

# (Steps Towards Spiritual Perfection) - Beg to Be

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer emphasizes the necessity of surrendering to God and the importance of suffering in the pursuit of spiritual perfection.*

**Duration:** 41:58

**Topics:** "Spiritual Perfection"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of surrendering to the will of God. He addresses the fear that some young people may have towards God's will and encourages them to let go of their own desires. The preacher also highlights the common occurrence of people who claim to be perfect in their teachings but lack true faith and obedience in their actions. He then references the example of Jesus, who humbled himself and obediently went through suffering and death on the cross. The sermon concludes with a reminder of Christ's ultimate triumph and the need for believers to remember and follow his example.

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## Transcript

I went to the barber shop to get what is, what I sometimes refer to as my hair cut. The Italian barber said, I've been sick a couple of days, and you know, my throat. So they had that, that, what do you call it, orange ice.

And didn't I get his orange ice. Couldn't be here this morning. But I didn't want to disappoint the people who I knew had come tonight.

Fortunately, before I got my orange ice and had to go to bed, I got my salmon. So, Brother McAfee, if you come up here and read me a text, I'll take the time. I want you to read it again, Philipians 4, 7 to 15.

But what things were counted to me? Three. Yes. But what things were gained to me, those I counted lost, for Christ? Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but lost, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but done, that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having my 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 suffering be 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, for getting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded, and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. And we'll get new years, as Anthony once said, and we'll not miss anything, and by Wednesday I'll be okay and be teaching my class as usual. We had an objective before us, and that objective, let me repeat again, is to know Christ.

It is to know Christ. It is to know the power of Christ's resurrection. It is to be conformed to his death.

It is to experience in us that which we have in Christ. And in order to do that, it is to count all things we've lost for the excellency of this knowledge. Now, I have read a prayer, and we've referred to it often, the prayer of the author of the Cloud of Unknowing, who says that he wants God to pray for us so that we may have the contents of our hearts say to him that we may perfectly love God and verbally praise him.

Now, I listened today on the radio from early morning to the afternoon lying in bed listening to the religious service, and it was everything from Catholicism down to spiritualistic meetings. And it could be that some of you would say, well, Tozer is a nice chap, but he is a bit off-base. Well, I want to ask you if, in the light of the New Testament, this sounds fanatical.

We are seeking a place in God where we may perfectly love him and verbally praise him and be united with him, not only judicially but experientially. Now, if that's fanatical, then of course there's only one thing for you properly to do, and that is not to come back anymore, because I don't believe in fanaticism. But if this is your listening, this is your preaching about, your listening to, then you are doing a superior direction in experiencing in ourselves that which we have in Christ, and being united with him experientially as well as judicially here in this present world.

Then let's relax and say, this is not fanaticism, this is New Testament Christianity. Now, the object of the Holy Spirit is twofold. It is to convince Christians that this which I have talked to you about is possible, and then it is to lead them in, as Joshua led Israel into the promised land.

First place in this, please, is not hard. To convince Christians that that which I've talked about is possible in this life, that's not hard, because people are ready to accept it. We'll accept if you die hard, but universities and colleges and Bible schools and conferences of every kind have evangelical and fundamentalist persuasions.

I ask them to this. So it's not hard to convince Christians that these things are true, but it is impossible to lead them into it. For a man, it's totally impossible.

But not, of course, impossible for the Spirit of God. So it must be the Holy Spirit who leads any individual into this place of what we call a social kind of Christian, superior to and different from the common Christian. Now, I want to read something to you, just a brief snapshot here, from an old print in So a persuaded mind and even a well-intentioned heart is a long way from exact and faithful practice.

Nothing has been more common in every age, and still more so today, and we could add, and still more so nowadays. Nothing has been more common than mischievous souls who are perfect and saintly in speculation. Do you hear this? Nothing is more common in defined Christians who are perfect and saintly in speculation.

But the Savior of the world says, You will know them by their wit and by their behavior, and this is one rule which is never deceived, and by which we should judge ourselves. Go ahead, come along. Now, I'm going to go out on a limb tonight and claim to know something which I don't have any way to know except by a sure guess based upon known spiritual laws.

I'm going to state here now that for some of you, and I don't know how many, but for some of you, last week was your worst week spiritually. You have been disappointed when you talked. You heard about them, and you said, This is what I've been looking for, and you heard four of them.

But last week was your worst week. You hoped it would be your best, and you hoped that the path of the just would shine more and more under the perfect day. But instead of that, you had more discouragement last week than you've had in many a long week before.

