

(Hebrews - Part 9): What Is Man That Thou Art Mindful of Him?

by A.W. Tozer

God's love for man is a fixture in his mind, and he can't escape his burden for the human race.

Duration: 27:26

Scripture: Genesis 3:9, Psalm 8:4, Psalm 139:1-2, Isaiah 53:6, John 3:16, Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:4-5

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the wickedness of mankind and how our daily conduct is evidence of our guilt. He argues that anyone who doubts the fall of man and the iniquity of the human race only needs to look at the news or observe people's behavior to be convinced. The preacher also reflects on the love and mercy of God, despite humanity's unworthiness. He highlights a news report about the Chicago Aircraft crash, where teenagers acted irreverently and people stole from the dead bodies, as an example of the iniquity that exists in every person. The sermon concludes by stating that history serves as an indictment of mankind's sinful nature.

Transcript

I have already touched this verse, but I want to pick out a particular phrase from it and talk about it this morning. It is 2.6. What is man that thou art mindful of him? For the Son of Man, that thou visitest him. Two verbs, mindful and not a verb so much as it's indicating a condition, a situation, and visitest is the verb, that thou visitest him.

Now, the question, what is man that thou art mindful of him, is really one question. And I want you to notice that this is not an academic question, asked merely for the sake of argument. Never is there found in the scripture anything merely academic.

This is an exclamation, it's explanatory. A man of God gazes at the sky and cries in the light of all this, what is man that thou art mindful of him? There is never anything in the scriptures put there for the satisfaction of mere curiosity. God never propounds mere speculation.

Everything in the Bible is practical, moral, and spiritual. This book is here for a specific purpose. It is to take men who are alien and reconcile them.

It is to take men who are evil and make them good. It is to take men who are neglecting their future lives and persuade them to become concerned about their future. It is always a practical book.

I care very little for mere speculation. This is a moral question, and it's a moral book and a spiritual book. Now, he said, man, thou art mindful of him.

And the word mindful there means that man is a fixture in God's mind. It means that it comes to remembrance continually. That is actually what is meant by it, that it's a fixture in the mind.

And God's weakness for mankind is the only eccentricity of the great God. I can understand why God did most everything that I know that he did, that is, it's easy to see why he might do it. But it's very difficult to understand why God should love mankind and why man should be a fixture in God's mind.

But it's there, and it's one of the strangest phenomenon in the universe. It's a moving, solemn sight that God is unable to shake off his burden for the human race. For God has a burden for the human race.

He's burdened. That is, it's a strange fixture. It's in his mind as something, as a nail driven into hardwood.

It's there, and God can't escape it. I don't know that God wants to escape it, but I know that the nature of God is such that he can't escape it. And yet, God's love for mankind is a hurt, it's a wound.

He's wounded by man's treachery, but he's caught in the sweet and painful meshes of his own love. And he's impaled, so to speak, on the point of his own great love for mankind. Now, I believe this, my friends.

I believe this. I think that this is true. I believe it in my prayers.

I believe it in my preaching. I believe it in my living. I believe this.

I believe that it can be said of man, God is mindful of him. Just as a mother is mindful of her child, God is mindful of men. Only infinitely more, for a mother can forsake and can forget, and it's often done.

Mothers forget their children, though not usually. Usually a mother's love will last to the end, but sometimes even a mother's love will collapse. But the love of God is such that it can never end, that God remains caught in the meshes, in the web of his own mighty love, and that the man with all his treachery and all his sinfulness and impotence and evil, yet man is a fixture in the mind of God.

Man is God's image and God's pride and God's responsibility and God's problem. He's all this. And God finds man haunting him.

God does not sleep, but I'm sure that if God slept, he could not sleep, because God is haunted by the treachery of man and is caught in the web of his love for man and his pride in man, and he feels himself responsible for man, though certainly there can be no moral responsibility. Man forfeited all that when he sinned, and yet God is responsible and feels himself responsible. And he says, I'm pressed under you as a cart is pressed under sheaves.

God groans under the pressure of his great love for mankind. Now, what is man? Man's frailty made the psalmist ask that question, and I consider thy heavens. What is man? Man is likened in the Bible to grass, he's likened to flowers, he's likened to vapor and to breath.

He's likened to a breath that you take in and then expel and it's gone. He's likened to a vapor that lies over the hill in the morning and the sun is up and always gone. He's likened to a flower that blooms so beautifully and brings so many exclamations of delight from those who see it.

