

# Plague of His Own Heart

by A.W. Tozer

---

*The plague of sin is a personal issue that each person is responsible for, and it can be overcome through the cleansing of the forgiving love of God and the restoration of moral innocence.*

**Duration:** 36:28

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 12:7, 1 Kings 8:23-39, Jeremiah 17:9, Matthew 6:33, John 14:30

**Topics:** "Sinful Nature"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the consequences of sin and the need for repentance. He shares a story of a 15-year-old boy who committed a cold-blooded murder and reflects on the mother's plea for her son's innocence. The preacher emphasizes that sin is a result of Satan's influence and highlights the importance of turning to Jesus for deliverance. He also references the biblical story of Ananias and Sapphira to illustrate the severity of sin and its impact on not only the individual but also their family and community. The sermon concludes with a reminder that Jesus died to save us from the plague of sin and calls for repentance and reliance on God's grace.

---

## Transcript

In the Book of 1 Kings, Solomon is dedicating to the temple of the Lord, and he prays, Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven, and he said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee in heaven above or on the earth beneath, keepeth covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart. Then he prays on and finally, verse 37 and on, if there be in the land famine, if there be blasting, mildew, locusts, or if there be caterpillars, if there be them in the land of their city, whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be, what prayer and supplication be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which know every man the plague, and spread forth his hands toward this house, then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and for days, and give to every man according to his ways whose heart thou knowest, for thou knowest the hearts of all the children of men, that they may hear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers. Now, in verse 38 there is that I want to single out and pinpoint, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart.

And I want to talk about the plague of his own heart. We have the word here, the word plague occurring, and it is one of the great terror words. Since the dawn of history, this terror word, plague, has stopped a frightened and horrified race.

In its most horrible form, it has struck nature. We will find three words here, blight, mildew, and blasphemy. That is the plague nature.

When I was a boy a few years back in the hills of Pennsylvania, we had then a league called the Chesnut. It was tall and lovely, and every fall we would go out and knock down the chestnut burrs, open them, and take home a sack full of most wonderful nuts, the chestnuts. But now you can travel almost where you will, and you will not find a chestnut tree.

They stood like daisies when I was a boy. Today, a plague, a chestnut blight, started about 30 or 40 years ago and swept them away. A plague does when it hits nature.

Out in the Middle West, where I now live, in the city of Chicago and all that area around about, these are Swedish... We have a tree, a pretty well-known tree, the English Elm. Old, fan-shaped, lovely tree that has nothing to be said against it, and everything to be said in its favor. And they meet at the top, and they arch like a cathedral.

And in some of the better areas of cities out in the Middle East, elms are meeting each other and forming a little arch like a cathedral, a beautiful view from around. But now the elm blight has begun, and the scientists are busy trying to discover too, those wondrous elm trees, the beauty of all the... will go the way of the chestnut of a half-generation ago. That's what the plague does when it gets into nature.

Oh, horror! The chilling, blasting terror of the world is when it strikes human beings. The Black Plague of the 14th century that we read about in the history books, that mysterious, strange thing that dropped on healthy men and struck them down, and they died between their work in their rooms, unable buildings, and half of the population under the loan died. So many were dead at once, that they lay like still wood in all directions, believing that they were dead.

That's the Black Plague, and we have today. But now in the Bible, there's a kind of curse that struck men. It might be a sore or a spot.

It seemed to be sudden, and it was a terrifying thing to discover it. The Lord Moses had a very sweet scheme for dealing with the plague. There's a man came with a spot.

They shot him up and watched him carefully. It must have been to be the father, say, of a family, a happy job, and where the father went, and everyone was happy. And then one day he discovers a little spot, thinks nothing of it, thinks it's a mosquito bite, perhaps, or an insect bite, and his days notice it's growing and goes to the priest, has the examination made, and is told that he has the plague.

Kissed, or say goodbye without touching, rather, his family, and go out a marked man with the mark of the plague upon him among the caves and the rocks. What a terrible thing the plague is. Now, I am not to speak about the plague in this ground by way of illustration.