You were filled with doubt and deceit, and instead of what you've been learning these last few nights, lifting me up, you have found that it has cast you down. But you know, I want to tell you something. Those who have been told the truth, and those who have learned the right piece of doubt eating at them, and those who have bumped their head between from the sidewalk to the are the same very ones who are getting nearer to God.

But those who have been unaffected and are unaffected, and who can still leave this temple not teary, who can still be worldly and not minded, you have not been affected when you have made the least progress. But those of you who have found things going against you, and when you are longing and yearning to know Jesus Christ better, instead of it helping you, it has actually discouraged you, you are very close to the thing. Now, I want to give you another little phrase out of the Bible, and this sums up the teaching of the Bible, too.

He says this, See who by grace ye may. I want you to put that down. See who by grace ye may.

Or, to put it in our modern English, let those who see see by the grace of God. Or, to put it in the language of the Scripture, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. He that hath eyes to see, let him see.

Before he talked about eyes, he said it is. See who by grace ye may. Now, I explained the first night that I'm a bit different from the old gentleman who wrote the book, in that he simply walked out on people if they couldn't see.

He said, I don't want you, ganglers and rauners and threshers and barterers and gossips and money-lovers, I don't want you even to work at my book. Well, I'm trying to help you, so I'm going to be a little broader than that. And I'm going to tell you that God seeks out those who cannot see in order that they may lead on by grace those who can see.

For remember that those they will be as the sands of the seashore where the remnants shall be saved. And the Lord said that in the last days, few should be found who were right. The love of the many should rise to power.

Now, here was a man named Gideon. And Gideon was going to go up against the enemy, and he got 32,000 soldiers. And the Lord said, You've got too many.

Let them go who by grace may. So, he said, Everybody that's afraid, you turn back. And 22,000 out of the 32,000 turned back.

He said, You've still got too many. I can see people among you that cannot see, and that you'll never be able to make these soldiers out of. Test them.

So he took them to a river and tested them, and with all of them he had 300 left. Now, there's scarcely a preacher anywhere on the top side of this terrestrial ball that what they'd do to his right hand to get those 32,000, and he'd have more in the night to be cut down to 10,000. So, 10,000 is too many.

God is not thinking about numbers, but about quality. So, God sets out those who cannot see, but see who by grace he may. And he leads on those who by grace do see.

Now, as an explanation of why you had a pretty bad week some of the last week, and why your efforts to go on with God only got you into more bumps, remember Christ's journey to immortal triumph. Remember the garden where he sweat blood. Remember Pilate's hall where they put a purple robe on him and smote him.

Remember the desertion from all that took him in his place. Remember the journey up the hill to Calvary. Remember the nailing on the cross.

Remember the six hours. Remember the hiding of the Father's face. Remember the darkness, and remember the surrender of his spirit in death.

This is the path that Jesus took to immortal triumph and everlasting glory, and if he did, so are we in this world. Now, that's what some call the dark night of the soul. And there's certainly a Christian that will be willing to go into this dark night of the soul, and that's why there are very few Christians that ever enter into the light.

They don't know the morning, because they won't know the night. Now, but some people say, Mr. Terger, I have known quite a while this darkness, if you speak. God has chopped me down and cut me down, and he's not done the business, and he's made me... I've actually been tempted by the devil, but the morning hasn't come in my heart.

Why? Why does it take so long? Well, it doesn't need to take long. Here's what the clouds say. This work asketh no long time before it be once truly done, as some men wean, that is, some men think, believe.

For it is the shortest work of all that men may imagine. For it is neither longer nor shorter, but even according to the stirring that is within thee, even thou wilt. The trouble is, my brother, that the stirrings within thee aren't enough.

There isn't a vacuum in there yet, and so the Holy Spirit can't rush to him because there's not enough stirring within. I have said to you, everybody's as full as he wants to be, and everybody is as holy as he wants to be. And when we think we want and don't, then of course we wonder why it takes so long.

I'll tell you why we haven't gone on faster, and why you that are seeking but still trouble, why you have not come up into the land. It's because you have not come to the end of yourself. We interfere with God's

working in us.

He will, God will but look on him and let him alone, but we can't get, God can't get us to let him alone. We struggle to keep up a good front. Instead of being humble and meek, Christians want a good front.

Most hardly a Christian. He wants to go to heaven when he dies to see old Jordan roll, but he wants to have a good front while he's here. And he says, as Paul the apostate said before him, he says, O God, honor me now before these people.

