

Mistaking Word for Deed

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon warns against mistaking the word for the deed, emphasizing the importance of living out one's faith in everyday life.

Scripture: Matthew 5:16, Matthew 7:21, Luke 6:46, John 14:15, Romans 2:13, Galatians 5:6, Titus 1:16, James 1:22, 1 Peter 1:22, 1 John 2:4

Topics: "Faith in Action", "True Discipleship"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the critical distinction between knowing the teachings of Christianity and truly living them out, drawing parallels with the philosopher Epictetus, who valued practical application over mere knowledge. Tozer warns that many professed Christians fall into the trap of mistaking intellectual understanding for genuine faith, highlighting that true wisdom is demonstrated through actions rather than words. He challenges believers to examine their lives and ensure that their faith is reflected in their deeds, rather than simply in their knowledge of scripture.

Transcript

The genuine philosopher, Epictetus used to say, was not one who had read Chrysippus and Diogenes and so could discourse learnedly on the teachings of these men, but one who had put their teachings into practice. Nothing else would satisfy him. He refused to call any man a philosopher who showed evidence of pride, covetousness, self-love or worldly ambition.

Epictetus was not impressed by eloquence or learning. It was a waste of time for the student to recite the list of books he had read. "What has your reading done for you?" he asked his students, and looked not to their words but to their lives for the answer. He required of the young men who sought him out that they bring their lives into immediate harmony with the Stoic doctrines. "If you don't intend to live like a philosopher, don't come back," he told them bluntly. He drew a sharp distinction between a philosopher in fact and a student of philosophy, and would have nothing to do with the mere student. With him it was all or nothing. There was no middle ground.

This is not to advocate the teachings of the Stoics, but to assert that many of "the heathen in their blindness" appear to have more light than some Christians and that the children of this world often show more real wisdom than some of the children of God. For the snare Epictetus warned against is the very one into which multitudes of professed Christians are falling, viz., mistaking the word for the deed and falsely assuming that if they know the teaching of the Christian faith they are therefore in that faith.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/mistaking-word-for-deed/>

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