

(Hebrews - Part 45): Christian Manifesto - Part 1

by A.W. Tozer

The Christian manifesto is a call to recognize the reality of the spiritual Zion and to live out the purpose and identity of the Church.

Duration: 30:12

Scripture: John 1:29

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the passing of Dr. Whitmer, a brilliant educator who succumbed to an uncontrollable illness. The speaker laments the state of the Church, describing it as dead and lacking in understanding of its true riches. He emphasizes the importance of the Word of God, which should be accompanied by Christian song and prayer. The speaker encourages the congregation to fully embrace the divine things of God and to share them with others, in order for the Church to grow and for more people to be included in the fellowship.

Transcript

Now, this talk, and at least one more Sunday morning, the possibility that it might become another extra one, making three or so, I am to speak on and to set forth our Christian manifesto. Now, this is to be a general setting forth of divine truth, a manifesto of pastor and people, a defense of our position, and a confession of our faith by which we live. That doesn't mean that this is going to be a full-blown course in theology.

It certainly is not that. But I want to tell you that we are a church and that we have a message and that we know what the message is, and we know where we are met, and that we are not in the groove of tradition except where we want to be and intelligently and openly desire to be, and that we are not putting our ears to the ground to find out what other religious bodies are doing in order that we might imitate them, but that we get our instructions from the throne of God through the scriptures, and that there is a valid reason for our coming together like this. It's not social, though it has a social implication.

It is different, it is spiritual. So I want first to talk to you about the things that we are not come to. It says we are not come, and there is the negative.

Then it says, but ye are come to, and there is the positive. I want to begin this little talk by a defense of the negative. We have been very much, at the hotel where I stayed in White Plains, and I noticed a sign that said, Dale Carnegie meeting here.

Dale has been gone for some time from this earthly scene, but he still has his followers. Dale accents the positive and sweeps the negative under the rug. But our Lord never did it, the Bible doesn't do it, no great Christian leaders ever did it, and I do not believe that we dare do it.

So I will briefly make a defense of the negative in our manifesto, because a part of our teaching has been negative, it's been against, and it is going to be, and it's bound to be. So we don't deny this, nor apologize for it. If a man dedicated himself to the positive and said, I will never discuss the negative because that puts doubts in people's minds and the world is full of trouble, so I'll just talk about the positive.

The man who would attempt to do that should go off immediately and have his head examined, because I have in my hand here a picture or a cameo of a very beautiful girl, the Queen. On the other side there is a picture of the Canadian Elk, I assume it is, just the outline. Now that says Canada, 25 cents.

Now that's good for 25 cents anywhere within the Dominion. Now suppose that I say, well, the side with the Queen on is the positive, and the side with the Elk on is the negative. The negative isn't as interesting as the positive, it's an elk head, and an elk head couldn't possibly be conceived to be as interesting, attractive and beautiful as the Queen's head.

So I have decided that I will split this quarter right through, I will divide it right thin-wise down, and I will never bother you with any elk heads. It will all be the Queen. It will all be the positive side, nothing of the negative side.

Now, where would you put me? You'd send a man up to Five Old Orchards and say he's a nice old fellow, but he slipped his trolley. Would you do something for him? Well, brothers, you can no more hope to preach and teach and be honest about it and helpful about it by giving only one side of the coin, than you can hope to pass this Canadian quarter if you split it down the middle. You can't.

It takes two sides. It takes the positive side and the negative side. It is so everywhere, and it must be so.

God made it like that. There is polarity in the universe, and we've got to recognize it. In order that right is to grow, wrong has to be either exterminated or at least minimized.

I've used the words exterminate or minimize. Personally, I like to exterminate. If I hadn't been a preacher, I think I'd have been an exterminator, because I like to see things that oughtn't to be around and are not around any more.

I like that. If a skunk comes in the backyard, I don't like to go out and discuss philosophy with him. I like to give him what they call in lesser cultured circles, a bum's rash.

Get rid of him and get him out of there. And so it is with things that are wrong. But I have learned too much about people to believe that you can do much exterminating in this world in which we live.

The best we can hope for is to reduce evil to as complete a minimum as possible within the Church and as far as we can within our neighborhood and our community. But there must be a getting rid of the negative, things that don't belong there, in order that we might put the things there that do belong. Before we plant,

we must plow.

And before we build, we must excavate. Before Moses could lead the children of Israel in, he had to break the power of Pharaoh. The first had to come before the other could come.

And Israel had to drive out the Jebusites and the Hivites and the rest of the Iths in order that Israel might take over where they had been. And when Christ came, he fought the noxious Pharisees. And a good deal of Christ's preaching was telling off those Pharisees, that is, getting rid of that which shouldn't be there in order that he might plant that which should be there.