One day and two days later is a faded, limp thing nobody cares to see. Man is like grass that grows up in the morning and withers before night. Well, there's but a step between me and death, said the old man of God.

So the frailty of man, why should the God who is eternal be caught in the love of that which is so frail? I don't know, I only know it's true. Man's frailty is only matched by man's ignorance. We see it glaringly at both extremes.

We see it in idolatry. We see it among the philosophers. The five unanswered questions of which I spoke on a previous occasion when I was preaching on the attributes of God, they are whence and how and what and why and whither.

Where did we come from and how did we get here and what are we and why are we here and where are we going? Those are the questions that cannot be answered except you go to the Bible for the answer. Man in his ignorance does not know into this universe and why not knowing or whence like water willy-nilly flowing and how did it like wind along the waste whither I know not willy-nilly blowing. We don't know where we came from.

We don't know how we got here. We know the facts of course of birth but we don't know the mystery that makes it possible for human life to be born. We don't know what we are apart from God and we don't know why we're here apart from the New Testament and we don't know whither we're going.

And then man's iniquity. This is the worst of all. I can see why God could love that which was frail and I could see how God could love of that which is ignorant but I cannot see how God can love that which is iniquitous and yet man is declared to be iniquitous.

The same God in the same breath and maybe in the same verse that tells of man's love tells of God's love tells of man's iniquity. Man's iniquity and God's love are found in the same paragraph. Sometimes I say in the same verse so that man's iniquity is another reason that I can't understand why God why we're a fixture in God's mind.

Now history is man's indictment. I heard after I came home Friday night I heard a news report given by a Canadian newsman who had been on the scene at the Chicago air crash. He said he was talking from there in Chicago just 11 miles out of Chicago you know three or four minutes after takeoff.

My wife and I are familiar with that territory where that plane landed or crashed. Some lived there close by Clarendon Hills. This Canadian newsman said that he had seen this shortly after of course went with other newsmen to the scene.

He said two things stand out in my mind. One, the great mobs of teenagers drawn by curiosity milling around and acting so irreverent so so beastly. And the other he said was that before the police could get there people were stealing the wristwatches from the dead bodies of those who had died and killed.

Now if I thought that was only true in the United States I'd never go back. But I know that it's true everywhere. That could have happened in Canada.

Could have happened in Germany. That could have happened in Italy. That could have happened because that was that was not merely an American doing that.

That was a human being doing it. Human beings. It was iniquity.

Iniquity that's in the blood of every man of every race black and white and red and yellow around the world. It is the iniquity that runs in the bloodstream of everyone born of Adam's fallen race. Man's iniquity.

History is our indictment. We have only to read history and the evidence is in and the verdict can be rendered. Man is exceedingly wicked.

And our daily conduct is the evidence of our guilt. And any theologian who does not believe in the fall of man and in the iniquity of the human race has only to pick up tomorrow morning's Globe and Mail. He's only to listen to the report on the news tonight after he gets home from church.

And man's daily conduct is all the evidence that the world needs and that God needs to convict man. Because man is guilty and he's betrayed himself in the very thing that marks him as God-like. He's betrayed himself in thought and truth and virtue.

He's betrayed himself spiritually, intellectually and morally. He's betrayed himself. He's proved himself unworthy to live.

There are those who can understand why God lets men die and I can understand why God lets men live. For we forfeited all our right to live by our iniquity. Yet in spite of all this, it's here, it's here.

Man is the fixture in God's mind. Man, you and I, we, man next door, Chinese down the street, Japanese boy over here, Irishman over here, all of us, we human beings, we're fixtures in God's mind. We're as though we were driven into God's heart with a hammer and God can't escape the great love of his heart for the human race.

I remember talking to a man once, a young man. He said that he couldn't believe, he couldn't understand how God could love him. And then he read in Genesis 6, 6, that God saw the wickedness of man, that it was very great and it grieved him in his heart.

And he said, I saw that only love could grieve and that you do not grieve unless you love. Nothing can bring grief except love. We can suffer other ways, many other ways.

Men can break a leg and suffer. Men can lose property and suffer. But nobody can ever grieve except he have love.

And when a grieved man had grieved God at the heart that man had sinned, my friend Will Huffman knew that God loves him. That's good reasoning, that's good hard thinking, a good way to look at things, and it's true, and you can't escape it. God loves us or he never could have grieved over us.

Jesus was called the man of sorrows. What was the sorrow that Jesus bore? It was the pain in his mind, the pain in his heart, the pain he carried, our pain, the pain of our sins. And this pain knows no ease, and it makes God restless and eager.

