

Marks of the Elect

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer explores the distinct marks of the elect, emphasizing moral sensitivity, discontent, hunger for God, humility, and receptivity to His presence.

Duration: 39:16

Scripture: Matthew 3:11, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:17, John 6:37, John 10:26, John 14:6, 2 Corinthians 7:10

Topics: "Elect Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of moral sensitivity and how it relates to the reception of the gospel. He emphasizes that not everyone is receptive to the message of God, and that there are many who do not respond to it morally. The preacher uses the analogy of rain falling on a fruitful field to illustrate how the gospel can either make a person fruitful or have no effect at all. He then goes on to explain that those who are morally sensitive and responsive to the voice of God are considered blessed, as they have a deeper understanding of the Father and the Son. The preacher concludes by stating that there are five marks that identify those who are receptive to God, and encourages the audience to reflect on these marks to see if they apply to them.

Transcript

Verse 10 verses. These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify thee, as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

And this is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.

And they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee.

And they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.

And all mine are thine, and thine are mine. And I am glorified in them. Let us pray.

Father, we feel as if we had entered a holy place when we read these words, for we hear thy Son in his high priestly prayer. O God, make us worthy to hear, make us worthy to kneel with thee, belittle behind thee, waiting reverently back where thou didst kneel, unworthy to kneel quite where thou didst kneel. Help us to hear and believe and enter into and accept it.

Lord, lend thy Holy Spirit tonight in great power to make truth effective. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

Now in verse 6, our Lord says, I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me. In verse 3 he says, no, in verse 2, as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

Now I want you to notice that our Lord here talks about the men which God gave him, the ones that God gave him out of the world. And he said that they were God's and that God gave them to Jesus, and that Jesus did two things for them. He gave them eternal life, and he gave them a revelation of the name of God.

Now this revelation was not made to the world. I want you to notice it very clearly. I pray not for the world, but for them that thou hast given me out of the world.

The revelation was not made to the world, and the prayer was not made for the world. Now if that should startle anybody, kindly remember that it's here, it is true. Jesus, our Lord, said it, and we dare not deny it, nor modify it in any sense.

We in our eagerness to be all things to all men and to show that everyone anywhere at any time can come, we tend to overrate what Christ did and is doing for the world. What he did and what he is doing is available to all the world, and therefore in that sense potentially it was done and is being done for the world. But it is not effective toward the world.

It is effective only toward certain ones, the ones that our Lord Jesus says are given to him out of the world by the Father, the men which thou gavest me out of the world. Now as somebody should imagine or be afraid that I was misinterpreting or misunderstanding the words of Christ in his high priestly prayer, I ask you to notice in Matthew 11, 27, all things are delivered unto me. Those are the words of Jesus, and then he goes on to say that all things are delivered unto me of my Father.

But no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Then in Matthew 16, 17, when Peter had nobly testified to his belief in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior, our Lord replied, Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed these things unto you, but my Father which is in heaven. And in John 26 there is a passage which, have you ever noticed how it is? It says, Ye believe not, because ye are not my sheep.

Now it doesn't say, ye are not my sheep because you do not believe. That's the way we say it, but he said it precisely the opposite. He said, Ye believe not, because ye are not my sheep.

And in John 6, 37, our Lord says, Well, he says, him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. And have you noticed how we have divorced that passage from that which precedes it? For what precedes it is this. Here's what Jesus said, All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Those who belong to the Father and are given to Jesus are not cast out. Now that's what he said. And then seven times in this chapter, which I have read, seven times in his prayer to the Father, he says, The ones that thou hast given me, they were thine, thou gavest them to me, thou gavest them to me out of the world, and I manifested thy name to them, and I gave them life.

Now admitting the difficulties here, and I don't hesitate at all to admit that there are difficulties, that there is mystery here, and that we can only see the parts of God's ways in all this. Admitting all that, yet we can sum this up by saying that there are some persons who are gods in a peculiar way. How they are gods I do not know, although I shall show you later how we can know that they are.

But I do not mean that this, I do not mean to teach here blind, fatalistic election which makes God close his eyes and put a pin down and choose the one that the pin touches, or arbitrarily choosing certain ones from the foundation of the world. I don't want to teach that, but I do want to be bold enough to allow the scriptures to teach what they do teach, that there are some persons who are gods in a peculiar sense that other people are not. And that these persons who are gods in that peculiar sense are given to his son Jesus Christ, our Lord, and that Jesus invariably and always receives them and gives them two things, a manifestation of who and what God is, and eternal life.

Now these things, it says here, are true, and we dare not move away from it, nor recoil. And it says that for these, our Lord Jesus Christ makes intercession at the right hand of God. Thine they were, says our Lord.