If you have a head full of error, it is simply a tight dream to imagine that you can take truth into that head. You must get that head emptied of error in order that truth might come in. And it's the same with the heart.

When Luther came, he had to engage the power of Rome, and he dared to stand against it and be against something in order that he might be for something. When Finney came to the States, I don't agree with all of his theology, but I do admit that he was one of the world's greatest evangelists. Seventy percent of his converts remained as compared with 30 percent of Moody's and a smaller percent of every other evangelist.

And in order to do the work of God as he understood it, he had to meet and defeat dead orthodoxy of his day in order that he might get the word free to save men. Now, we can't be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease. We have to face up to what is going on and meet it.

Put on a benignant smile and hope for the best, but we've got to meet this situation. And where we see there is wrong, we've got to face that out and show that wrong and dismiss it and then plant truth in its place. And if you doubt this, read 1 John, where John had to do it.

Read Colossians, where Paul had to do it. Read Galatians, where Paul had to do it. Read Matthew 23, where our Lord had to do it.

Read the book of Jeremiah, where Jeremiah had to do it. Walk up the hill with Elijah, when he had to do it. So we are against some things.

And if you hear anybody say, Mr. Tozer preaches a good deal that is negative, don't you come to my defense at all, smile brightly and say, Yes, sir, that's because he's a preacher of truth. And truth has two sides to it, and you cannot plant the true until you have gotten rid of the false, and you cannot or dare not build until you have cleaned the sand away and got down to the rock. Now, I'd like to mention a few things that we're against, in order that I might tell you the things that we're for.

We believe the Church on earth is a divine body, and we believe that as such we are called together, but we believe also that we are called to separation. We are called to separate from the world's follies and the world's pleasures and the world's ways and the world's values and the world's ambitions and the world's greed and the world's vices and the world's habits. There is a sharp moral antithesis which exists between the Church and the world, and this can never be reconciled.

It affects every Christian so that the Christian sins when he fraternizes with the world. He grieves the Holy Spirit by worldly living and stumps his spiritual growth by imitating the world. Little children, said the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves from idols.

So we are against the idols of the Church which have been dragged in. We are against the unhappy and unholy importation into Christian circles and worship at any cost. We are against the strange fires which are being offered on the altars of the Lord.

We are against the strange sacrifices which they are offering. We are against the strange gods in their sanctuaries. And we are specifically and especially against the baptized foolery and sanctified frivolity that has taken over fundamentalism.

We believe we have something better, and so you may expect that there may be from time to time a pointing out of that stump that needs to be taken out of there, that big rock that needs to be hauled away. When I was a boy, my father and I used to plow the field. Often I did alone.

It stunted my growth. I shouldn't have had to work as hard as I did up until I was 15 years of age. But two things were in the way.

One would be the old stump that had been there since my grandfather's time, and the other would be the huge rocks, the boulders. We would have to take them out of there, plow around them at first, and then get a stone sledge and haul them out of there. Maybe if this stump we couldn't get it out by just pulling it out, we'd have to dynamite the thing.

But the point was, if you wanted a smooth field free of stumps and free of rocks, you'll have to dynamite occasionally. So if by any chance we might dynamite a little, don't anybody run for cover and say, What's happened? Nothing has happened, we're cleaning up the field so we'll have a good, smooth field. We're getting rid of the rocks, we're getting rid of the old stumps, we're getting rid of things that shouldn't be here in order that we may have a rich, green harvest of things that should be here.

Now, what are we for? Well, he says, You are come unto, and then he names the things to which the Christians are called. He says, You are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the City of the Living God, and unto the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the Spirit of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel. Now, there they are listed for us, the things that we are for.

He says, You are not called unto these other things, but ye are called unto these. Ye are not called, there's the negative, but ye are called, and there's the positive. Ye are called unto these glorious things.

You see, they are contrasted with the things that Israel came unto. Israel's things were earthly and visible, and ours are spiritual and invisible, but ours are as real as theirs. The Jerusalem, the golden, the Zion of David's day and the Zion of the days of the prophets and of our Lord's day, Jerusalem was a physical city.

It could be approached. It was God's delightful, sunny fort, Mount Zion, where the temple stood and where the sound of the songs went up day and night, and where the sacrifices never ceased and where the singing people came to worship God, and where the lambs were brought, pointing forward to the Lamb of God that should take away the sins of the world. And this Mount Zion was a real mountain, a real Zion.

