

(Hebrews - Part 41): Cure for Spiritual Weariness

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the importance of considering Jesus and meditating on His life to overcome spiritual weariness and live courageously in a hostile world.

Duration: 27:03

Scripture: Hebrews 12:3

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not underestimating the power of small words. The goal is to align our lives with the example set by Jesus, who was a witness and a light to the world. The preacher highlights the mystery of the world's hostility towards Jesus, despite his innocence. He encourages Christians to understand that they belong to a different realm and have a different relationship with the world. The sermon concludes with the reminder to meditate on the life of Jesus and recognize that Christians are his younger brothers.

Transcript

And in the third verse, third and fourth, he says, For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Because, remember, ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Now, this man, as I've said over and over, is writing his epistle to young converts, who are, some of them, very unsure of themselves and unsure of the faith which they've tentatively entered anyway.

And they're asking, in effect, just what is this Christian life, this saved life? How am I to learn how to live it? And who is to be my example and my model? And how can I keep from wearing out in the thing and losing heart, ceasing to have any interest in it? Well, the Holy Ghost says, Consider Jesus. Think constantly of Jesus. We get life from Jesus dying, but we get courage to live by his living.

I mean, we get life from his dying and resurrection, and we get courage to live by his having lived. Because it is the life he lived on earth that gives us courage here, and it is not to the life he is now living in heaven at this particular point in the epistle, but it is to the life he lived when he was on earth that we are appointed. And we are told that by knowing how he lived, we can get the courage to live, and we can get the courage to persevere and keep on living.

Wear the devil out and live on past all the obstacles, and get over them and get around them and continue to live. And even if we get weary, we can lose the weariness or shed it off or endure it by knowing that somebody else was weary as he sat off so thus on the well. And so we consider him, thinking constantly of Jesus.

Now, to know this, to know how he lived, we must, of course, remember how he lived. We must read the scriptures and learn and then think upon it. I believe that we ought to meditate three times more than we read.

I believe I can safely say that I think ten times more than I read. I remember old Dr. Samuel Johnson was invited by the King to come over and have an evening with him. He was a well-known literary lion in those days.

And so he came over to the palace or to the mansion where the King lived, and they sat in front of the fireplace and talked. And the King said, I suppose, Doctor, that you have read a great deal. Yes, Your Majesty, but I have thought more.

And I believe this. I believe that we ought to do a lot of meditating. I believe that if you were to meditate more, you'd need to read less.

This idea of speed reading is not in the realm of the pulpit to deal with it, but I'd like to take a crack at it sometime. Because what's the difference how many words went through your head if they didn't leave any deposit there? What's the difference how many books you read in the course of a week or a month if there was no result? I believe that a little reading and a lot of reverent meditation will teach you more than you'll ever learn from many books. I just picked up the Apocrypha this morning and was looking at it, wondering whether I might take it along with me on the trip to New York.

And I noticed this one sentence standing out. It said, A man's own soul will sometimes give him more information than five watchmen on a watchtower. I didn't read on, I don't know what he had in mind.

But I like that. That if you'll stop and meditate and take the word of God and dream over it and let it get hold of you, it'll teach you more than you can learn from five watchmen on a watchtower. So he said, meditate and consider what happened to Jesus.

And remember that Christians are Christ's younger brothers. He calls us brothers, and he's not ashamed to call us brothers, he says. And as he was sent into the world, so are we sent into the world.

Except, of course, there was one wonderful, lonely, isolated, glorious, unapproachable field where we can't enter. When he went out to give himself the just for the unjust, the lamb for sinners, and in the darkness of the cross did that mysterious something, whatever he did there, that made it possible for God to justify sinners and forgive rebels and restore to his heart alienated men and women, in that act of redemption we share not at all, and we can never share. Our high priest did that alone.

But all the incidental living that Christ did on earth, we share. As his younger brethren, we go the way he went. And he says that as he is in the world, so was in the world, so are we.

He was a witness to things above, and so are we witnesses to things above. There are two little words, the tiniest little words, two tiny little words. No Christian people, especially scholarly Christian people, tend to multiply language, multiply words.

