

# Philippians

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer's sermon on Philippians calls believers to pursue a deeper relationship with Christ and strive for spiritual perfection through grace and holiness.*

**Duration:** 39:06

**Scripture:** Philippians 3:9

**Topics:** "Philippians", "Pursuit of God", "Spiritual Perfection"

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## Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the pursuit of knowing Christ and attaining spiritual perfection, urging believers to forget past failures and press forward towards the high calling of God. He highlights the importance of cleansing the intentions of our hearts through God's grace, enabling us to love and praise Him worthily. Tozer warns against complacency in the Christian life, advocating for a deeper, more committed relationship with God that transcends mere surface-level faith. He calls for a revolution in the church, encouraging believers to detach from worldly influences and strive for holiness and joy. Ultimately, Tozer's message is a passionate plea for spiritual awakening and a deeper understanding of our purpose in Christ.

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## Transcript

Christ and be found in him not having mine own righteousness which is of the law but that which is through the faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead not as though I had already attained either were already perfect but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus brethren I count not myself to have apprehended but this one thing I do forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth under those things which are before I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God and Christ Jesus let us therefore as many

as be perfect be thus mind and if in anything ye the otherwise minded God shall reveal even this unto you nevertheless where to we have it already attained let us walk by the same rule let us mind the same thing now I have in mind particularly in this text that I may know him and that I may attain unto a superior resurrection for that's here all right and that I may lay hold of that way for which Christ has laid hold of me a dual laying hold Christ laid hold but I must lay hold of him for that for which he laid hold of me or it's not completed then I forget what's behind and I press toward the mark those are the words that will particularly

be in our mind though I shall roam far and wide in the message let us have a word of prayer first now our Lord our Lord we appeal to thee we're here

tonight it's comfortable we're well off we're as happy as human beings usually get but thou knowest how time like an ever-rolling stream bears all its sons away next Sunday or the next some of us may not be here at all or anywhere else here in this world for little by little we fall through the screen wine of life keeps dropping and the leaves of life keep falling and what we do we've got to do right away I'll give us we beseech thee now O Lord the courage and the determination to bring to a head all our vagrant and fugitive wishes and begin tonight press forward seek to lay hold of that for which we were laid hold of by thee Christ's name now the text which I have read and have been using is the testimony of a man panting after God and after some kind of spiritual perfection a man saying

in one breath not that I am yet perfect and in the next breath but as many as be perfect let them be thus minded now this enjoying what you have and longing for more this thanking God for what he has done and yearning to have him do more is quite the mood and the temperament of the old and the New Testament the law and the prophets the Psalms and the New Testament are all alike in this and it is not only the temper and mood of the New Testament but it's also the temper of the superior souls who have written the great books of devotion unfortunately over the last 50 years in the English-speaking world and I would suppose in the other parts too where there are evangelicals we have allowed to fall into disuse the great devotional books that have moved the ages that have helped to bring

revival that have helped to keep alive the flame of divine fire in the hour of the church's deepest woe we have forgotten them they're very difficult to get and we have gone to reading the books written by men who read other men's books and they were written by men who had read somebody else's books and it's all echo and reflection but it's very difficult to find the reality and the reality was found by these men of whom I speak certain great souls within the bracket of sound Orthodox Christianity they wrote for us some great books the pastor brother Newell has been reading communion Sunday morning a verse or two now and then for one of those great books the imitation of Christ there are others and I am intending to use one of them a little in these evenings these Sunday evenings as I'm

talking on the deeper light it's a little book called the cloud of unknowing I'll refer to it later and I said that this temper of having and yet wanting holding and yet yearning thanking and yet begging being there and yet pressing on this is the mood of the of the Bible and it's the mood of the men who've written our great books of devotion and it's the mood of those who've written our loftiest hymns our greatest hymns you will find to have this same spirit in them and in all these talks that I'm going to be giving over the next weeks I shall not diverge one inch from the broad field covered by the great hymns you'll sing them all the time and don't know what you're singing and they we're going to let we're going to let one of these great men speak to us a little I want to quote him now

and again I promise you that I shall not quote such it so at length that it shall become boresome at all but I do want to quote this old fellow he lived 200 years before Luther I don't know who he was nobody knows who he was he wrote three books this being the most famous of them all the cloud of unknowing and the purpose of his book was that the Christians might become what he called one with God who that is united united with God now though he made a great prayer at the beginning of his book I just want to I just want to read that prayer and make a few comments on it and you'll recognize it because it has been borrowed and taken over into some of the rituals of the churches he makes a little prayer now he made this prayer and wrote this down churches have borrowed it but he made it and

