

# (How to Get Out of a Religious Rut): It's Imperative to Get Out of the Rut Now!

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer emphasizes the urgent need for Christians to break free from complacency and actively pursue spiritual growth now.*

**Duration:** 32:15

**Scripture:** Genesis 12:7, Deuteronomy 1:6, Deuteronomy 1:21, Matthew 6:33, Romans 10:15, 1 Corinthians 11:11, Galatians 3:28

**Topics:** "Religious Rut"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being wholehearted Christians and not settling for a half-hearted faith. He urges the congregation to take their faith seriously and commit fully to God. The preacher believes that if everyone in the church truly embraces this mindset, it will have a powerful impact on the community and lead to spiritual revival. He warns against procrastinating and waiting for help that may never come, urging people to accept God's help and guidance in their lives now.

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## Transcript

...conclude this series by reading it again, in the first chapter of Deuteronomy. The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, You have dwelt long enough in this mount, turn you and take your journey and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hill, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the seaside, to the land of the Canaanites, and to Lebanon, and to the great river of the river Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you.

The women possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and their seed after them. Now, that's an Old Testament story concerning a situation in Israel when they had allowed themselves to settle down and become contented with circumstances which were all right, but which could and did break their spirit of adventure and cause them to accept the as-is, the status quo, as being final for them. Now, that same text with a principle involved there is found throughout the Old and the New Testaments.

Every once in a while, prophet and apostle and psalmist, that is, God is doing it, is stretching out his hand and trying to allow these people from their sleep, because man is somebody that is made of dust, and dust tends to settle, and men settle. And they tend to settle down and do the same things year in and year out,

and so slowly go around that circle. And when this gets into religion, it is a deadly and evil thing.

Now, this will be the last of my talk on how to get out of that religious rut. I believe that the majority of Christians are asleep and that they're in a rut, and I very much want them to get out. And yet I do not want to press anybody nor push.

I think maybe that some people are a bit disturbed because we don't have more of an urge on. But I've always respected my audiences. I preach the word to them and then put them in the hands of God and allow the Holy Ghost and the individual hearer to have it out.

And it isn't my business to come along and push and urge. I have found that it never pays, because if we yield under pressure, it shows that we're too weak to resist. And if we're too weak to resist, and if we take up a religious position because we're too weak to resist, then we will also be too weak to persist.

When you follow Christ, there must be persistence. You must go on. And if you allow yourself to be pushed into a situation, I never have been willing to listen or to take orders from a man in the pulpit.

I know that man in the pulpit. He's just like everybody else, and sometimes not so much so. I know him.

I know people in the pulpit. And I know what they say before they come into the pulpit and what they do when they go out of the pulpit. And therefore, I do not take kindly to being stampeded by anybody.

Truth is truth. And if truth doesn't convince a man or woman and persuade them, then the man has no right to set up a psychological screen that makes it impossible to get out. Because what's happening there is, the man is projecting himself into the minds and consciences of men made in the image of God, and forcing them psychologically to do what they have no particular reason for wanting to do.

They're not basically interested in it, and they have no satisfactory reason for doing it. But they're under pressure. I heard a man say years ago about another man, he said he could get blood out of a turnip and he could get an offering in a cemetery.

He said, just turning loose. I've seen people like that, but I've never wanted to be like that, because I respect my own interests. I would rather a man would go to hell and be a man, I'd rather he'd live for the sin in the world and continue to be a man, than to allow me to put him in a corner and make a soft pussycat out of him.

God wants men to be men, and he doesn't want them to yield and be pushed around. That's why I never would have been willing, from the beginning of my Christian life at 17, down to now, I've never been willing to have somebody stand up and tell me to say amen. I'll say amen if I feel like it.

I won't say amen if I don't. Nobody's going to persuade me or make me feel bashful or ashamed if I'm not doing what the rest are doing. Amen.

So that if you don't have a reason for doing what you're going to do, then when you get in, you won't know why you're in, if you're in, for still you'll know that for sure. And then when you get out, you won't be sure that you ever were in. And so the whole thing makes for weak, timeless religion.