But often more power lies in a little word than in a big one. For instance, the word as, A-S, and the word so, S-O, have tremendous power in them. Notice this.

As thou hast sent me, so have I sent them. As and so. And when so becomes equal to as, as thou hast sent me, now that's the said of Jesus.

Now, so is said of us. So have I sent you. And when the so becomes equal to the as, then we are fulfilling the will of God.

And then again, as my Father has sent me, so have I sent you, saying the same thing. And then, as he is in this world, so are we. As and so.

As he is, so are we. When the so of our living becomes equal to the as of his living, then we are where we ought to be. So, let's remember that power lies in little words and not despised them.

And what we want to set out to do by the grace of God is to bring the so of our living up to the as of his living. In other words, equate the two and bring them together so that we're living as he lived. He was a witness on earth, he was a light to men, and we are to be.

He was a moral judgment on the world, and so is every Christian a moral judgment. And then, the world's hostility toward Christ. I think it is one of the great mysteries of human life, the world's hostility to the Savior.

He was rejected by his own nation, and he was condemned by organized religion, and he was executed by organized government. And they did all this without a cause. He said, they hated me without a cause.

You know, there is such a thing as thinking up excuses for what you do. They call that rationalizing. And you have an ulterior motive.

You have a reason for doing something, but you don't like to admit the reason. So, you think up a reason which becomes an excuse. And you even think it up for yourself.

You do what you do for a hidden reason, and then you give a big, bold, plainly visible reason as the reason which is not the reason at all. And so, anything they did against our Lord Jesus Christ, it was all rationalizing from their hatred they felt for him. They said he wants to be king.

Who did they care about that? If they could have had him become king and rise and put down Caesar, they would have shouted and danced in the streets. But they used that as an excuse. And so did almost all of the other excuses that they had, rationalizing their hatred.

And Christ gave this world up as lost. That is, he said, I pray not for the world, but I pray for them which thou hast given me out of the world. Now, he did not give up his chosen individuals out of the world everywhere as lost.

But he gave the world up as lost. I pray not for the world. That's bothered some people, but you'll find it there in the text.

The prayer of Jesus now in heaven is not for the world. The prayer of Jesus is for his own people. Those whom thou hast given me out of the world, thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have believed that thou hast sent me, and I have given them eternal life.

These are those who are being prayed for by our Lord, effectively and efficaciously prayed for by our High Priest and Mediator at the right hand of the Father. But the great world out there, he doesn't expect them to be anything. He says the world will get worse and worse, and evil men and seducers will even enter the church.

And that when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? He expects the great world to rot and decay. It is rotting, it is decaying. And he expected it to.

But he always has a people whom he has called out. Now, the world, I say, is hostile, and you are living in a hostile world. You must keep that in mind.

You are not playing on the field where everybody is friends with everybody else. You are fighting on a battleground where everybody on one side is enemy to everybody on the other side. And there are two spirits in opposition to each other.

Christ walked among men inwardly free, and they said he broke the law. He was the only free man in Israel, completely and perfectly free. And a Christian is, among other things, inwardly perfectly free.

That's why a Christian has a good conscience, but he doesn't have a troubled conscience, and he doesn't have a sick conscience. One of the problems of a pastor is to handle people with morbid consciences. They are not free inside, and so their consciences bother them because they are breaking their own rules.

And the Jews, of course, were that kind of people. That is, the Pharisees and the people in authority, they were that kind of people. And our Lord walked in the earth inwardly free, a perfectly free man.

He wasn't going to sin, and God knew he wasn't going to sin, and he knew God knew it, and so whatever he did he didn't apologize for and worry over. He just did it simply as a rose blooms quietly without any apology. It just blooms.

So he just lived his inward life, and the inward became the outward, and the internal became the external, and what he was became what he did, and he lived like that, perfectly relaxed, and not always digging at himself and worrying about himself. And of course they said, well, he's a lawbreaker. He and his disciples were going through the fields, and they had been on a long missionary journey, and the disciples were hungry.

