

# Paul's Self-Distrust

by A.W. Tozer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of self-distrust and humility in order to experience spiritual victory and trust in God's power and character.*

**Duration:** 24:32

**Scripture:** Philippians 3:7

**Topics:** "Distrust"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the danger of relying on our own virtues and stability. He explains that God teaches us to distrust ourselves in four ways, including through holy inspiration and going through difficult experiences. The preacher also warns against sympathizing with Job's suffering and taking his side against God. He highlights the humility of the apostle Paul, who recognized that his abilities and power came from God alone. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the need to trust in God rather than ourselves and to acknowledge our own shortcomings.

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## Transcript

Still in Philippians 3, and you must grind it out again by reading it once more. In 7 to 15 of Philippians 3, beginning with, But those tend to me, I found it lost for time. And that's only to know, and found in him, not having mine own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God's respect.

Which by means I might attain, and not to go I had already had attained. But I follow after, and I forget the things that are behind, and I search forward. And what I search for is much more.

Now, this man, this most aggressive man, the boldest man, this pure-hearted man, and this painter. And if you think I'm overstating, let me read to you some things. The Holy Ghost instantly says itself, that in every city, bonds and afflictions awaken, but no need.

Neither count I my life near unto myself, nor that I might finish my course in my ministry. He said rather partly, Though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, you have one. You have not many followers, for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

Therefore be followers of me. In 1st chapter he said, I have judged already what to do concerning this man, that he done this deed. The Lord Jesus Christ, with the power of the Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one that's taken for the destruction of the flesh.

That the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. The late Jesus said, From henceforth let no man trouble me. I bear in my body the mark of the Lord Jesus.

Now those are only five texts. But you have framed them all through Acts and Luke. There was a pure-heartedness about this man.

None of this crawling on his stomach. This man, what he believed, knew where he stood. He knew God, and he was confident with a great confidence.

But that same man was yet the most careful man. Listen to this. Later, 1st century.

Finally, and there not need to be called an apostle. It's only by the grace of God that I am what I am. 2nd century.

We have this plagiarism vessel. That the excellency of the power may be of God and not of others. This is a faithful shame.

And worthy of all expectations. Jesus came into the world to save sinners of which I am true. Romans.

Everything in me is in my natural flesh. In my body, in my natural nature, my soul. For I know that in me dwelleth no good thing.

Now I haven't exhausted these texts. I've only given you five precepts on each side. And therefore we may properly conclude that Paul's great triumph from his side resulted from an end.

And radical distrust of himself. And that's what I'm going to teach on tonight. Self-distrust as the last great obstacle, or self-trust, obstacle to spiritual triumph.

And this man, Paul, didn't trust himself. Before his life, before God, he couldn't say too much against himself. He had no confidence, Paul.

And the confidence of the man, God, was in inverse proportion to his confidence in himself. As far as he trusted himself, he did not trust God. As far as he distrusted himself, he was thrown out upon God.

Now, self-trust. The expectability and self-assurance which come by education, birth, what you hear about yourself, and about yourself, and all the tests you make of yourself, self-trust is the last great obstacle to go out of the light. Charles explains, after you think it's gone, it still isn't gone.

And that is why you wait. There's a deep river of God. There's animals around the waterhole.

Crazy wind. You never do quite get in. There was an old man that I want to quote a little tonight, not boringly.

He had a wonderful name, I think, Lorenzo Cipolli. I think that's right. Well, Lorenzo Cipolli was one of those strange products who, in his lifetime, had a father who was considered more or less a heretic of his angelical views.

That was way back a few 400 years ago. And he said this, This trust in yourself is so necessary to you in this combat that without it you must hold it certain. What I like about such men as all the others is the clear, sharp, clean language they use, without any as-it-were stuff, without any of that, well, as-it-were and so to speak, and none of that.

He said, This trust of yourself is so necessary to you in this fatal combat that without it you must hold it certain that you will not be able to die a victory. This trust of self. And he said, We are much too easily inclined to a false opinion of ourselves.

Without any foundation at all, he said, we presume vainly in our own sense. Now this is, in effect, very difficult to understand, and most displeasing in the eyes of those who love us and desire to give us a loyal recognition of every grace and, loyal recognition, recognition that every grace and every virtue proceeds from him who is the fountain of all good, and that nothing, not even a good thought, can come from us except it be of his will. Now you can be converted, born again, and be walking around testifying for a hundred, haven't been around a hundred years, but we haven't found this out yet.