Now here in the masses of maybe in this city, certainly in this and perhaps in this church tonight, there are some who belong to God in a special way. They are the prodigals about to come home. They are the sheep about to return back to the fold again.

Now I say and repeat that I do not know what makes them gods in a peculiar sense. Scripture teaches about it. Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me.

All thine are mine, and they come to me, and I do not cast them out. But while I do not know the mystery that underlies all that, I do know how we can locate these sheep that are to be found, these prodigals that are to return to themselves and to the Father's house. Now I show you five marks tonight, that mark such as these.

One is, and in giving you these, I am not introducing anything that is not here. I am letting the whole Bible talk, and then letting human experience and Christian biography and the knowledge, such small knowledge as I may have of mankind and of the world. Together I let these tell you, these five marks, and I want you to notice them and see if this means you.

Now the first mark of the chosen is a great moral sensitivity. These people are bothered. They're bothered.

There are millions of people that are not bothered spiritually. They may be bothered, strained. They usually take it out by having a nervous break.

But I'm not talking tonight about tension. I'm talking about people who are bothered, and they have a great moral sensitivity. It doesn't mean they're good necessarily.

It doesn't mean that. But it means that they're sensitive in the areas of moral things. There is a little instrument which is known to everybody, and they've not seen them, they've at least heard about them, called the Geiger counter.

Now the function of the Geiger counter is to tell when there's any radioactive substance present. If you take this Geiger counter and pass it over an area where there's radioactivity of any sort, even your wristwatch, anything that throws off a tiny bit of radioactivity, that Geiger counter will begin to make little noises. It will go click, click, click, click.

And the more activity, the faster. That's how they can locate anything that gives off any, is radioactive, by this Geiger counter. Now there are some people who are totally without sensitivity to the presence of sin and righteousness.

They're totally insensitive to it all. You can pass their heart over it and there's no click. They do not see, nor feel, nor hear, nor sense anything at all.

They're apathetic and callous and insensitive and feelingless. I think that this would take in most of the people of the world. They're apathetic.

They're not against religion, they're not opposed to the Church, but they're just calloused about it. They're not against preachers and the gospel and the Bible, but they're insensitive to the claims of the Bible. They're feelingless.

They do not have feeling about it all. And when they come to die, they do not panic and scream as the evangelists would sometimes make out they do. Maybe some do, but most of them don't.

Instead of panicking and screaming, they die peacefully in their nest, as the book of Job says. And they die just as they live, feelingless and calloused. If by any chance these morally sensitive people come to die, they would be the ones that would panic, because God has given them this most precious treasure, this sensitivity in the presence of deity, this sensitivity in the presence of sin and righteousness.

And such persons as that are bothered. They're disturbed. They're worried.

And instead of being apathetic, they're deeply concerned. Now, that doesn't mean they're converted yet. It doesn't mean they've come home.

It doesn't mean they've given up their sins and turned to Christ. But it does mean that the God who laid his hand on them has given them the same thing that he's given, that scientists have given to the Geiger counter. He's given them an ability to feel and respond in the presence of God and of divine things.

But to those who don't have it, sin is just sin, that's all. And the rose of Sharon is just another flower, and heaven is just something you talk about when you're sad, and the gospel is something that you've heard about, and so on. But the morally sensitive person, the one about whom it can say it all, and no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and nobody knows the Father except the one's son.

Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, flesh and blood, and all that the Father giveth me shall come to me. This is the group. I well remember as a young fellow.

I certainly was no saint, God knows, and I was a distress and disturbance to my mother. But I did have this sensitivity there. Now, where it came from, I don't know, for I only know one person that was praying for me, just one.

He lived next door to us, and I didn't think he was too good a Christian, but he was some kind of Christian, and he did pray, I understand. At least he tried to talk to me about the Lord once, and I assumed he prayed for me. So I don't know where the moral sensitivity came from, but I do know that I was sensitive to spiritual things.

I'd say some things that I can't very well say because all these sermons are taped and they go around over the world, and I don't want what I would say to go around over the world, so I'll omit it, and I shouldn't even, I should have omitted saying that I was going to omit it if I'd want to be right about it all. But I'm thinking of others who were better than I, far and away better than I, and they're not saved even to this day. But the Lord, by his marvelous grace, laid hold on me.

I thank him with all of my heart for the fear that I had in my heart, and I thank him with all of my soul for the anxiety and the state of being bothered about my soul that God in his kindness gave me. The second mark that I note is a mighty moral discontent. I've quoted here before what Browning said about certain people.

He said, "They are finished and finite clods," he said about a man. A finished and finite clod, untroubled by a spark. And that was Esau.

I guess you couldn't describe a man better, Esau better, than to call him a finished and finite clod. He was a clod, that's what his name meant, the red clay. He was finite, as we all are, and he was finished.