And all God's acts of mercy come out of the pain in his heart. They're not drawn out, they're forced out. We do not have to say, I don't think God loves me, I'm not worthy of it.

Of course not. Might as well a field out here say, it will not rain on me, I'm not worthy of it. The clouds, when they're pregnant with rain, do not ask whether the field is worthy.

When certain conditions come to pass, it begins to rain regardless, and it rains on the just and on the unjust. It rains on the city street and the meadow and the country. They're asked no questions.

So the love of God is like that. God loves you not because you're worthy, but he loves you because he is God, and because you're a fixture in his mind, he can't escape you. No worthy object.

Spiritually depraved and intellectually blind and morally corrupt were no object of God's love, certainly. But God says, I will not forget thee. I believe that.

We used to sing a song, I haven't heard it for years, sweet is the promise, I will not forget thee. Some of you have heard it. I will not forget thee nor leave thee, I am thy Redeemer, I will care for thee.

One does not forget his pain. Nobody ever forgets pain. When a man has a pain, a sharp pain, a pain that won't let up on him, either in his body or in his heart, he doesn't forget it.

Someone dies and it grieves us and becomes a fixture in our hearts, we don't forget they've died. It's there reminding us always. And God's pain in God's heart is a reminder, all the reminder he would need, that we're ignorant and iniquitous and frail and alienated and helpless.

God says, I rose early and stretched my hands out that I might look after you. Stretched out my hands. A man told me this.

I knew the man, knew his son, knew the family well. He said his boy began to get, in middle teens, he and his father slept in the same room, slept together in the same bed. And always had, and the father always knew that when he woke in the night, he'd hear a little boy breathing beside him, a little warm boy breathing beside him.

Then when the boy got growing up and got into his middle teens, he'd go out and he wouldn't come in. Sometimes he would come in so late, and his father told me over and over, wake up at night, feel over, stretch out my hand to see if the boy's back. Often he's not, not until three in the morning.

At that time he was heartbroken and grieving himself to death over the wayward teenage boy. He stretched out his hands in the dark and felt for his warm boy that he'd slept with and loved so long, but the boy wouldn't be there. And that boy turned out, well, he's one of these, it's hard to find language to describe fellows like that, pathetic, fleshly, worldly boys that are not worthy of such love as that father had.

And God has stretched out his hand many a time in the dark to see if we're there. I've stretched out my hand, says God toward you. I rose early and I did it, but you would not.

So he said, because we were a fixture in his mind, he visited us. What is man that thou art mindful of him and that thou visiteth him? When Christ came, some say it was the development of God's purposes in history, and we're right about that. Oh, I don't know.

Why do people insist upon thinking that their head is something? You take the average fellow's head off and he wouldn't miss it. We really don't have, our heads don't amount to too much. Talk about the history, God working in human history.

Let's put it around like this. Let's say a young couple is going to get married. They've met each other and they've known each other six months or a year, and slowly it's developed, and now they're going to get married.

And the day of the wedding has come. The presents are in and the flowers are bought, whatever you call that. I never could pronounce that French word.

Whatever it is the lady wears, all of it. And it's all ready and she's ready to put it on and go, and she sits calmly back, stormy face, says, I'm getting married this evening. It is the development in history of my husband's plans.

Well, you'd think she's a dead fish. She was sitting back talking about the historical development of the masculine plans. I'd say, what's the matter, you honey, don't you love the guy? You don't talk about those things in that way.

You talk about it in the language of emotion, in the language of feeling, in the language of love. No mother ever sits. I saw in New York City, even New York City has a heart.

Somebody carried a baby in. I think they were foreigners. That is, I think, I say foreigner not in the sense that I'm a foreigner here, but in the sense that they were Europeans and didn't speak the English language very well.

But they had him, a little fellow. He was, oh, I'd guess he was nine months old, maybe eight, and was handsome and fat. And they had him in a basket.

They were carrying him, two young men, and the woman was alone. I assume she was the mother and father, maybe the brother. And they were carrying him out of Toffanetti's restaurant.

And everybody looked at that fellow, that little guy, and everybody smiled. Even New Yorkers looked down and smiled. It didn't take me long to find him.

And I was looking down at him and making eyes at him, and he was laughing back. Well, there he was. Now, there would be a way, there would be a way to explain that boy.

Biologists and physiologists and all the rest, they can explain that boy. They can take charts and explain that boy. That is, best they can explain him.