And then we hide our inner state. It is the teaching of the Bible that we ought to expose our inner state to God, but we hide our inner state. And because we hide our inner state, God can't change that inner state.

We hide it, and we disguise our poverty spirit. I said, I think, once already that if we were suddenly to look on the outside the way we do in our souls to Almighty God, we would be the most embarrassed people in all the state of Illinois. There would be people barely able to stand.

There would be people in lag. There would be people completely too dirty to be decent. There would be people that have great sores on their bodies.

There would be people, persons, that even Skid Row would turn them out. But we won't let God know how poor we are in spirit, and we won't tell it. That's why we have to wait so long, and that's why we want to go on this job, but why we don't.

Because we disguise our poverty of spirit and hide our inner state to preserve our reputation. And then we want to keep some authority to ourselves. We don't want to turn the last key over to Jesus Christ.

We want to have a dual control and let the Lord run it, but have control before us in case the Lord says. So we're not turning over all the authority. We just don't intend to do it, and that's why we have to wait so long.

And we want to keep some glory for ourselves. We want a little bit. We're willing to sing the glory to Zion, and Zion is the kingdom and the glory, but we want a little glory for ourselves.

Sennelam said again this, We are strangely ingenious in perpetually seeking our own interest. And what worldly souls do crudely and openly, people who want to live for God often do more subtle. You get that? It's almost human, but it is so true that we're strangely ingenious.

A man that couldn't invent anything can invent a way of seeking his own interest, because what worldly souls do crudely and openly, people who want to live for God often do more subtle with the help of some pretext which, serving them as a screen, prevents them from seeing the ugliness of their own behavior. I think that's a classic, brother, that our strange ingenuity, our strange ability to seek our own interest under the guise of seeking the interest of God. And I haven't the remotest fear to say that there are thousands of people who are using missions and healing and prophecy and the deeper life and all the rest for no other purpose than secretly to promote their own private interest, but using it as a pretext and letting the pretext serve them as a screen so they'll never know how ugly they are inside.

Now, we contradict, I say. We rescue ourselves from the cross. Nobody wants to die on the cross, and yet Paul said, I want to die on that cross, and I want to know what it is to die on the cross in order that if I die like him, I might have a superior resurrection.

Those who know the Greek know that that's what he said. He didn't say, so he'll raise me from the dead. Every Christian will be raised from the dead.

But he said, I want a resurrection like his, a superior resurrection, and in order to do it, I've got to die like him. Now, we're willing to die a little bit, and we're willing to die a piece at a time, but we're always wanting to rescue a little part of ourselves from the cross. And it's that part of yourselves that you rescue that keeps you in trouble all the time.

Now, we're contradicting ourselves. You know, it's entirely possible to do it. It's entirely possible to beg to be filled, and yet resist the filling.

Beg and plead to be filled, and yet hinder God from filling. He wishes and wills, thou do but look on him and let him alone. But we beg him to help us, and then won't let him help us.

Like a spoiled child, if you want to take their temperature or a pill or do something for them, and they howl and bawl and yet beg for help, I'm sick, Mama, but won't take a thing, won't take a thing, and won't let you help them. Just stubborn little fellows. And so, we beg to be filled, and at the same time resist the filling.

And there's that strange ingenuity, there's that strange contradiction that's in us that our wills won't stir enough. And what worldly people do crudely, we who live for God often do more subtly. And before God, of course, it isn't subtle, but it's subtle before us.

Thus we contradict ourselves, and that's the problem. We live in a state of contradiction. We beg, fill me now.

There's one song that I never wanted to sing around here. Oh, you know, I don't make any show out of it, and if somebody's announced it, why, it's okay to sing it. But I think one of the most hopeless songs ever written in all this wide world is the song, Fill Me Now, Fill Me Now, Fill Me Now, Fill Me Now.

I think that's a hopeless song. It's so gloomy and hopeless, and I'll give an autographed book to any man who will find me anybody who has ever filled while singing, Fill Me Now, Fill Me Now. It just doesn't work that way.

We resist God and say, Fill Me Now, and sing all four verses and repeat the last one in a mournful melody. Fill Me Now, Fill Me Now, but we're resisting God. We're part of it, but we won't let it die.

We want to keep it alive, and we're never going to let anybody know the poverty of our spirit or the terrible condition of our inward state. We're going to preserve our reputation and our glory, a little glory anyhow, and thus live in a state of perpetual contradiction. And that's one reason why Christians are not happy.