And they did what I've done as a boy a hundred times. Now they reached down and pulled the head off of the wheat and rolled it in their hands and threshed it that way, and then ate it. And the Pharisees said, well, you're threshing on Sunday.

Can you imagine a thing like that on a Sabbath day? Can you imagine anything as little as that? That's because they were sick inside. And Jesus and his disciples, he was free inside, and he was trying to make them free inside, and he knew that the Lord God in heaven wasn't so hard to please and so farsighted that he would care if a hungry disciple reached down and pulled off a head of wheat, rolled it and got himself a mouthful of wheat to munch on as he went, waiting for a better dinner. That's why the free Christians have always been in trouble, and have usually been called something else but free.

I remember my friend Tom Hare, of whom I speak quite a little. It's written in the little booklet there. You may have read it.

But I remember that Tom one time was having an all-nighter prayer. He had frequent all-nighter prayers, two and three a week. But he had a group with him that night, and they were praying, and had meant to make all night of it.

And along about one o'clock or so, Tom, being an Irishman, suddenly wanted what he called a cup of tea. So Tom just got up and went out and made himself a cup of tea. And the rest of them felt he was a sinner.

They felt that was just terrible, that this man, why he was supposed to be fasting and he drank a cup of tea. The fact is, he and God were on such good terms that I think God made the tea for him. Because he and God were in perfectly good terms, and he was perfectly free inside, and he didn't worry.

Now, if you're in bondage to something, if you disobey that thing, then you're in trouble with your conscience. But if you're free from everything, and only in bondage to the love of God, the happy, joyful bondage, which you wouldn't give up for the world, then whatever you do is all right, because you do it in love. And Christ lived like that.

And of course, that was exactly contrary to the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world had no freedom in it. It had only bondage.

Bondage to self, bondage to sin, bondage to the devil, bondage to arbitrary moral rules, and bondage to religion, which God had never given them. And the result was, of course, they said, well, he's a lawbreaker, and he's leading the people astray. And they brought the judgment on him.

And he talked familiarly of God. He talked about God to somebody that he knew. He said, my father always hears me.

The Son of Man is in the bosom of the Father. He talked about the Father with the familiarity of a little boy talking about his father here on the earth. I don't care how great the man is.

His own son. I never can see it. His own son.

He's just my dad. And they get terribly, wonderfully familiar with him in their conversation and in their talk. Now, one of my boys, whom I know loves me very much and respects me too, wrote and said to my new wife, he said, my wife Connie says that I am just like my dad.

Pontifical and dictatorial. But he said, I am too humble to claim any such honor. Well, now, of course, that was a rib at me.

But he could say that to me where you probably wouldn't say it. You might think it, but you wouldn't say it because you're not my son. Now, the Father and the Son are in such perfect accord and so intimately related with a relaxed intimacy that the Lord Jesus Christ was perfectly free to do whatever came out of his heart to do because he knew he loved God and was living within the mighty, mighty boundless framework of the revealed will of God.

But they couldn't see that. They had their own little rules. They said that they added to the Ten Commandments 365 other commandments.

That would be one for every day. And then they put the pressure on for those other commandments just as great as for the ten that the Lord had given. And of course, when the Lord walked in that kind of a world surrounded by that kind of Christians, he was a stranger to them.

And they to him. Though he was one of them, born of one of them, a Virgin Mary, a Jewess herself, still their religion separated them from him because it was not arbitrarily created religious rules that the Lord lived by, but he lived naturally, I repeat, out of his heart of love for his Heavenly Father and for the world. And of course, they hated him for that.

And I'll say to you, the more carnal you are, the less trouble you will have with the world. And the more spiritual you become, the more the world will persecute you for what you are. Now Christ, I say, belonged to another world and so does the Christian.

We are brought out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son and his love. And these two worlds never can be reconciled. Hear me now.