Nor am I even to talk about the plague of the human body, such as leprosy. But I want to talk about her. And I am not thinking, in my, of the masses.

One of the neatest ways to get out from under conviction, in my, about things. If every man's a sinner, then nobody's a sinner. If it's true of the whole congregation, then everybody can.

But it's when the Holy Ghost focuses the light on you alone, or me alone, and the Sharpie Ghost points to our heart and says, Thou art the man. Then, you can begin to get somewhere from there. And the scripture says every man should know the plague of his own heart.

Now, the human heart is the most important thing to be dealt with today, or any day, since Adam's seed. Because it would be perfectly helpless if it were not that there was a plague in the human heart. When Jesus was talking to his disciples, he'd come back around again.

But when he came, he would find nothing in Jesus. The devil can never hurt anybody, as the devil's possessions are in the heart of the man. Jesus had nothing in him that belonged to the devil, therefore the devil stood outside like a hound dog, but he couldn't let in.

Jesus was perfectly safe as long as nothing that belonged to the devil was in him. The devil said, Jesus, when he comes, won't find any of his possessions in me. Now, it is this that makes the devil the true enemy that he is.

People do have that which belongs to the devil inside of their heart. It's the plague. The plague of their heart.

And if it were not so, there could be ten thousand devils multiplied by ten thousand more devils, and you would be perfectly safe in the midst of it. But it's because the human heart has something that Satan can claim. And he goes cynically in and lays claim to his own possessions.

Now, I want to get it very straight tonight, and I don't want you to begin to cry on your own neck and pity yourself. Because we have been taught that sin is a disease, and because we are poor to be pitied people, not to be blamed, but to be pitied. Now, while the Bible uses the word plague, and of a figure of speech to deal with sin, and while I shall follow the Bible in doing it tonight, I want to make it perfectly clear to all of you, the plague of sin is not accidental.

The plague of sin is not something of which I'm victim. It is a bent to love and choose evil, and I am responsible to guard my own heart. For remember now, when you come to sin, we talked about the plague in nature, and that is a plague by which we may reason from the known to the unknown, from the tangible to the intangible.

So we reason across, by way of the negation, from a plague that is a disease to a condition of the soul, which is not a disease. It is a bent to choose and to love sin. God wouldn't send a man to hell for having cancer.

Why would God send a man to hell for being sick? But God sends men to hell because they love sin and choose it to sin. If we do not get this basically straight, then we paralyze the moral will, make it impossible for people to live. My friends, you will not go to hell because Adam sinned.

You will go to hell because you sinned, and because you chose it. And knowing the judgment of God against such things, yet practice those things knowingly. Now this plague of the heart, this bent within us to do evil, this promise to wander, is the most fatal and the most deadly.

It's more to be dreaded than any disease. Cancer can kill your body, but it can't. But the plague of sin gets into your soul.

It's more dreaded and more terrible than war or the atom bomb. It can destroy a whole man. Disease can only destroy the human body.

But the plague of his own heart can destroy the man for this world, and the man can't get at it to fight it. That is, it isn't something he can pull out. If we could reduce sin to a thing, animate it, materialize it, and then could operate on it, everybody would be waiting in line outside the office of the surgeon that could operate.

Sin, my brothers, though we're using a figure that might teach that sin was a thing, sin is not a thing at all. It is an attitude, and a bent, and a will, and a choice, and a thing is all that. And you can't get at that with a surgeon's knife, neither could anybody else get at that for you.

I'd do anything for this fellow here. I'd do anything for him. But I can't get at his heart.

I could cut his hair, and pull his teeth, and shave him, and bathe him, but how? If he's got a plague in his own heart, all the schools in the world, all weakening, and we couldn't touch that, now I can't do it. There's no preacher, no evangelist because you sit lord of your own heart, lord of your own heart and master of your own faith, and got anybody to get to your heart. Nobody can do anything.