The man who's always on a cross isn't happy. It's when he gets over with that and says, Into thy hand I commend my spirit, and ceases to defend himself and let go, it's then that he dies, but also there's a resurrection that follows. Now, if we're ever going to be anything more than common, mediocre Christians.

You know, Christians halfway up. That is, halfway up from where? Not halfway up to heaven, that's not. I'd settle for that for the time being, but I don't mean that.

I mean halfway up from where we were to where we ought to be. That's what I mean. Halfway up the peak.

Not to heaven, but halfway up to where we ought to be. That's what mediocre means, you know, I told you. And the reason that we're most all mediocre Christians is that there's not enough stirring within, and we'll never be anything but that until we give up our own interest and cease to defend ourselves and put ourselves in God's hands and then let God alone, not try to tell God how to do it.

I'm perfectly certain that being the kind of man I am, that if I were having a surgical operation, I'd want a spinal block so I could stay awake and help the surgeon and instruct him. I know it. I always am prepared to put up a stiff argument and tell the doctor what to do, and he said amen.

But it's this thing carried into the spiritual life that hinders us. We want to tell God what he ought to do. We lay it all out.

We read the life of Adonai and Judson, and we say, now God, I want you to do that. Or we read Moody's life, and then we say, Lord, we want you to do what you did for Moody. Now, God couldn't pour the Holy Ghost on you walking down the street of Philadelphia.

Some of you have never been in Philadelphia. But we want to tell God how to do it, at the same time preserving a little bit of the glory and having some areas in our lives that have not been crucified. We want to be crucified technically, and we're very happy to go listen to another exposition of the sixth chapter of Romans on how we're crucified with him.

But nobody wants it in reality. We want to hold out something, and until we put ourselves in the hand of God and let him alone, and let God go and let ourselves go and let go and let God, we'll just be what we are, mediocre Christians singing happy songs to keep from being completely blue, and trying to keep up a little the best we can. But at the same time, we're not making progress, and we don't know what it is to be one with him experientially, to have the intent of our hearts so cleansed that we may perpetually love him and worthily praise him, that we may be filled with his spirit and walk in victory.

We just can't come to it, and it's all our fault. So remember, remember, this work passes no long time before it be wants to be done, as some men wean. You're one of the fellows that wean.

It takes a long time. I want to unwean you and tell you right now you've got it wrong. He says, it's one of the quickest, shortest works ever men may imagine, and it's just as short or as long as your will.

Just as short or as long. This reminds me of the old cat meeting preacher I used to hear. This old fellow, he's saying the same things I used to hear them preach in the cat meeting time.

People wanted to be holy. Now, brothers and sisters, what about you? Are you ready to let yourself go? Some of you young people are afraid of the will of God, and I won't talk about the will of God next Sunday, but more. But you're afraid of the will of God, and you're hanging on hard onto something.

You're afraid if you let go. Some of you, you have a little baby and you love that little baby, and if you let that little baby go, you, God will take him, God will take him, God will take him away, you're saying, sob it out as I did, and lay on the floor. When you had two boys, but no, lay on the floor for as being entertained when God spoke to me and wanted those two boys, and I thought he meant he wanted them to die, and my wife was back home taking care of them.

I was in the evangelistic meeting, and I lay on the floor beside my bed and kicked my toes on the carpet and cried to God and finally gave up my two boys. They were big, strapping, healthy fellows, except one of

them was in the war and got his leg hurt, but by the grace of God he didn't lie there and die in the cold. He was all right, saw him in the day, feeling fine, both boys were all right, and four others.

After that, so you see, God didn't want my boy, he just wanted me to get rid of my boy. He just wanted to know he could have him, that's all. He just wanted me to know that I was partly dying, that I was willing to give up anything.

When we had our girl, she'll excuse me, I suppose, be embarrassed, but when she was born, I had to die again. I did some dying, I tell you, brother, we dedicated it, but that was nothing. Dedication before the congregation.

It's possible to do that and not amount to much. But my dedication was a terrible, bloody, sweaty thing. And I finally, before God, said, Yes, you can have her.

I knew God wasn't going to let her die, because I had learned my lesson way back there when But I didn't know what he wanted, and I told this in the testimony. I said, The dearest thing we have is our little girl. She was a little tight then, a year old or so, and I said, But God can have her whenever he wants her.

Somebody came and said, Mr. Church, aren't you afraid to talk like that? Aren't you afraid? And I said, Afraid? For I have put her in the hands of perfect love, and love can't wound anybody, and love won't hurt anybody. If Jesus Christ was a devil, if he was a cruel beast, I'd shield her from it. But his name being love, and his hands being fierce, and his face shining like the beautiful sun, and his heart being the tender heart of God in compassion and lovingkindness, I know he doesn't kill babies.

