majesty has been lost to it.

A sense of dignity is gone. We don't care whether it's true or not, if it's funny. We don't care whether it's truth or not, if it's said in an acute way.

Brethren, I want to warn you, the majesty is still in the heavens. I want to warn you, the majesty still sits on his throne, the awful majesty, before whom angels and archangels and seraphim and cherubim continue to cry, Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of Sabbath. And when this one who was God, by himself alone purged our sins, he went right back and sat down where he had been through the long, long ages, at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens.

And he sat down on that right hand, and the Eternal Son returned a man, don't forget it. A gentleman has been writing to me from some town. He is a brother of Dr. Walter Wilson, the brother of the famous preacher.

He is lamenting to me that nobody talks about a man being in the glory at all. He said he interviewed a number of ministers, outstanding, leading men, and asked him this question, Do you believe that Jesus Christ at God's right hand is a man or something else? And only a very few of them believed that Jesus Christ was a man. They believed he was a man when he was on earth, but they think he is the Spirit now.

He said, Spirit hath not flesh and blood, as you see me have, didn't he? And he said that after his resurrection, the man is at the right hand of God. He is a man, he is God, but he is a man. Just as he was

man and God down here, he is God and man up there.

And the years of his earth walk and the deadly pain of his dying and the Godlike act of purgation finished, he went to the right hand of God. And God gave him approval, approved his person and approved the perfection of his atoning work. From his high honored position there he shed down the Holy Ghost and works in through his people.

He died alone. Would Jesus have the sinner die? Why hangs he then on yonder tree? What means that strange expiring cry, sinner, he died for you and me? Forgive him, Father, oh, forgive. He knows not that by his by me he lives.

Father, we pray thy blessing upon the word given. We pray that thou wilt help us, that our faith might mount up like an eagle, stretch its broad wings and soar so high that nothing can pull it down. As the eagle can look upon the sun, we pray that we may look upon thy holy sun at the right hand of the majesty, and that we may be grateful to the point of tears and tenderness that he who was God and very God of very God gave himself and hung on yonder tree.

Bless us as we receive of the Lord's Supper. In Christ's name, Amen.

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