Psychiatrists can't do anything. These big windbags that state a charge, terrible, exorbitant pricey for telling people what any old grandmother could bring them enough to fill a salt shaker. And these psychiatrists, God help them, they can't get at your heart, brother.

It's a strange thing, this, about the plague of our heart. It's strengthening, it's power lies in the fact that people don't know it's there. And suddenly it spreads and overflows into the whole nature, conduct, and the habits, and finally the life.

Now, it's a strange accompaniment of this plague of the heart we call sin. Anyone will admit it's present except I'm not. We can get a whole congregation to stand and say, I believe that all men, and then get them to sit down, and then say, now, is there anybody here that has the plague sparked in your own heart? Well, hardly anybody will stand.

We can hardly get a beacon to stand. We can shout till the welcome rings and we echo, and still wait, because that pinpoints it. That takes away.

You see, if I'm with a thousand people, as we are here in the 1200-way we've got, everybody stands together. We all say, and everybody shrugs and says, well, there ain't no worse than the drug abuser of Emily on my left, and the deacon just ahead of me, and the deacon that's behind me, and probably no worse than the pastor. So it's all right.

We're in good company. It's a good way to handle it. It's a sneaky way of getting out of something.

But hardly anybody will admit they did it, that they had it on their heart, because it carries a shame with it and a fear. No one likes to hear about it. I preached one time down in the South, convention or a council of the Christian Missionary Alliance, and I preached on sin, just old-fashioned sin, spelled with a capital S. And then I turned it over to another man to sort of give an altar call.

He whispered to me, I don't think anybody will move. He said, anyone on a sermon like this convicts himself of being a sinner. Well, my God, ma'am, that's what I was trying to do.

That was the purpose of it. But in spite of his pessimism, now, it says, that when we shall know the plague of his own heart, and when he knows that, in the text, there then was a kick forward, a confessing, a turning to the altar of God, an acknowledging of the plague of our own heart. And it was only then that God, Now, if you're not a blood-washed, fire-burned Christian tonight, you've got a serpent coiled in your heart.

Now, listen, sister, Now, don't laugh. I'm no clown. Sit still.

Now, listen, sister, you can be a shapely Indian actress and have a serpent coiled in your heart. Listen, man, you can be the vice president of Pittsburgh and you can have a serpent coiled in your heart. Listen, mama, you can be a nice little grain and mother with a picture, like a picture by an artist, tapping or burping your little grandchild and holding it.

You still have a serpent coiled in your heart and you don't know the plague of your own heart. Everybody's talking about, what's the matter with you? I'm saying, we have made Jesus Christ into a joy-bringer, a scratcher. And we have forgotten that he came into the world to save men from the plague of their own heart.

And he saves individually from the plague of his own heart. You can't go to God in squadrons or in regiments. Each man goes.

And if a hundred people were to go to the altar tonight to seek a clean heart, each one would have to go in utter bleak spirits and go to God as completely alone as if he was in the midst of the desert. There are two phrases that I want to speak of tonight, just briefly. I borrowed both of these from some of the old writers.

They said it so much better than he can. One of them is the cleansing of the forgiving love of God. I like that.

The cleansing of the forgiving love of God that sweeps in like a detergent and takes out all grief of iniquity. And the other one is restoration of moral innocence, a sense of complete innocence free of sin. Now you know that by the mystery and miracles of the God of the Lamb, you've had moral innocence again.

A Christian like that is not likely to be laying emphasis upon what he was saved from. He's more than likely than what he was saved to. But we'll skip that for the time now.

There's a danger that we don't know. The man of God here said, and you're all right, that it's possible that some wouldn't know, but he said, which shall know every man, the plague. Now look what this plague has done for people.

Because, or done to people, because they didn't know it or wouldn't believe it. There was Cain. We put a black mark on Cain and we have made Cain to be a pariah, a whipper, a man that none of us know who.

If he were to turn up in Pittsburgh, they'd have him in jail within an hour's time. Cain, the cursed one. But do you feel terribly bad? I don't think so.