The terrible part about Esau was that God was done with him. That's the terrible part about Esau. If I thought if God were to come to me tonight and notify me that he was ready now to put a label on me and say, this is finished, I would not be a happy man, I would be a man deeply grieved, because I'm not satisfied, I hope God isn't.

Esau was satisfied, and that was his trouble. Esau was a contented man. I think Esau was rather a good man.

We paint Esau anything but a good man, and we make him a great hairy gorilla, but he was anything but a hairy gorilla. He was a twin brother of Jacob. And you can't ask me, you can't get me to believe that one fellow should be a great, dark, ugly, should be a very gracious, kindly fellow.

Not so. One fellow did have more fur on his arms than the other, as the artists have painted. Simple truth is that Esau's only vice was that he was contented, and Jacob's only virtue was that he was not.

You will find, if you read their story, that Esau was a better man than Jacob. He didn't get into problems, and he didn't cheat the way Jacob did, and he didn't hide behind his father's back the way Jacob did. He was a better man, but he was a contented man.

He had no moral discontent in his heart, and that was his trouble. Jacob's only virtue was that he was not a contented man. For as a virtue in a pasture field may be a vice in the kingdom of God, that is complacency.

But the man upon whom God has laid his hand becomes discontented. The purpose of all books on how to have peace of mind is to get you contented, get you adjusted so that you are well contented with your lot in life. But the purpose of the Holy Ghost is not to make you contented, but to stir within you a longing that's not fulfilled.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. The hungry man is the man that will get food, and the thirsty man is the man that will get drink. Paris Reidhead says that the weak preachers are out trying to get people to eat food that they don't want, and drink water that they have no consciousness of desiring.

He's perfectly right. If you have a sense, if you're bothered by religion, if there is a longing after God inside your heart, if there is a deep dissatisfaction with your present spiritual and moral state, blessed are you. Flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you, but my Father which is in heaven.

If you have a hunger after the bread of life, blessed are you, because there are thousands just as good as you are that don't have it at all. There are thousands that are better men than you, and women that don't have it, that are kinder, that are more thoughtful of others, and have the common little human virtues that we admire, and yet they do not have this moral discontent. And for that reason, like Esau, they will be cast aside, and their birthright removed, because they have no discontent.

And then the third is a consuming hunger. I have mentioned that partly. But this consuming hunger is something without which there can be no manifestation, and there can be no transformation.

This consuming hunger, this longing after God, you remember that Julian of Norwich prayed for the wound of contrition, and the wound of compassion, and the wound of earnest longing after God. This is a mark of the Christian, the mark of the one who will be a Christian, the mark of the one who will become a Christian, the mark of the prodigal who is about to get up and start home, the mark of the sheep that is about to be found. This beautiful pining of holy desire, this yearning and longing after God, and that is followed by a deep humility, a deep humility.

There is so much in religion these days that is not humble. It's human. It's Christianity.

But the mark of God's chosen, one mark, is that of deep humility. And those who have it have renounced self-trust. They don't intend to try to make themselves good.

They don't intend to try to make themselves acceptable to God. They've renounced self-trust, and they've seen themselves as they are, and no man who sees himself as he is can ever be proud. But a man can be perfectly happy about himself, and quite satisfied.

He has learned a language of humility, and if you praise him for something, he'll say, well, it wasn't anything. But in his deep heart there's great pride there. But those upon whom the hand of God has fallen, the blessed ones, the happy ones, they may not be saved yet, they may not be in the kingdom, but in a sense that is not true of others, they are those that God will give to his son.

They have a deep humility, and they know that they're no good, and with Paul they say, I'm chief of sinners, and I'm not worthy to be called a Christian. And then lastly, there is the limitless receptivity to God. Now, everybody's receptive to something, you know.

Everybody's receptive to something, and the advertisers well know that. They know that the world is going to be receptive. That is, you and I are sponges.

We can take it in, and it's amazing how much we can take in. There are men now wintering, or just have been wintering, in the watering places of the world that made money on the fact and got rich on the fact that you and I have receptivity. We're receptive to ideas, and we're receptive to pressure, and we're receptive to psychological push.

We're receptive to it. Everybody's receptive. The woman who reads the ads and sees they're selling something with three cents off, she'll burn six cents worth of gasoline to go down and buy it in order to save money.

She's receptive to those things, you see. Receptivity is everywhere, but one of the mysterious signs of identification is that some people are receptive to God. God is here searching, and searching for the receptive heart.

And when his gospel falls on the receptive mind, there is an immediate response. When his gospel falls on the heart of the man who is not receptive, there's no response at all. When the rain falls on the sidewalk, it lies there until it's evaporated and goes back from whence it came.

When the rain falls on the fruitful field, it fructifies it and makes it fruitful, and it brings forth grain. And so, when the gospel falls on certain minds, there is no response at all, except an aesthetic response, maybe, or poetic response, but there's no moral response. You're receptive to something.