We haven't found out what Paul, and what the Bible quotes but never answers us, that this obstacle to spiritual victory is self-trust, and after sin has been put away, every sin that we know has in our search for God, and after all the self-sins that we know about have been crucified, we've stopped boasting, we've stopped loving ourselves with sin, and we've put away the hyphenated self-sans, and since they're pretty well gone, and we reckoned ourselves indeed to be dead, have died with Jesus Christ, and after we've humbled ourselves, even publicly by going to an altar, then self-trust may be stronger than it was before, because it has more foundation to build on, and so after we have put away our sins, and after we have given up our wealth, we have taken a poor position, and allowed ourselves to be shoved around, and after we have been rubbed in the dust, then self-trust, this is the consolation. So, take that consolation of self-history there, for the Holy Ghost, a week when you think we're strong, and self-consolation and self-trust, it goes like this, it says, now you're far, you people are here 70 to 90, you're far in advance of us, and you've put in, and you've confessed and humbled yourself, now you may trust yourself, of course with God's help, and you may expect a victory to come, and power to be at your side. You're not one of these, you're one of these living self-tellers, and it cost you a lot, hasn't it, brother, and you've had to part with friends in order to push on, haven't you, self-tellers, and rub your back, and you enjoy it so much.

Self-tellers, you've put sin behind you, haven't you, yes, and now you may trust yourself, you're up there, you're getting somewhere, of course you understand it's got to be God's help, but victory now, now that's self-trust, brother, and almost all the joy every Christian has is the back-stretching. That's all the pleasure he gets, is the back-stretching that he gets from self. You take a cat, and between the ears, and it'll close its eyes, and you call hunker down, that is, back in Pennsylvania, that's what I mean, hunker, and just, you know, crouch it, and I think that's an old Scotch word, and quite familiar to me as my boyhood.

Well, a cat will do that to be scratched. A cow will come, put her head over the fence, and you scratch it between the ears, and pet her, and she'll love and stand there. Self is always scratching the ears of the people of God, and the further they go on into the world, the further they go, the more back-stretching they get, the more ear-stretching.

And self says, well, certainly you know better, on the campus, and you, you're different, you love the old you, and you're none of this, and you're a separated Christian, none of these movies for you, none of this crazy modern stuff for you, you're, you're better. You don't know what's happening to you, you're feeling good, and you're feeling good is strictly a self that hasn't yet died. The self-trust is there, after you think it's gone.

Why is self-trust so wrong? Self-trust is so wrong because it robs God to give to man. God said, you have robbed me, and you say, wherein have we robbed you? Well, that was under another context, but we rob

and we take away from God the, this thing that the brother wrote about, that he is the God of all good, and that nothing, not even a good thought can come from us except it comes from God. We take that away to give it to our converted and sanctified selves.

And it's just as bad, just as bad as it can be because it takes away from God the ultimate, the final trust. It misjudges God and holds God to be less than he is and man to be more than he is. This is mainly the trouble with it.

You think God's less than he is, more than he is, and you can go to school and study theology and learn how God is the source and fountain and all the rest, and learn about the attributes in our heart, still believe God is less than he is and we're more than we are. And thus, it's like the moon. Suppose the moon could talk and think and have a personality and should begin to say, well, I shine.

I shine on the earth. And I, that I'm around where I can reach the earth where I see the earth become beautiful. And somebody would come and say, well, listen, if you're by yourself, you're a bird-ass, don't you know that you've been discovered and found out? You don't shine enough.

If the sun was shining and I could see myself telling the moon, well, you're shining. You're doing a good job. I notice when you're not up, the whole side of the earth lies in darkness.

But when it lightens up and you begin to see the roofs of houses and you do a fine job, and the moon would nod and say, well, the glory belongs to God and by the grace of God I'm like this. But all the time, the moon thinks it's shining. The moon isn't shining at all.

It's reflecting. And think Paul could boldly shine because he knew that he wasn't shining at all. He knew that he didn't have a thing that was fit for heaven.

It was the grace of God in him. And again, he completely and radically distrusted himself. Now, no man ever really knows about himself.

He doesn't know how he feels. He just knows what he sounds like. Everybody thinks he sounds right until he leaves himself on tape.

Well, it never happened to me. It happened about when I had my first sermon placed on a record, a part of it. I heard that.

I never could stand myself then. Never. Never could stand myself.

Never could stand the sound of my own voice. So I was that man. I heard myself on tape dozens of times trying to work something out that I could use.

But it always comes time, I have been told, that I had a fine preaching voice, people coming, good voice. But I heard myself. Nobody needed any more of it.

I listened to it. I've been forced to hear it. But no man knows the sound of his own voice till he hears it.

And no one knows how weak he is till God's exposed him. And nobody wants to be exposed. But God has exposed him.

And what we consider our strength is our weakness. If you will think over your life reverently, carefully, in prayer, on a pad, the things you think are your virtues, those are your weaknesses. And those very virtues force you to resolve trouble.

And the only way you can deal with yourself is look away and look unto Him. You stop thinking about yourself at all. Now, nobody can know how weak he is, nobody can know how bad he is until he's been exposed by the Holy Ghost and nobody wants to be exposed.