I think that Cain was a sinner, all right, and he had a plague in his heart. But don't you think, Abel, we're growing up together, that Cain and Abel used to play together and that Cain used to take his little brother up sometimes in his unwrapped spot? Don't you suppose that Cain would sometimes pick little Abel up and pat his head and be a big brother to him? I think so. And then often kissed his mother and greeted his

father.

Don't you think Cain was just a pretty average man that had a plague spot in his old mitz? And then one day he was religious, you know, and he went out to offer an offering to the Lord. And he was young to offer an offering to the Lord. And a pariah came down and consumed Abel's younger brother's offering, but it didn't consume Cain.

And then that which had been suddenly leaped up like a fire. And Cain became jealous and angry and turned on that brother with whom he had slept and with whom he had eaten and with whom he had many times played on the green grass. Mother and beat his brains out and buried him in the leaves.

Now that's what happened to Cain. And we try to picture Cain as being a great, hairy-looking fellow. It couldn't possibly be so, my brothers.

The only reason two brothers in a family look different from each other is that they have a long ancestral line and they inherit from grandfather, great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather. But Cain and Abel didn't have any line to inherit from. You wouldn't have been able to tell them apart.

The artist painting one is white, all poppycock. They looked so much alike. They only had a father and a mother to inherit from, and they were nice.

It was their insides that made the difference. And Cain had a plague spot in his heart, you know it. And he never went to God about it.

He skipped the blood and went to the flowers. And he offered blood. And flowers can't cure the plague spot of a heart.

Only the blood can do that. And then, you remember him? When they destroyed Jericho and the walls came tumbling down and Israel was all walking on air, happiness over. They had come to Jericho at the crack.

They went over there and they fled from before the people of Ai. And 36 of their soldiers died. And Joshua fell face down and said, What? What happened? And Israel turned her back before her enemies.

And God said, I'll tell you what happened. Get up off your knees. There's a time to pray something.

And the time has come to do something. You've got a plague spot in the camp. You've got a plague here.

And that plague will go on to kill you unless you get rid of it. Now Achan was a family man. He had a wife and he had daughters.

He had children. Don't let's think of Achan as being a delinquent that should have been in jail. Achan was just like all the rest.

They had to pull some kind of a scheme to find out who Achan was. If he'd been a delinquent in a jailbird, they'd have hunted up Achan. But he was a family man.

Don't you suppose he kissed his wife? Don't you suppose he patted his babies on the head? Reverend Achan was a man who was pretty good in every way, but he had a plague spot in his heart. He fellow. He loved his money.

And when the opportunity offered itself to a goodly Babylonish garment, it wasn't a theft. It was a disobedience. He didn't steal it.

It didn't belong to anybody. It was just that God had said, don't touch it, that's all. And he took the wedge and the silver and the goodly garment home and buried it, put it under his tent.

Josh, if I let you get away with this, Achan, this black plague will spread to all Israel. You've got to die. You've got to die, but your whole family has to die.

Achan didn't know, when he ignored the plague spot in his own heart, that it would be the death of 36 soldiers, himself, his wife, and all of his sweet little children. He didn't know it. If he'd known it, he'd have fled in horror, but he didn't know it.

It sprang out on him. He didn't know it. 15 years in the city of Chicago, not very far from where I live in the same high school where my daughter Becky goes.

The other day he took her to a store and asked for a cup of coffee. They gave him a cup of coffee, and he said, now I want a Coke. I don't know, but that's the story.

And when it was all over, he said, I want another cup of coffee. And the gruff old keeper said, oh, get out, kid. Get out.

He wanted rid of him. And the kid pulled his gun from his pocket and shot the man down in cold blood. 15-year-old boy that was 16 yesterday, or the day before Sunday, 16 last Sunday, and spent his 16th birthday in the arms of his fellow man on his hand.

And you know his only reply to the police was, I guess I lost my head. Satan came and found something in him. And Satan laid claim to it a few moments, and one man died, and another boy will go to prison for life.

That's what this cursed serpent does. But nowadays, we say, come and have your nerves relaxed. Come and have peace.