And all that violates the law of our nature, which dictates that all valid acts must arise from a natural urge or from a convinced mind. Now all valid acts have to arise either from a natural urge or from a convinced mind. By a natural urge, I mean to say that you may be very hungry, and your hunger doesn't have a high

intellectual content in it.

Nobody needs to stand up and say, Now all you that are hungry, raise your hand, and all you that are hungry, do something else. You know you're hungry, and you just do without me, if you can afford it, because you're hungry. That's a natural urge.

There are many natural urges. You see them in little children. They do things naturally.

They don't reason them out. So that's one valid reason for an act. Another valid reason for an act is a convinced mind.

I'm convinced that I ought to do something, and I do it because I have a conviction it ought to be done. And those are the only two reasons for doing anything. And if I force a fellow under psychological pressure and roll him through a steamroller and force him to do something because he's too weak to resist, I have violated his nature, and I won't do it.

So for that reason, I have said we ought to get out of the religious rut. I have given reasons for it. I have shown that Christians are in a rut, and I have given sufficient reason for saying it.

And I have explained that it is bad so to be, and I have shown how to get out, and I have shown why it is important that we get out and get started on a better kind of Christian life, both as individual Christians and as a church. I have given reasons. And if those reasons do not move you, then you'll have to excuse me because I shall employ no tricks to get you to make any decisions.

But now tonight I want to take it a step further, and I want to declare that it is imperative not only that we Christians get out of our rut, but that we get out now. And I address my remarks to anyone who is in. You say, do you mean me? Well, I mean you if you're in.

But I don't mean you if you're not. In preaching to a mixed congregation, and that's what we Protestant pastors have to do all the time, every congregation of any size at all has in it a man who has never been born anew at all, he's not a Christian, another fellow who is only halfway in and hardly knows whether he's a Christian or not, and another one who is a Christian but not a very good Christian, and another one who was a Christian but has cooled off about it, and another one who is a blazing light shining in his generation. Now you multiply these or add to each one of these classifications, the hundreds or whatever you have present, and you see that it's not the easiest thing in the world if I were a physician, I could give each fellow the medicine depending upon what was wrong with him, but when you have to give it, I remember in the army, they used to decide that we all ought to have medicine, and they put it in our coffee, and it ruined the coffee of course, and the fellows that needed it got it, but the rest of us had to take it too.

And so everybody got that bad bitter coffee, and everybody put it down, and of course being soldiers they cursed a good deal about it, but everybody had to take it. They didn't come in and have a doctor look at each one and somebody higher up some brass on his way probably to play golf, he said, give him so-and-so, and then he hurried off, and so we got it. But that isn't the way the Holy Ghost does things, so therefore when you address an audience and you say to them, you're in a rut, and you say, whom do you mean? And I say, I mean the one that's in.

And if you're not in, I naturally don't mean you. But if you are in, I naturally do mean you. And there isn't anybody big enough on this continent to scare me out.

If I think he's in, I'll tell him he's in. But also to get action, I won't tell a man who isn't in that he is in, for that's an old trick that preachers know how to work, too. You take an evangelist from some far country, as I saw in Chicago, he blazed in from across the water, you let him have a night with us, and he came all, and every place was packed out, and he got up and gave his talk, and then he said, now everybody who wants to be blessed, you come and you stand up.

And our best people stood up. And they testified and confessed and admitted they were no good, and he went away and wrote a book and said what a marvelous meeting he'd had, the best one he'd had in the States was at our church. And I positively know that the people who stood up and confessed were the cream of the church.

They were the very best. Of course, you could write a book about that. All I'd have to do here tonight would be to pull a little trick on you, dear people, and get at your conscience, and the best ones of you would be the ones into the prayer room.

And the rest would go about as usual. But you know where you're in, I hope you do. And if you are not progressing, if you are where you were months ago or years ago, if you've settled down and learned to live with yourself and learned to live with your present spiritual state, if you're not getting any prayers answered, or if they are, you're so vague you're not sure about what it might have just been an accident, if you're living so far off from God and yet hoping you're saved, then I mean you.