Now this is one of the great basic rules which you must know as a Christian, which if you fail to know, will only have a socio-religious church, a religious that is partly social and partly religious and couldn't exist apart from its social activities. But if you see that the Christian belongs to another realm altogether, that he has been translated out of the kingdom of darkness and now exists in the kingdom of light, and that he is here to mingle with and fellowship with others who have had the same experience, you will then see that there is a different relationship held between the average religious church man and the world and that held by the Christian, the true Christian and the world. These are the contrasts.

The spiritual man has treasures that the world discounts. He has a mystic wisdom of the Holy Spirit. The world has no organ to receive this wisdom.

There is no organ to receive it. He said the world cannot receive him because it seeth not, neither knoweth not. Just as a deaf man has no organ to receive music, just as a blind man has no organ to receive light, so a worldly dead man has no organ to receive the treasure of mystic knowledge by the Holy Ghost.

And of course, if the Christian says he has and he is sure of himself, the world is angry with him. Even the religious world is angry with him. They say he is a bigot and thinks too much of himself.

And the Christian man has a spirit, invisible and from God, whom the world cannot receive. The Christian has heard a voice and seen a light and been enabled to repent and believe on Jesus Christ. And the world, as the word is religious, is just religious.

Oh, I am so deeply concerned that this church should be a Christian church in every sense of the word. I am so deeply concerned that we should be a Christian church, that we should rise and shake off that graveclothes of dead denominational Christianity that lives on a dead tradition and runs like a truck with the engine off and the momentums carrying it, and that we should enter into the Christian life deeply and gravely and wonderfully and beautifully, and that we should be a people indwelt by the Holy Spirit and recognize ourselves as a minority group living in a world that hated our Lord and hates us for our Lord's sake if we act like our Lord, adopts us and accepts us and uses us if we don't, but rejects us and despises us if we do. And that's how you keep from being weary in the Christian life.

You remember that you're out here, that's what you're here for. You're here to have trouble. You're here to have the friction that the world gives you.

You're out here as your Lord was. As he was, so are you. He was rejected, you will be.

He was hated, you will be. They didn't understand him, they won't understand you, but always he had some that did. And always you'll have some that do.

I got a beautiful letter this week. I thought I'd have brought it to the pulpit with me, but I didn't. It's from Hong Kong, and it's signed by five Chinese students.

They have their name printed so I can read the English. And then they have their name signed. And it's beautiful.

Just beautiful to me. Beautiful. They're studying English using my editorials as their textbook.

That's one of the things they tell me. But they tell me also about their Lord and their relation to the Lord, and how they're learning and how they're growing. Inviting me to Hong Kong to preach to them.

Well, I won't go to Hong Kong to preach to them, but I feel I'm one with them, and we're one together. And color doesn't make any difference, and race doesn't make any difference, and backgrounds make no difference at all. We are a people called to follow our Lord, and there's a little poetry in it and quite a little music, but it's a long way from being made up of poetry and music.

There's heartaches and hardships and bloody feet and calloused hands and bullets flying and sharp tongues wagging. Opposition. All of this.

It's there in Hong Kong, God knows. And it's worse behind that iron curtain or bamboo curtain. And it'll be here in Toronto if we realize who we are and what we're here to do.

Now, I want to read a passage of scripture to close. "Let this mind be in you," which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." But someone says, "You're gloomy. This is gloomy preaching.

This is terrible. We're living in a time when we've got to be jerked up. We've got to be cheered up.' Well, let me read the rest of it.

"For this reason, God also therefore has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. You see, he had to brace himself and throw off the weariness of living in a world that hated him. He had to continue to live it until he went down as far as he could go, and when he was down as far as he could get, then God reversed enough that he came as far as he could get, even to the right hand of God with every knee bowing and every tongue confessing in heaven, earth, and hell that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Now as he was, so are we. We are also called to follow him in earth's hardships, in life's labors, in its struggles and disappointments and griefs and rejections. And when he finds we've had enough of it, he will bring us up into a place of glorious power and light and usefulness, even in this world, and of course, ultimate and final glory in the world to come.

So may God help us now to work and not be weary, because there is full reward coming for all of the Lord's overcoming saints. Amen.

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