maybe you've heard it in ritualistic churches were there the ritual read maybe you have heard it and up to now it hasn't registered at all it hasn't meant anything at all to you but when you know that an old singing throat this and put it down in a little book and that that's the origin of it maybe it'll mean more to you now here's what he said he prays he said Oh God under whom all hearts be open and the beginning of his prayer he knew that there that everybody's heart was open to God you can shut your heart and lock it with a key and throw the key away and still it's open to God God sees into every open heart the x-ray eyes of God can see through all the vault doors that you can close and lock God sees your heart God unto whom all hearts be open open and all will speak it that is

whatever you will that talks aloud a man wants something or will something or determine something and God knows what he wills and determines and his will is eloquent and speaks loudly he may stand on the street corner or in the Wednesday night prayer meeting he may lead in prayers we call it for 20 minutes and not mean a thing of it but whatever he wills in his heart that's his prayer whatever he wills that's what he's praying and all will speak as he said and unto whom no privy thing is hid that is no secret thing is hid then he makes his prayer I beseech thee I beseech thee although that's the kind of God I'm praying to I beseech you the soul for to cleanse the intent of my heart I heard of something here this morning that I smiled it's a quite British and Canadian I'd never heard it

except here the pastor was telling you that if you wanted to invest in Glenrocks you should give what he called a notice of intention now that's a that's a good expression I hadn't heard it I think except in Canadian circles but it's it's a mighty good expression and a notice of intention why do you intend he said I beseech thee so for to cleanse the intent of my heart now whatever your heart intends to do brother that's what you are and that's what you will be and that's how God sees you and we can put on a front if we will but we have already given God our notice of intention and this man prays Oh God cleanse my intention so that when you look and read across my heart written in fiery letters what my intention is what my spiritual intent is you it'll be cleansed and you'll know what it

is and you'll be pleased with it and he says cleanse the intent of my heart how by the unspeakable gift of thy grace I want you to know that this man believed in grace just as much as anybody moved a Bible Institute or anywhere else the unspeakable gift of thy grace and why God do you why why my God might say to him do you want to have your intentions cleansed with my grace he says that I may perfectly love thee and worthily praise thee now I want to ask you my brother is there anything fanatical about this would you after you read your Bible even a little bit even the most cursory reading of your Bible would you come to the conclusion that a man who wanted to be so delivered from sin and blessed by God that he could do these two things perfectly love God and worthily praise God do you

think that man is fanatic you think he ought to be thrown out of the church for conduct I'm becoming a Christian and all he wanted of God was that he might perfectly love God and worthily praise God I think there's a lot of praising God that isn't worth it at all we praise God in song and we're not worthily praising him because the intent of our heart hasn't been cleansed by the unspeakable gift of God's grace we're not worthily praising then we have those perpetual praisers that stick a fishy hand in yours shake in a limber sort of way and say praise the Lord well they're not worthily praising the Lord you know that's just a habit it's just like it's the same as meeting somebody and saying what do you know doesn't have a meaning in the world and then he says perfectly love thee I may

perfectly love thee and that's what Jesus taught that all along the prophets summed up to that we might love God perfectly that is we might love him with our minds and love him with our emotions and love him

with our souls and love him with all our strength and love God until it became a consuming fire to us now that's all this man asked for and my friends this is all I'm preaching these nights I don't know what they're saying about me over Toronto I haven't heard anything bad yet then I have been around there are right people I suppose but I don't know what they're saying but I want you to carry the news if you're interested at all to mention it after you leave the church that all we want here is that we might perfectly love God and worthily praise God and we mean that when we say we're

not just fooling we mean that we want to perfectly love him and praise him in a manner worthy of him ah my brother this is what we want now we're going to let this old unknown Saint I'm gonna have to invent a name for him one of these days I'll come through with one but I haven't named him yet he's mr. anonymous up to now he's the praying soul but he says that there are four stages in the Christian life I mentioned that back in October another sermon that I preached different sermon that this man said there were four stages of the Christian life he said there's the common Christian and the spatial Christian and the singular Christian and the perfect Christian you have to go through the first one to get to the second one but most of us are satisfied to remain common Christians but a few

press on to become spatial Christians there they're just a little bit different they're a little superior though they feel they're a little bit inferior but they are a little bit superior to the rank-and-file of common ordinary Christians they don't know it but other people know it and then there's the singular Christian who still made an advance forward he has been singled out as as unusually thirsty and he unusually determined that he's going to be a better Christian than he was he's determined about this he's a singular Christian then there's the perfect Christian but this man says that the three of these may be begun and ended in this life but the fourth may be by grace begun here but shall ever last without end in the bliss of heaven he's a very humble old man and he's very cautious