Come and have happiness. Come and be sure you die. And my God, what heretics we are.

Jesus Christ died that we might be delivered from the plague of our hearts. He died for us. And these other things are byproducts of that one central thing.

And in there was Ananias. Look at Ananias. You think that he was totally bad? Why, no.

Ananias was a decent fellow. I haven't seen him in any church in the Alliance anywhere, probably even elected into the Board. But Ananias, listen, if Ananias hadn't been caught in the moment when he needed the money, chances are he wouldn't have lied to the Holy Ghost.

But he was caught needing the money, so you know, brother. You can live along with that plague for half a lifetime, and it'll not really embarrass you. It'll catch you when you're not ready, and it'll destroy your life.

And that's what happened to Ananias. He wasn't too bad a fellow. He had to get out of a tight spot by telling God he got less for his back lot than he said he got.

And thus he lied to God. He must have had some good in him, or he wouldn't have been around there with the rest of those Christians. It was something to get into a church in those days.

Today, you can live like the devil's grandmother and get into the average church. The car is always tides and clouds, and you want to go somewhere. But in those days, they were concerned with getting delivered from the plain hair of a liar with them.

They knew that a lie was a plague spot, and if it was allowed to live, that it would contaminate the crowds. And Ananias out. Now, think of the murderer and the rapist.

They weren't. A little girl went to Covenant Baptist Church, not Covenant Baptist Church. That, you know where it is, down on 16th Street.

The big Baptist church down there. She was 16 years old, and she started home one night after a B meeting. You know what that is? That's equivalent of our AYS.

They'd had a meeting, and she started off by herself. Now, we will not allow our daughter to go alone over the streets of Chicago. She has to.

I even meet her, if no other way. But they allowed this little girl to go home, and walking under a railroad bridge, a fellow steered a knife and killed the little girl there. She was sentenced to die, and the last I heard, that sentence had not been kept.

Apparently, he was going to die for this. But you know what the mother always says in a case like that? She screams, God, my boy was a good boy. He was a good boy, sure.

He kissed his mother. He brought him his pay. He was decent, or whatever the dishes.

They all say that, and it's always so. It's always so. The murderer, the rapist, the killer.

They're always decent fellows around, suspect it, and so they don't suspect it. But this serpent lies coiled, and when a leaf strikes, and it doesn't always mean a dramatic thing like the ones I've named. I've deliberately named these dramatic, colorful things.

But you don't have to die of an atom bomb explosion to die, brother. You can die of cystitis, or even grow and die in the most ignominious way possible, you know. I often say that if I die, I suppose I'll be hit with an old rattle trap, sort of an undignified way.

You can die without dying dramatically. You don't have to be romantic in order to die. You can just die, just trying to kind of peter out.

And that's the way most people die anyhow, but they die, and as if they had died and been gone down in history. Well, you can go to hell without being an Ananias. You can ruin your Christian life without being an Achan.

You don't have to be a Herod to be as lost as Herod. You don't have to shoot a man down to have a plague in your heart and die of it. I want you to hear me.

Know the plague of your own heart. And stretch out your hand by the plague of our own heart. I've given you some illustrations, but I want to give you some more.

I want to talk about lust. These are the days of lust, the like of which nothing has ever been known, probably since the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, possibly sometime in French history that might have

been. But we have accepted a city nowadays that is so substandard, so vicious, destroyed cities because of its homosexuality.

I've read books justifying it from scientific viewpoint. I've read books justifying it. They say if that's the way some people are built, why call them criminal? They're built.

If that's what they like to do, it's just the same as you like music. They do what they like to do. God Almighty, on account of that, God Almighty destroyed all inhabitants of Canaan because of that.

And God did not besteam all that over France because of that. And yet we're justifying it. Nowadays, there's a place for it.

In Prague, some of you sisters say from lust and sexual assiduosity that you're embarrassed by my using the word, even in public, that you're as proud as... You've never been a temptation to anybody, and maybe that's the reason you're so pure. But you're so proud that you appear as bad as if you're a harlot. Because a harlot is impure in her body, but a proud man is impure in his heart.