Now, there are some reasons. These are reasons now, not pressure, but reasons why it is imperative that we get out as a church, as individuals now, and get moving on our way to a better spiritual life. And I'll give you some of them.

One of them is that you haven't very much time to do anything about it anyhow. Your own interests are going to flag one of these times, and the less you feel the need to change, and as I've said, change is imperative, absolutely imperative, the older we get, the less we feel the need to change. If a person has an urge within their spirit that's based upon a belief and a conviction that they ought to move out and begin to reassess their lives and readjust their living, then they ought to do it right now while they're thinking about it, because we tend to cool off and our interests tend to flag.

And there's danger of political development which will make it less favorable to serve God. I suppose there never has been a country or two countries in the whole history of mankind, not even in Old Mother England, nor have there never been two countries anywhere in the history of the world where it is more favorable to become a Christian than in these two that occupy the northern part of this continent. It's favorable to be a Christian here.

They won't let you give all you want to give. They'll only allow you to give 10% here. But you can give 30 or 40 if you want to.

Nobody will arrest you and take you to jail. You just don't get it off your income tax. So you'll give it and pay tax on it.

I'm doing that right along here. I don't mind it at all because I'm still eating. But it's favorable climate we have here, favorable climate.

And it could easily be that things would shift around so the climate is not so favorable. There are lots of countries where the political climate and the social climate is not favorable to becoming a Christian.

Anybody who wants to become a Christian in some country in the world has a such time out.

But here, people will help you along. You get converted tonight, there will be two fellows who will call you up tomorrow and say, Jim, I understand you got right with God last night. I just want to congratulate you.

Come over and see me sometime. This is a favorable climate for serving the Lord. And now I ask you if the climate should shift so that it's not so favorable, and if the social situation should shift so that it's not so favorable, I want to ask you if you can afford to wait for something like that.

Because if you have not taken advantage of this favorable climate to get right with God and to improve your spiritual life in this freedom, would you if you were forbidden? I wonder, I don't think so. And then, the next is that the Lord himself may come. I realize that there's an awful lot we don't know about prophecy, but I believe that most Christians are looking for the coming of the Lord.

They expect him to come. They don't know when he will come. The ones who claim they do, don't.

But he may come, because that is in your time and soon. He said he would come back, and he said at an hour when we think not the Son of Man will come. And it could be that this present decline in expectation may have an ominous significance.

For easily it can be that this would be the time when fewer people are expecting the Lord. 30, 40 years ago, everybody was expecting the Lord and talking about it. But now, very few are, and fewer are talking about it.

Yet if you pressed people, you'd say, well, I believe in the coming again of Jesus Christ to the world. I think most Christians believe in his coming again to the world. I think if you were to ask the average Anglican, he would say, I do.

Ask the average Wilson, he would say, yes. Ask the average United Church man, he would probably say, well, I believe that the Lord may come back to the world a second time. I don't think many people would outright deny it, but the point is that they do not live in expectation of it.

And our Lord said, at an hour when you think not the Son of Man will come. And now, lastly, I believe that it's imperative that we do something about our spiritual lives now, because we have a short time to prepare for a long time. I mean by that, we have now to prepare for the end.

We have a day to prepare for a month. We have an hour to prepare for eternity. And so to fail to prepare is an act of huge moral folly.

For anybody to have a day given him to prepare, it's an act of folly, I say, of inexcusable folly, to let anything hinder us, anything hinder us, or to see any earthly consequence, any earthly consequence at all. Nothing in this wide world should hinder us from coming unto God. Nothing in this wide world should hinder us from, if we find ourselves in lust or find ourselves cold, nothing in this wide world should hinder us, nothing should hinder us, because it isn't worth it.

Nothing in the wide world is worth it. If we believe in eternity, we believe in God, we believe in heaven, we believe in hell, and we believe in the eternal existence of the soul, then there isn't anything in the wide world important enough to cause us to commit that act of huge moral folly, failing to get ready in time for eternity and failing to get ready now for the great then that lies out yonder. I say that nothing, nothing

should allow us to fall into a trap that is in plain sight.