to tell us that the perfect Christian is not likely to know he is and that he may enter into the environs of spiritual perfection but he'll never arrive at the place in this life where he stands up and says I am perfect never will he do that he says that isn't that you can pass through from being an ordinary Christian to being a spatial Christian cut out spatially by the Lord and you can go on to be in a singular Christian marked out as being holy the Lord's but when you pass on beyond that you begin a life of toward leading toward perfection but he says that that act goes on now that's exactly the theology taught by the Christian and Missionary Alliance incidentally it teaches the Christian Missionary Alliance has always taught that there is such a thing as entering into a place of of

consecration a critical and vital act of consecration that moved you over into a place where you were beginning at least enter into the perfect life but that you went on and on progressive they call that no all that I don't know how many preachers are here tonight how many men who have been examined for ordination but you know one of the things they examine you on is on the doctor of sanctification they want to know about that and usually everybody seems to be contented if you say I believe that sanctification is both an act and a progressive state a progressive act everybody's satisfied but the trouble is that most churches are satisfied to progress so slowly that it'll take one millennium past the coming of the Lord before they arrive anywhere we're contented to progress slowly if we

went through school as slowly as we go up these steps into the deeper life we wouldn't get through school where one fellow said he was well educated he'd been in the fifth grade four years and that's where we'd be we Christians are we stay in the fifth grade four years we don't progress we don't go forward I think you call it progress here but if you'll excuse my American accent I call it progress and we'll just settle on that

because I can't learn a new language at my age now I want to begin here if you can begin after you talk 15 minutes I want to begin with a postulate and that postulate is that most present-day Christians live sub-christian lives most present-day Christians live sub-christian lives they're not joyful persons because they're not holy persons and God Almighty has tied

up holiness and joyfulness together and he will not separate them he will not let them to be to be separated an unholy man can be it can be happy in the sense that he's glad that his business is prospering and so on he can be happy that way but he can't be joyful God has made joy and righteousness to go hand in hand joy and peace and righteousness so most Christians are not joyful because they're not holy and they're not holy because they're not spirit filled and they're not spirit filled because they're not separated persons we're there's going to have to be a revolution that will separate the church and detach it from the world in which we live we're going to have to become so detached from the world that we'll be branded as being queer the trouble with this is we're afraid to be

thought peculiar we're not that we will not we want to save face with the world save faith face with the world that crucified Jesus save face with the world that cut the head off of the Apostle Paul save face with the world that's going down in the flood as though Noah had been so fearful of the opinion of the antediluvian population that he made his ark in the woods somewhere where he couldn't be seen ashamed of what he was doing he had to separate himself from the world and if the world went by the evangelists say it did I've never written a Bible but all I know is what the evangelists say they say that everybody went by making fun of Noah I don't know whether they did but if they did he either paid no attention to them at all which I'd inclined to think or he said to them you're all

going to perish they held their hands over their mouths and went away thinking that they had seen the world's prime nut but he had heard from God and he knew what was going to happen well we got to be separated and further the average Christian is not a Christlike Christian that is he's not been one with Christ one there are in the air most Christians bad dispositional flaws moral weaknesses when I say moral weaknesses I don't mean unchastity we've used that word moral to mean only one thing in our day but any moral weakness any weakness anything less than the will of God is a moral weakness frequent defects character and dull of understanding living our privileges in Christ and out of the will of God yet we go on you know you can found churches and organizations for the evangelization of

the Penguins and you can be busy promoting religion right and left constantly and still this be true of you not be separated not show bad dispositional flaws all the way through and frequent personal moral defeats and still be zealous one of the most zealous religions I won't I won't advertise it by mentioning it call themselves Christians but they aren't they come around to your house in twos two but two and if they can't break you down they fly out and get mad somebody told me about asking one of them now let's pray they got down on their knees and the man got so furious they got up and left in a cloud of dust while the man was praying angry said I'll never be back here well and that's what I call this been a dispositional weakness a breakdown and God's people shouldn't have them but

they do now this substandard condition is not unfamiliar you will find in the Old Testament that God said about Israel though though the children of Israel should be like the sands of the sea yet there shall be a remnant and that idea of a vast number of ordinary professors and a small remnant that really knows God is quite in order down the years you'll find it there and our Lord Jesus Christ said that when he came that the love of the many would wax cold and would he find faith on the earth and you'll remember that in the seven letters our Lord wrote to the churches how he began the best he could by telling them that they he