So she was safer with him than she was with us, and nobody was ever a better mother of a small baby than my wife. And I said it to her, and I say it to you, that they never came better, and we kept that little thing, and she didn't die. God didn't want her to.

He just wanted me to put her in his perfectly loving hands. Now, you've got something. I don't know what it is, but it's something.

You've got a boyfriend, and you hang into that boyfriend. You can't say, you can't say, I'll give him up. You've got a girlfriend.

You can't say, I'll give her up. You've got a job. You can't say, I've got an ambition.

You've got a profession, and you can't bring yourself to say, Yes, God. You've got money. You've got a nicely lined nest egg in it, and you just can't bring yourself to quit calling it yours.

You just can't let go. You don't know what it means to look on God and let him alone. You're afraid of him.

You hope he's all right, and you believe he's all right, and you know it says, God so loved, and all that. But still, for you, you're afraid if you let go, what will happen to you? I was going to tell a story about a man who was down in a well. Today on the radio, I heard a preacher.

I think he was a Lutheran, if I remember. I don't know where this story came over and what it was supposed to illustrate, but it that's the way I pronounce it. Remember that there was a kind of a clown in the book by the name of Sancho Panza, and one night, Senor Panza hung to a render still all night, hung all night long, afraid to let go, for if he let go, he knew he'd plunge down and die below.

And when the morning light came, he found he was two inches off of the green jack. But he hung all night on to the render still. In the morning, his red face, he thought if he'd just let go, he'd have been down on the ground, perfectly safe.

Now, that sounds humorous, but there are some of you who have not closed their eyes from hanging on to the render still. And the Lord has been saying to you, lift on me and let go. But you won't do it.

You won't do it. You are not going to do it. If you're going to go to heaven, you couldn't miss that because you accepted Christ, of course.

We know that by the books. But I may know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering be made conformable unto his death. But then I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and you can't, and reaching forth unto those things which are before and you're afraid to, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God and Christ Jesus.

See who by grace see may, and the rest can sit around and get old and wait for the undertaker. Go to conferences year after year and get nothing out of them. Do sermons year after year and not get anything.

Go to Bible studies year after year and not make any progress. Just barely keep your chin up above the water. See who by grace see may.

But we're ingenious, surprisingly ingenious, in fixing our Christian life so we get a little glory out of it and get our own way instead of getting God's way. What about you? Bert Miller, I want you to come up to the platform, please, while I talk. Father, Reverend Bert Miller.

Bert Miller. He's here and will come. Yes, he should.

All right. Now, my friends, what about it? Here we are. We're the church that's supposed to be the deeper life church here in the city.

We're not Pentecostal, and we're not eradicationists, but we believe there's a life of supreme victory in Christ, a young and willing, that will lift us above our troubles and will take us through the dark valley of dying and bring us out without the weight and burden of sin, having given up everything and yet having everything, having let go and still being safe. Now, what about you? That's all my talk for tonight. We'll make some advance next Sunday night, and I'll feel better and I'll preach a little longer.

But that's all for tonight. What about you, my friends? Do you remember Jesus? Remember what was said about him, that let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, through being in the form of God, sought it not robbery for equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in passion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Now, do we stop there and close the book? No.

Therefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that it is the name of Jesus. Every knee should bow for things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Up out of his holy grief he raised a battle.

Up out of his dying came a living, and exultation, and triumph, and victory. And so it is for every child of God. We won't let him conquer.

We'll never conquer till he's conquered us. And the way we conquer our enemy is to let God conquer us. Not lash out at your enemy, but submit and let God conquer you.

And by doing that, God conquered every enemy. Will you do it? Are you interested? Would you like to be supremely victorious in this life, filled with God's spirit, gifted of his spirit, to walk out a special kind of Christian? Not to be proud of it, but to be meekly, meekly, humbly thankful that by the good grace of God you see. For remember, see who by grace he made.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. But there's a lot that won't hear. You have too many, Gideon, too many.

Too many. Tell everybody it's afraid to go back. 22,000 went back.

Still got too many, Gideon. Put them to attack down by the river. 300 of them went out to victory.

300 out of 32,000. What is that, 1%? Ah, best. God wants to meet us tonight.

Brother Miller, if you'll lead us in prayer and then do whatever seems to be on your heart.

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