There's an odd little text in the Old Testament. It says, In vain is the trap set in the sight of any bird. When the man of God wrote that and gave the bird a little bit of credit, they have a saying about a bird's brain.

Birds are not supposed to be very bright. But this man believed, and it's obviously true, it was written into the Bible, that even a bird, if you set the trap with him watching it, he won't get caught in it. Wouldn't it be silly for him to watch me setting the trap and then he conveniently fly down and got into the trap that I just finished setting for him? And yet there are people doing that all the time.

In the sight of the trap, the people of Rez who have to live for eternity, they fall into that trap, and it's set for them in plain sight. And I say that it's folly to put off to a tomorrow that you may never see things that you should do now. A woman had me in her home one time.

I think maybe I was being entertained there while I was preaching or something, I don't recall the circumstances. Or she might have had me over for lunch while I was preaching some years ago. And she took me into a little room or a good-sized room, and she said, This is my husband's library.

She said he was a very busy man while he lived. And she said he looked forward with eagerness to the time when he would be financially able to get away from the crash of business and read these books that he had gathered. He loved them.

He gathered them carefully, put them up there, and there they are. And she said just about the time he was ready to break off from the crash of business and give himself to study, he suddenly died. She was very sad about it, as well as she might be.

Not only sad because she had lost her husband, but doubly touched because this man had put off to a tomorrow that he never realized, never saw, something that he wanted so bad to do, but he didn't get it done because tomorrow didn't come for him. And I say it's an act of inexcusable folly. To count on help that will never come, because we expect somebody to help us, but that person will never show up.

And it's foolish to ignore God's help now offered us. God is now offering us help. Suppose that the men were floating out on the sea, badly exhausted and chilled and in shock, with a cold after a shipwreck or a crashed plane in the sea, and suppose that a helicopter hovered over him and lowered its baskets and urged him with loudspeakers to get in, to fasten himself in.

And he waved him away and said in a weak voice, No, I'm waiting for help. I'm waiting for help. I expect the Queen's Navy to come out.

I expect the destroyer from London or from New York. I'm waiting for help. And they said, But man, where is your help? Where is your help? And argue about it and die in the cold.

Yet people are doing that. Ignoring the help that's expected to come. I tell you, there isn't very much wisdom in sin, ladies and gentlemen, and there isn't very much that can be said in favor of lazy Christians or careless Christians.

There isn't much that can be said. I talked to a Catholic priest one time on the train, poor numbers, but this man I happen to remember. He said to me, Now, this was in Anglican, and he told me this.

He said, Well, I think maybe there's a difference between you and me. He said, I think that you are demanding a moral level, a holier life than we expect. He said, You're just demanding a little too much of humanity.

No, no, we're not demanding too much of humanity, because God's commands, as they say, are God's enabling. And God never told any man yet to do anything that that man couldn't do. When that man with the paralyzed arm that hung at his side like a limp piece of flesh, paralyzed, when his body moved it, Jesus said, Stretch forth your hand.

He couldn't stretch forth his hand. How could he stretch forth his hand? Why, men could have written five books to prove there was nothing in Jesus' hand. He was paralyzed.

His arm hangs there. He can't. The muscles are all shriveled up.

He can't stretch forth his hand. And yet the command of the Lord was, Stretch forth your hand. We believe in Jesus Christ was God stretched forth his hand and was instantly healed.

So God never asked anybody yet to do anything that he wasn't enabling to do. So when I am told that I'm demanding too much of Christians, I say, No, I'm not demanding too much of Christians, because God will give you strength to do anything that you're willing to do. The dear collared brother who was preaching, they asked him, and with the simplicity and directness as characteristic of these friends, they said to him, What would you do if you were facing a stone wall and God told you to jump through it? He said, I would jump toward it, and when I got there, God would have a hole in the wall.

I believe that. And I believe that when God tells us to do something, if we do it, God will be there to meet it. Therefore, if the Lord tells you that you ought to get rid of that habit, you say, I can't, I can't.

You can't? Maybe you can't, but God can. If you will tell God what it is and stretch forth your limp wizard hand, it will be a whole hand when it gets up there. So we're not asking too much.