was glad for some things they'd done but nevertheless I have somewhat against thee use three words here nevertheless but and notwithstanding nevertheless I've

somewhat against you but thou has suffered that woman Jezebel notwithstanding you have done so and so they weren't where they should have been now if there's any disagreement here on this I suppose we might just well hang our taker hats and go home because I don't think there'll be any reason for me to preach on because I base what I'm having to say here upon this postulate that we Christians aren't a very good spiritual condition that not even not even the people of the Alliance Church in very good spiritual condition we need help from God that we might perfectly love God and worthily praising that we might have the intents of our hearts cleansed by the unspeakable gift of God's grace so that we may be united with Christ and become Christians of a special kind the only kind there ought

to be but compared with the average special now I say if there's no agreement here then there can be no communication I can't possibly if I get up here and say that two times two is five and two times three is seven and two time four nine and then I proceed to demonstrate from there on you and I can get together because you know better you are not going to accept me if I start wrong and so if I'm starting wrong here if it's true as we're told that you believe in Christ and accept Christ and you're born again and that's it whoops from here on we can have fun if that's Christianity brethren then I have no I have no word for you at all I can't get through to you but if believing Christ and being converted being born again is only the birth of the baby and all the rest of his life he's to

grow and increase and mature and become godlike and Christlike then I can get to you if that's true and you believe it and if what we see around us in evangelical circles is what I've branded it to be as simply a nursery the average evangelical church is simply an asylum for retarded spiritual children born again I'm not going to unchurch them I'm not going to say they're not going to heaven because I haven't the keys of him God didn't give it to me and I don't know every man's heart well enough the old man said here that to God every prairie thought was known every private thought is known to God but they're not known to me and I can make mistakes but I don't think I'm making a mistake about the whole Church of Christ because I get around among them now to some people this series can

mean nothing at all you remember here in the 13th chapter of Matthew let me turn to it Matthew 13 10 what our Lord Jesus said talking to the people of his time he said the disciples came and said unto him why speakest thou unto them in parables and he answered and said unto them because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven but to them it is not given but whosoever hath to him shall be given and he shall have more abundance but whosoever hath not from him shall be taken away than that he hath therefore speak I to them in parables because they seeing see not and hearing they hear not neither do they understand and in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which said by hearing you shall hear and shall not understand and seeing you shall see and shall not

perceive for this people's heart is waxed gross and there is a dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed lest they at any time should see with their eyes and hear where their ears and should understand where their heart should be converted and I should heal them but blessed are your eyes for they see in your ears for they hear now the author of the cloud of unknowing warns us and I'm going a little bit against what he says but here's what he here's what he said in the beginning of his book this great little book he says I charge thee and I beseech thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost neither to read this book nor to speak it nor to suffer it to be read written or spoke by any of you or anyone except it be such a one as has in him a true will and whole

intention perfectly to follow Christ not only in active living but in the sovereign as point of contemplative living possible by grace to come to in this present life said I don't want you fooling around my book this book isn't written for the kindergarten said I don't want you fooling around my book if you're not going to go on if you're if you don't plan with all the sovereign intention of your heart to serve God with everything in you to carry the cross and to become a New Testament Christian indeed said I don't want you to bother with it well I am NOT willing to withhold the open secret from those that will understand it simply because there are some that do not and will not understand it and then I confess to just a little bit of amusement here at the kind of people he says he

doesn't want even to listen to this so does anybody like this in your the circle of your religious friends don't bother bringing them because this old man says don't bring him he says any fleshly janglers now that's an idle talker he says a fleshly jangler won't even understand what I'm talking about it's entirely possible to listen to a message straight from the throne of God and not understand it if we're fleshly janglers that is idle talkers and open praisers and blamers of themselves anybody that's busy praising himself or busy blaming himself they didn't believe in either one those old brethren said don't bother blaming yourself and don't bother praising yourself forget yourself and look to Jesus Christ the Lord he's the one after all then he says some more people that I don't want

you to bother bringing around to hear this he says tellers of trifles I don't know so much about Canada yet I've not been here long enough but I know that in the United States that's where just men make millions of dollars telling trifles men go out and do serious hard work and make a fair wage but if they know how to tell a trifle they can make a million a year and then of course it filters down gets in Reader's Digest pretty soon it goes from mouth to mouth and from Christian to Christian and we spend two hours together and a time we spent together one hour one minute spent talking about God in the last meeting we were in and the rest of the time is telling of trifles is it any wonder we don't get anywhere then he says runners you know what a runner is 600 years ago they were over in