And the impurity is just as bad as the impurity of the body. And the man who is a homosexual and guilty of impurity in his body is in the sight of a holy God than the man who is proud of his purity and thus has a plague spot in his heart. And then there's resentfulness.

I walk among people and I find a lot of people are resentful. They've got a chip on their shoulder. Their hackles are always up like a curved dog ready for a fight.

And then there are secret sins. There's the hidden grudge. Oh, I think grudges are out here tonight.

We're trying to cover it up by being to the 64th Annual Missionary Convention, Northside, Pittsburgh. Amen. You've still got your hidden grudge there.

And you've learned to live with it. Just as a man can learn to sleep with a toad. You've learned to live with it.

And you're full of grudges. You've got a grudge against the pastor you had 13 times in McMichael, man. And you've never got rid of it up to now.

Hidden grudges. And you can shout all you want to. Hidden grudges are plague, self-love, temper, temper.

I have no confidence, no faith in the spirituality of any man who's got a bad temper. I don't believe he's a clean man. A temper is a disease of the soul, and the man is responsible for that disease.

It's his fault. And envy and jealousy. How many of you choir singers secretly eat when somebody else has asked to sing? How many of you little pastors that don't get to big churches, and you gnaw at your own vitals and eat at your own liver because of it.

And you're mad at the superintendent to say he doesn't preach you right. That's what I mean by the plague of his own heart. You can accept Jesus all you want to.

Don't know the plague of your own heart, you'll never do anything about it. Now, God heals the plague in three ways. Blood, fire, and suffering.

Not by signing cards, not by making missionary pledges. Blood. Some sins, the blood of Jesus Christ washes away.

Other sins, the fire burns away. And still other are so insidious and hard to locate only deep suffering will expose them. There's a word I'd like to restore again and to all Mary's and preachers, I'll give it to you.

It's the word purgation. Purgation. Now words that are familiar.

Believe on Christ. Accept Christ. Follow the Lord.

Those are words that have lost their meaning. We need again to restore the word purgation. A fiery purgation of blood and fire.

Brothers, the Holy Ghost can burn out the plague spot and wash you clean to know the plague of your own heart. And you've got to admit it. And you can't ride over top of it.

You can in the name of all its common decency and logic and righteousness try to hide the plague of your heart. That's for missionary conventions. Get rid of it, man.

But you say I'm a deacon in the church, it would be an awful shock to the church if you went forward and stopped to be delivered from an unclean heart. It'll be a bigger shock one of these days when you lose your temper and blow a bomb and disgrace yourself in front of the church. I knew a man who said he was eradicated.

And he was one night the board didn't go his way and he blew, he blew like old Vesuvius. How could he preach anything after that? Theoretically eradicated, but actually he had a plague spot in his heart. That's the most important thing I can say to you.

Not your \$56,000. We're hoping you'll get \$45,000 this year. Get your \$56,000, that's good.

This you should do. But you should not leave the other on. Don't ride over a plague spot.

No matter who you are, no matter how loud you shout, no matter if you sing in the choir or play a... If you've got a plague spot, know it. Find it out and then stretch your hands to the altar. Blood and fire will purge it.

What about it, man and woman? What about it, young people? This would be the night, I believe, of you. Brother, Frazer, do we have a prayer room somewhere? All right. Now, I've prayed.

Others have prayed. I suppose you've prayed, too. And, uh, I wonder if you could say to me, Mr. Torger, I don't want to do this, but common honesty tells me I should.

And the cry of my own heart for inward cleansing compels it. I want to... I want to be helped. I want God to purge my heart that when Satan comes, he'll find nothing in me that belongs to him and shall know every known heart.

Now, don't think about your wife. Don't think about your neighbor. It's you.

It's you. It's you personally, individually. You were born all by yourself and you'll die all by yourself and you'll be judged alone just as much as if there'd never been anybody else born by yourself.

You're going to have to face the great monotony.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/5/SID5776.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/plague-of-his-own-heart/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**