Now, that is gone, but God said, Here, that was only a shadow anyway, I give you the reality. I give you the real city of God. I give you that which is not visible, but which is real.

Let's be very careful here that we don't think that which is not visible is imaginary. That which is not heard is imaginary. My brother, there are things just as real that you can't get hold of.

For instance, your love for your mother. I think everybody is safe there. We all loved our mother, love our mother.

Your love for your mother, all right. That's a real thing with you, a real thing. Love, you can't escape it, it is a reality, it's an entity, it has existence, and yet it isn't something you can lay your hand on.

My wife brought up a picture from the front page of a newspaper from a little town where our Becky is teaching, and here on the front page was Becky's picture. Now, there are others there, but her picture was there. I keep it there on my dresser where I can look at it.

Now, love, you feel that, you feel that, you feel love, but yet love is an intangible, it isn't something you can get your hands onto and put in a box or fold up and put in your pocket. It is something that exists and has existence and reality. It's not imaginary, it's real.

So it is with this city of God under which we are called. It has reality, and yet it is not visible. We cannot lay our hand on it, but it's there.

And so these other glorious things of which we speak, the city of heavenly Jerusalem to an innumerable company of angels. We Protestants have exterminated the angels from our thinking, whereas the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, talk about the angels a lot. And I think that we ought not to throw out the baby along with the bathwater, and because the Pope and his little boys talk about angels, we refuse even to consider them there.

Even though the Pope does like them, that doesn't mean that I don't. There is an innumerable company of angels, and then there is the General Assembly and the Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven. And there is God himself, the Judge of all.

There is Jesus, the Mediator of the New Testament. You say you are talking about heaven. I haven't mentioned heaven this morning yet.

I'm not talking about heaven at all. Some people say, Well, we have these things, but we'll do the best we can, and finally we'll get to them. I tell you, my brother, that you don't have to do the best you can and wait to die in order to get to these.

It says, We are come unto them. The Church of Jesus Christ has these things accessible to us. We can meet God now.

We can see and know and touch our Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts now. We can commune with the innumerable company in the Church of the Firstborn now. We can dwell and live in the presence of unseen but real angels now.

And we can know the presence of Christ and the blood that cleanses. We can have that and know that and share that and taste that and experience that now, here and now. Popular theology has erred right here.

They have removed this in time and space, and they have told us that this is some other place, some other time. In the meantime, we're caught in a bracket of vacuity, and all we have to do is just wait it out. And

then someday the Lord will come and someday we'll die, and then we'll enter all of this.

I tell you, this is not scriptural at all, for the Bible says, We are now come unto this, and we can now feel the powers of the world to come, and we can now taste with the inner tongue of our spirit and hear with the ears of our heart the sounds and the taste and smell with the olfactory nerves of our heart. We can taste and touch and see and hear and smell and feel and enjoy the divine things of God. That's what a church is, brethren.

It is a company of convinced people and committed people met around the Lord Jesus Christ to share and enjoy these wonderful things. And then, of course, though I'm not particularly talking about that this morning, go out all throughout the world and tell others in order that the church may grow, and others may be numbered with it. So these things we now have, they are present to us in time, and these things are accessible to us now.

We are now come, we are now come close to, says one translation, this Mount Zion, this city that stands on the impregnable rock of God. This is the spiritual Zion, real and accessible, not poetical, not symbolical, not figurative, but real. And the church's instincts have been found to identify herself with this.

This is what a church means, and that's why I grieve in my heart. I grieve when the church becomes simply a social organization with a little dash of Christianity to give it zing. I think that the whole Church of Christ, all of these people of whatever denomination, that we ought to be a called-out people, a separated people, a sanctified people, a dedicated people, conscious of what it's all about, knowing why we're here, knowing whom we're dedicated to, knowing who redeemed us, knowing God himself and knowing his Son, Jesus Christ, and feeling in mystic rapture the presence of the Holy Ghost.

And then when we meet together, we meet with this, all conscious of this. And then the outside things, the baptized foolery and the sanctified frivolity that's cursing the church and weakening her like a cancer. You know what a cancer is? A cancer is simply a bunch of uncontrolled and uncontrollable cells.

One of the sweetest men that I know, Dr. Whitman, died and was buried the day before yesterday. Cancer. Here was a brilliant Ph.D., not too old a man, not a youth by any means, but a reasonably young fellow yet.

And here this young man, or this man, this brilliant speaker and educator, Ph.D. out of Chicago University. A little while ago something got hold of him, and he went and had a hasty operation, but the doctors said we didn't get it. He went back to work and labored as he did labor prodigiously for maybe a year and a half.