England they were calling people runners any of you qualify as a runner well a runner is just an old-fashioned name for a gossip he says I don't want any gossip said anybody that likes to pass on any news he said you won't hear it you can't hear it it is true my brethren but these serious faults among Christians stop our ears so we can't hear and make our hearts fat so we can't understand and then he says the tattlers of tales don't you know you listen to me either he said I can't talk to you and he says the pinchers you know what a pincher is the INCHR said any of you pinchers he said don't bother reading my book you'll not understand it a pincher is just exactly what it seems to be I hold here Canadian quarter in my hand the offering plate goes by and I pinch it and a pincher is a fella

who holds on and pinches his money he's stingy and he said anybody that's stingy can't he can't understand me either and he says for my intent what my intent was never to write such things unto them therefore I would that they meddle not therewith neither they nor any of these curious persons lettered or unlettered you can get into the average group of preachers and some of them have been to school you know and know it very self-conscious curious persons lettered curious persons and you can you can get an argument in a minute over some remote doctrine that nobody understands very well he says don't bother you are these curious learned persons that are ready to talk about consubstantiation and transubstantiation and phalloprogenitiveness says don't bother because these people will not

learn anyway my friends I don't know whether we know maybe the hour of our visitation has come and we're not finding it out but there will be a sorting out and some will go on from stage to stage some will

worry about what I've said and they won't say much but they're worried about some are deeply concerned and some will take a half day out to pray and some will search the New Testament with an avid eager spirit they never had before and some will judge themselves unworthy and back out and say I'm quite satisfied the things as they have been but I give you the word of the heathen when they said arise O sleeper and call upon my God if so be that God will think upon us and for some it will be a time of unconscious testing someday I'll preach a sermon on that drawn from the Bible the

unconscious testings the times when men and women were tested for eternity and didn't know they were being tested when a child in school comes to the time of tests examinations exams they know it they arrive all keyed up and they cram beforehand hoping that they'll pass it but God never says come on out here I want to test you and it came to pass that God did test Abraham but Abraham didn't know it but Abraham passed the test nevertheless passed it with flying colors got himself an A in the school of God's discipline but he didn't know he was being tested and I say unto you whatever your motive in bringing you here tonight can easily be that they this talk and other the talks like these will become to you an unconscious testing Israel came up one time to a little place called Kadesh

Barnea and they didn't know they were being tested only God knew it maybe Moses suspected it and was only a day's journey over into the land or at least a short journey over into the land and at Kadesh Barnea they backed out and refused to go that was a test and they flunked the test and for 40 years they wandered in the wilderness 40 long years they wandered in the wilderness until the whole generation had died they flunked their test this is no time for spiritual babies to play with rattles this is an hour when the world is in agony this is an hour when the coming of the Lord draws nigh this is an hour when the Western world is on the defensive rocked back on her heels three times within six weeks that man who is probably the most popular man in the world Eisenhower suffered humiliating

stunning defeats in international diplomacy what does it mean it can only mean we of the Western world who have imagined that because God had blessed us he would continue to bless us and that we had nothing to worry about can only mean we'd better start doing some anxious considering for maybe after all we're not quite where we ought to be Israel thought that because they were descended of the seed of Abraham therefore everything was all right but they were scattered abroad throughout the whole world and are scattered abroad yet today throughout the whole world because they God turned against them because they turned against God I wonder if our love of money our love of luxury our inordinate and excessive love of pleasure I wonder if it has not softened us morally and placed us in a

position where God is angry with us some say well God will bless Canada in the United States and continue to bless them because out from here go the missionaries since when did God have to play politics and bless countries that aren't worthy of being blessed just because they send out missionaries the missionaries are to be blessed but I wonder if nations can long endure the love money above God love pleasures above prayer and love luxuries above discipline arise O sleeper and call upon thy God it may be that God will think upon us now what is your response I have prayed that it may be over these next Sunday nights I pray that it may be positive and affirmative you know I'm not an alliterative preacher I rarely resort to the old ministerial trick of picking out letters all beginning with

the same the same words all beginning with the same letter but I think of these three beginning with B one of them is desire and the other is determination and the other is desperation and my brothers and sisters if you're concerned that you might arrive at that place very soon where your intents of your heart might be cleansed by the unspeakable gift of the grace of God so these two things would be true that you could

perfectly love God and worthily praise him then I wonder about your desire you've got that desire have you got your determination determination isn't yet quite enough I don't think God ever blesses anybody except desperate people you can get along without him he'll let you but when we arrive at a place of spiritual desperation where we cry unto God as Moses did and as David

did and as Paul did and as almost all the Saints did sometime in their lives and I believe we'll hear from heaven and God will send us a token for good let us pray

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