Are you receptive to the voice of God? If so, then, I say, blessed are you, because there are so many of which it's not so. God is here searching, and he's looking for the receptive heart, and he's passing his Geiger counter over people, and he does it all the time. And there is no evidence, when he passes it over some people's hearts, that they know God is present at all.

But when he passes it over other hearts, there's a disturbance inside. There's a grief, there's a sorrow, there's a longing, there's a turning against self, there is a turning toward the cross, there are the beginnings of repentance, because they've got that receptivity there. And I believe that the Holy Spirit is constantly passing over us, constantly passing the truth over us.

And I pray, I would rather die, I tell you frankly that I would rather die, I would rather walk out here on the sidewalk and drop over and be gathered up by the authorities and carried away, and thus end my earthly life, and to grow to lose my sensitivity, and lose my receptivity, and lose my humility, and lose my hunger, and lose my discontent with my present state. God has a few that are insatiable. You can't satisfy them.

I grieve, I grieve over the playboy Christians that are satisfied. They're happy back-slapping fellows who think that Jesus Christ is simply wonderful. But there is no receptivity to God there, no longing after God, no deep yearning for holiness, no consuming hunger to be like Jesus, no awful devouring discontent.

I'm afraid that on our continent we have this kind of Christians in vast numbers. We've got to pray, we've got to pray that God will have his way in the whirlwind and the storm. But you say, if God has elected and chosen, why should we pray? I answer that I do not believe that God has chosen from the foundation of the world certain ones, and they can't escape and reject other ones, and they can't come.

But I do believe that as God moves among men, some respond, and while they're not yet converted, maybe, they have this quality in them which God calls them. He says, they're mine. They are mine.

No man can come except the Father draws him. No man can come. So when God finds this moral sensitivity there, when God finds this deep discontent and this consuming hunger after God, when he finds this deep humility and limitless receptivity to eternal things, God says he's mine in a peculiar way.

God begins to move him and crowd him toward Christ. We've got to pray, we've got to pray that circumstances or some mystery of God will come to greater numbers, and that instead of the satisfied Christians that we have now and the satisfied religious people that we have now, we'll have people who are troubled. When Peter preached the gospel at Pentecost, people were troubled deeply.

The arrows of God's truth went into their hearts, and they became spiritually sensitive to a point where they cried out, Oh, men and brethren, what shall we do? It's this that we need. We need it as a baptism. We need a cloud, a rain from God that will find these people and will bring them to Jesus.

We need it, and we need it desperately, and we need it here in this church. Now, what can I do for myself if I am not a Christian? But I do find that I have a great sensitivity toward spiritual things. I do find that I am not contented with my state.

I do find that I have a great hunger to know God. I do find that there is a receptivity to the voice of the gospel. What should I do? Repent and seek the healing sorrow.

Repent and seek the healing sorrow, for there is a healing sorrow. There is a sorrow that brings us to repentance never to be repented of. It is the healing sorrow.

I would rather be no Christian at all than to be the finished and finite type of Christian, untroubled by a spark of desire, untroubled by a spark of longing, untroubled by a spark of sensitivity. I pray God may keep his longing. Men come to me and they say, I am troubled, I am troubled, I am not where I ought to be, I am seeking, I am longing after God.

Have you got a light for me? I usually begin by telling them, You are the least of my troubles. You are the least of my troubles, and I believe you are the least of God's troubles, that you should be disturbed and worried over your spiritual condition. For there are not many that are, and the ones that are invariably go forward to new heights and new depths and plumb new abysses of glory and rise to new heights of glory.

What I am worried about is not those who come and say, I am in trouble, my heart aches, I long for God, what shall I do? My grief is for those who can shake your hand and smile in your face and never feel a longing, have never experienced a twinge of moral discontent, never know receptivity, so go their ways, figuring out their lives, keeping generally within the bracket of popular Christianity, but never seeking after God. Oh, that God would bring seekers among us, and that he would make us seekers, and that he would make you a seeker, and if you are not a Christian, that he would give you the healing sorrow of repentance now, and if you are a Christian, that he would fill your heart with a great longing, that would rather seek God than have the world or anything the world can offer. Now let us pray.

Maybe the Holy Spirit has spoken to some. If he has, I want to pray for you, and will you raise your hand so I will know you want prayer, anybody present here tonight, God bless you, I see you back there, anybody else would say pray for me, Mr. Tozer, who else, yes, I see you too, and you, who else here tonight, anybody up on the balcony here who would like to have us pray for them, just put up their hand.

Father, we pray for these men and women who have raised their hand tonight, and have by it asked us to pray for them.

O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Lord God of our Savior Jesus Christ, we pray that thou will take these and lead them, and

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