And the news came through to me at the hotel, Dr. Whitman is gone. What killed him? I'll tell you what killed him. Cells that wouldn't be controlled and couldn't be controlled.

Not death, but life. A wild, uncontrolled life brought death. Look around you at the dead churches all over this continent, from the tip of Miami to as far as the ice of the North.

Wherever there are churches, all their good members lie out back, waiting the resurrection of the dead. Inside, baptized frivolity and sanctified fury. We don't know what we have.

We don't know how rich we are. We don't know what we're offered. Oh, we ought to know, we must know.

I want to close with reading something to you. Maybe we've got it in our books. If we do, let's sing it.

John Newton wrote it. John Newton was that blessed psalmist of England who wrote so many beautiful things. He took what I've been preaching about and some more, and he wrote it up into a hymn and sung to the tune of Franz Joseph Haydn's Austrian Hymn.

It's one of the most elevating things that I know and love to join in singing. But I want you to get the words, don't think anything about tunes. Lecture 10 The Resurrection And The Three Degrees Of Glory 2 Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God.

Now, he wasn't talking about heaven. This man didn't have heaven in mind at all. He was talking about the Church of Christ, now here on this earth, us.

He whose word cannot be broken formed us for his own abode. That's what we're for. On the rock of ages founded, who can shake thy sure repose with salvation's wall? Surrounded thou mayst smile at all thy foes.

See, the streams of living water spring from eternal love, well supply thy sons and daughters, and all fear removed. Who can think when such a river ever flows, their thirst to assuage? Grace which, like the Lord, the giver, never fails from age to age. That's us now.

We can have this now. This Church, we here, can have this now. Round each habitation, hovering, see the cloud and fire appear, for a glory in the covering, showing that the Lord is near.

Blessed inhabitants of Zion, washed in the Redeemer's blood, Jesus, whom their souls rely on, makes them kings and priests with God. That's for us now. That's not heaven, I'm not describing heaven here.

The New Jerusalem is something else again. But present Zion, of which we are members, Savior, he says, if of Zion's city I through grace a member am, let the world deride her city, I will glory in thy name. Fading is the worldling's pleasures.

That's what we're against. All his boasted pomp and show, that's what we're against. Solid joy and lasting treasure, none but Zion's children know.

That's what we're for. Here we stand, not being frightened by any of these pussycats who say, Don't be negative, we know what we're against. And we're not frightened by any of these who say, Now, just hold your breath, when the Lord comes we'll get it all.

We know what we have now. So instead of being some of God's dear little sillings, with barely enough intelligence to find our way in in good weather, we're reasonably intelligent men and women, fairly well educated and some very well educated, and with some level of culture, and who know what we're doing and know why we're doing it. And we're not frightened by the liberal and the modernist and the unbeliever.

And we don't run for cover and whimper and say, I'm foolish enough to believe. I'm not foolish enough to believe, God has made me wise enough to believe. He's not a fool who believes, he's a fool who doesn't.

So this Church stands on this corner for something. We know what we stand for. This is our manifesto.

We want all the world to know, and we don't care who knows, that we're for all this blessed inhabitants of Zion. Are you with us? Amen? Thank God. Oh, I'd love to see God cleanse and purify and revive and

bless and rejuvenate and bring a revival to this Church.

But we could stand here on this corner and have them turn to us, turn and hate us a while, and then turn and wonder about us, and then turn and love us, and say, why, those people think they know it all. When I preach like this, I've had it said, he's arrogant. I don't see any arrogance here.

John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. Nobody said, he's arrogant. He wasn't anybody, he was just pointing to somebody that was.

So I stand here, I'm nobody, you can replace me tomorrow. But I'm pointing to somebody that is somebody, and to something that is something. And for that one's sake and for that sake, I issue this manifesto.

The word of God, only the word of God. The word of God shot through and glorified with sweet Christian song. The word of God lifted and given wings with sweet Christian prayer.

The word of God made rich with the fellowship of the saints and the consciousness of the hovering wings of God's guardian angel. And the communion with the General Assembly in the church of the firstborn of which we're a part. If you're not for this, and if this sounds strange and heretical to you, then I hope you will learn, and if you don't learn, I hope we may part.

Because there's no reason why we should fool each other. I believe in God the Father, almighty maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate and who rose again the third day, and who is God of God and light of light and very God of very God begotten, not created.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who with the Father and Son together is worshiped and glorified. And I believe in his church, a sanctified, redeemed and separated people called together to share in the riches of Zion's glorious city. I hope we understand each other, and I hope we'll have your support, your prayers and your understanding.

Amen.

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