And nobody knows how unstable he is. Paul, in the Old Testament, has said, Is thy servant a dog that I would do a thing like that? Apparently he meant it. Went straight home and did it.

Do you remember a certain great old, bold, patron? He said, Let everybody else run from you, Lord, I'll not. The Lord said, Before the cross comes Christ, you will. And he did.

And you will find that nobody knows how unstable he is. And that's why it's dangerous to trust. That's why it's dangerous to trust our virtues.

Because we're unstable. How then do we learn, he said? Well, this distrust is indeed the work of God's hand. And he's accustomed to give it to his dear friends in four ways.

Well, it takes the hide off. But here are the four ways that God teaches distrust. Maybe four are valid ways.

He says, He says, It's the work of God's hand, this distrust. That's too bad. I saw a cartoon once of a fellow with a hole in the top of his head and a funnel.

And somebody was told, And I've always had a kind of a goofy longing that I could do that with congregations, you know. Just, just, just trick them, don't they call that? Put them, pour it in. But you can't get it that way.

All any priest can do, and I don't care who he is, All he can do is point to the Lamb of God, Then you're on your own. And if you don't make it false necessarily, If he hasn't been quite honest enough, Hasn't been quite severe enough, Hasn't been quite, quite powerful enough, Maybe if he's done that one thing, that's all. Now, there are four things, says the dear old man of God.

And what he says is, Is proclaimed and confirmed by almost all of the devotional writers. And the great hymns. And by all persons about whom the biographies were written.

He says, sometimes it comes by holy inspiration. Now that's the best way to, The best way to find out you're no good is to have God flash a holy inspiration into your soul and just let you know suddenly. I think that's happened.

I think it has. Brother Lawrence, you know. Herman.

Nicholas Herman. Brother Lawrence. He said it happened to him.

And he said for 40 years he never was out of the presence of God once. Never out of the conscious presence of God. And he said when I, and decided to obey Jesus.

And walk this holy way. He said from reading around and hearing, I gather. That I have to suffer.

And he said for some reason God never counted me worthy of much suffering. He just, he just let me, He said I put all my self-trust away and I'm trusting in God completely. Paraphrasing.

Carrying his cross, he said, and believing he's around me and near me and praying all the time. And he said he's never given me very much suffering to do. And I do, and it's cited quite a little bit of attention around over this country.

About little old Julian. There's Julian, Lady Julian. And they're searching for her books and all the rest now.

Well, she only wrote one. And outside of that one, when she got her three wounds. She never had to do much suffering after that.

God gave by a holy inspiration. She knew instantly she was no good in Jesus Christ with everything. And she stayed right there until she died.

Going every day. This way to get it. Would be for the Lord to come and just by a sweet, sudden, holy inspiration within our hearts through the scriptures.

If you say, Mr. President, I already know I'm bad. I'm a believer in total depravity. You can be a believer in total depravity.

And be as proud as Luther. And trust yourself to the face of God and prevent victory. Theological total depravity hasn't got a, hasn't, isn't what you want.

I happen to be one of those who believe, according to the scriptures, that man is a sinner by, what is it? Ailing by birth and a sinner by choice. I believe that. I never believed anything yet.

I, I never have any trouble with theology. Some people are in difficulty with theology. Either I don't have sense enough to adhere to God's preservation.

Because I never have any worry about total depravity. And how I can inherit the evil from my father. I, I don't know a thing about it.

All I know is, as soon as I was ten, I went into the business. And I know that every child I've ever known or seen did the same thing. And I said to the boys upstairs, excuse this question, I said, you know, every race and every nationality does it.

Everybody, and he said, yes, all but the Irish. Smack it to you, see. But every nationality, every, but the vice that stands out.

Beetle nuts to one place, and to somebody else another. And vice. And what's the reason? At least one.

God knows there may be a thousand. But at least outstanding. Because we're all alike.

We're born. And we can believe that and accept it and teach it boldly to others. And those who most trust me, may yet be the ones who are most often quoted.

Quoting, all our righteousnesses are but filthy rags. Care to S on the end and confirm the fact that it's not singular but plural. Our righteousnesses are filthy rags.

Now, you see, it takes, it takes the Holy Ghost to tell you you're bad and make you sick. It takes the Holy Ghost to tell you you're weak and make you sick. Uh, the teacher can tell you you're weak and you can go through and get a degree that long.

And come out and proudly out to be a teacher or proudly out to be a missionary or a bishop. He says, God wants to give his friends or tell his holy friends, teach them to help be a trust. Sometimes with holy, or a second, sometimes with trust.

That's more where I am. With harsh courage. And I don't know who we could use for a better election.

We pity Job's soul with human, human sympathy. Take Job's part against God if we don't watch ourselves. And we certainly take Job's part against his wife.

The only good thing about all that was that she never heard of again. I don't know what happened to her, but she got out of the picture.

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