We're saying that Christians are letting the world perish while we play and dust off our china and wash down our cars and look after ourselves and watch television and read and fool and take long trips and play while the world perishes. And our days are getting fewer and we're getting older and our urge is getting weaker and our interests are flagging as we get older. Oh, my dear friends, I am urging you and declaring that it's imperative not only that we get out of our religious rut, but that we get out now.

These are reasons, these are reasons. This is not pressure, these are reasons, and you will face those reasons in the great day of Christ. Don't forget it.

The man stands up and froths at the mouth and puts pressure on and tells dead stories for a half hour, and then invites me to the altar and I don't go. The Lord won't excuse me of doing anything wrong with that. But if he gives me reasons why I should do something and back it up with scripture and I don't do it, then I'll have to answer before the great bar of God in that day.

So we'll all have to answer before the bar of God. Here are the fall days coming on, and here is a great city of a million and a half in metropolitan Toronto. And God knows how much little real preaching there is.

Some of it, certainly. Certainly we have excellent preachers in this city. Dear Brother Fitch over at Knox Presbyterian is one of the outstanding preachers of this city and of this country.

And there are others, good preachers, good gospel preachers. But what are they among a million and a half people? A young man came down to the front this morning with his wife, a young wife three weeks. He got in here by accident.

He started out to go to United Church and thought this was one and came in. He listened to me. He came down afterwards completely astonished, the two of them, obviously well-educated.

They didn't know what to make of it all. He said, You didn't tell them a thing about how to handle the situations in their homes and the situations they face every day. And I said, I'm expounding the scripture and giving a great theological philosophy of faith upon which we rest.

Yes, that he said. And he said, Your people have this philosophy of faith and they don't live it. And I said, Do you know any of our people? And he said, No.

And I said, Then how do you know? He smiled and said, I don't. But I'm a little bit afraid, there's truth in this, that we've got the theory but we're not living it. It's a few hundred people, a few, S-T-W, a hundred people who make up our weekly congregation.

It's a few hundred people. If these few hundred people would all take what I preach seriously and determine that you're not going to be a half Christian, you're going to be a whole Christian, and you're going along with God regardless, we could act like leaven in this city. It would spread, it would spread.

It would be talked about, others would hear about it. Preachers who are careless in their carelessness would shake themselves awake and say, what's the matter with me, where have I been? And this city could be revived in its spiritual life starting right here, if we would do something about it. Do you believe that? Let's pray.

Just for my own encouragement, if nothing more, I wonder how many present here tonight will say, Mr. Tozer, we're grateful to you that you haven't put on pressure, but you've left everything to our own decision, but have given us reasons. And you may count on us, you may count on me, as God helps me, I do intend to do something about my spiritual life. I'm not going to go muddling along.

I am going. By intensifying my prayer life, by searching the scriptures more avidly, by giving myself more completely to God, I am going to be a better man or woman, and I'm going to get out of this rut. And I'm going to go along with you as the days and weeks go by, to make this church the kind of church it ought to be as a New Testament church.

I just wonder how many would raise their hand and say, I'm with you, Mr. Tozer. I'm with you. Well, now there's a lot of hands, but of course I can't possibly tell how many in proportion to the people present, but we'll not press it further.

We'll only pray now. Now, our Father, we thank thee for this quite large number of persons who have thus signified that Christianity is to them not a plaything, but a serious, grave and vested reality. And that as thou dost lead them, they plan to rise up from this mount and go take the land which is theirs by covenant and gift and promise.

Pray thy blessing, O God, upon us as now we enter the fall, tomorrow being the first of October, we pray, O God, that thou wilt give to us an urgency of spirit and a convinced mind to lead us by the Holy Spirit, lead us by the Holy Spirit. Pray for our children, our young people, our teenagers, so in such a critical hour

as this, they so need thee. They need to see, Christian parents and grandparents, that they don't have to excuse or apologize for.

We pray thy blessing upon the board, upon our dear brother, thy servant, Brother McNally, who is preaching elsewhere tonight, O baptize us into a new, wonderful, warm fellowship, a new, wonderful, warm fellowship.

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