The mystery back of him, as I've said, will never be known. But it is the physical part. They can explain that.

But that's an awful way to look at a baby. It's an awful way to think of a baby. As a biped, anthropoid, that's an awful way to think of a baby.

You think of a baby in terms of affection and warmth and love. A baby raised in a laboratory where there was only scientists with mirrors on the top of their head. Why, they'd be zombies.

They wouldn't be human beings. Babies have to have love. We were bringing up our children, particularly our first couple of ones.

Scientists had then figured out that you should never love a baby. And incidentally, I'd just like to pass this on to you, that was partly communistic, only the poor, dumb United States didn't know it. They were teaching us that you shouldn't love a baby.

They said, if he cries, let him cry. Teach him self-assurance. Don't love him.

If you love him, you shouldn't cling to him. We paid no attention to that. We loved him anyhow and let him cling.

But shortly after that, they reversed their decision. And now they're teaching just the opposite. They say, above all things, love your baby.

You have to tell a mother to love her baby. You have to send her to school and take two semesters to learn to love her baby. All she has to do is to see the ugly little thing lying there all wrinkled up and red and working on his thumb, two hours old, why, she's wild about him, thinks he looks like her husband immediately.

She loves him without any education in the thing. You don't have to have an education to love your baby. You love babies because you love babies, not always because they're lovable either.

I've seen some that only the mother could love, tell you. Little stringy, dried-up fellas. Later on, you know, they might got to be great, fine-looking men, but when they were small and looking through the glass, they weren't much to look at.

But Mother loved them anyhow. My old Dutch grandmother always said, every crow thinks her young are the blackest. She always loved hers and thought they had more color than all the rest in the whole field, in the whole woods.

Well, now, this love, what was it brought Jesus Christ to die? Thou visitest him. Why did he visit us? Was it that he might carry out the eternal purpose? Yes, yes, yes, but then that's not the way to look at it. He visited us because we were a fixture in his mind.

He came for us as a mother wakes in the morning and runs into the room to see if the baby's all right. It was love that brought him down to die. God's anxious, restless love was incarnated in human flesh.

And this accounts for the character of Christ, and this accounts for his attitude toward people, and this accounts for his tireless labor for them, and it accounts for his dying for them at last. He never would have died to fulfill a purpose. If God had laid a chart out on the wall and said not to be this way and this way and this way, I doubt whether Christ ever would have died to fulfill the purposes on the chart.

But he died to fulfill the affections of the heart. That was another matter, and that's why he died. That gave us Calvary.

So our Lord came down, and the great pain compelled it. Calvary was a pain, yes, Calvary was a pain. The nails were painful, and the hanging there, perspiring in the hot sun with the flies, must have been a painful, awful experience.

But one pain was bigger than the other, and it was the bigger pain that drove him to endure the littler pain. And the smaller pain was his pain of dying. The greater pain was his pain of loving.

He loved us and died for us, and he endured the pain because the greater pain of love thwarted love, betrayed love, his love for us. And we turned and looked at him and walked away. We cared not for him.

To love and not be loved is one of the most exquisite pains in all the repertoire of painfulness. So he came and lived and he loved and he died. And death couldn't destroy that love, it's still a fixture in his mind.

But you know, someday that love is going to be satisfied. Did you ever see this passage of scripture? Did you ever think about it? In Isaiah 53, he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. What did he mean by that? He meant the same thing that Jesus meant when he said, A woman, when she is in travail, hath not joy but grief.

But when the child is born, she forgetteth her grief with joy that a man is born into the world. And she looked at the little ten-pound piece of crying humanity and sees a man there. I have born a man.

And so Jesus says, scripture says of Jesus, He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. Man, as long as he is sinning, is a pain in God's heart. But when he turns from his sin and turns to God, he is a satisfaction in God's heart.

Every one of you is one of two things, each one. You are either a pain in God's heart or you are a satisfaction in God's heart. Christ is either pained by your rejection or he is pleased by your acceptance.

He is either happy and satisfied that he found you, or else he is grief-stricken still that you haven't found him. So let's remember in this communion service this morning that we are, men are, fixtures in God's minds. They are there forever.

God cannot shake loose this eternal fixture. We are there, the human race is there. We are there either to be pains in his heart or joy in his heart.

I, for my part, want to bring joy to the Lord Jesus Christ. I hope you do, I trust you do. So let us reverently, as we go on into the service of communion, let us reverently, by God's grace, seek to bring joy to his heart and not pain.

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