

(Steps Towards Spiritual Perfection) - Intro

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon emphasizes the journey towards spiritual perfection through deepening our relationship with Christ and the necessity of surrendering all rivals to God in our hearts.

Duration: 55:45

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Philippians 3:7-15

Topics: "Spiritual Perfection"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses four stages that a person may go through in their Christian journey. The first stage is the common Christian, which was previously preached about. The second stage is the singular Christian, and the third stage is the Christian who has reached a level of perfection. The preacher emphasizes that one does not need fancy gadgets or equipment to serve the Lord, but rather a sincere heart and a willingness to pray and worship. The sermon concludes with a reminder to strive for the highest calling of God through Jesus Christ.

Transcript

The two sermons that Dr. Tozer refers to on this cassette as having previously preached are unfortunately unavailable. Tonight I want to read that text again. We've read it, you know, variously.

I've read it, and we've read it responsibly, and we've read it variously. Now, I want to read it from a translation that you may never have heard of, and certainly most of you have never seen. It is a translation directly out of the Aramaic, not out of the Greek, but out of the Aramaic of the Eastern Church, the language Jesus spoke and the language Paul spoke originally.

I'll just read the same. It's Philippians 3, 7 to 15. Not much difference, just a little, and we're sticking by the King James, of course, but I thought you'd like to hear this.

But these things, says Paul, which once were again to me, I counted aloft for the sake of Christ, and I still count them all aloft for the sake of the abundant knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have lost everything. And I have considered all those things as refuge, so that I may increase in Christ and be found in him since I have no righteousness of my own gained from the law, but the righteousness which comes through the faith of Christ, that is, the righteousness which comes from God, so that through this righteousness I may know Jesus and the power of his resurrection, and be a partaker of his suffering even to a death like his, that I may by any means attain the resurrection from the dead. Not as though I had

already attained or already perfect, but I am striving that I may reach that for which Jesus Christ appointed me.

My brethren, I do not consider that I have reached the goal, but this one thing I do know. Forgetting those things which are behind me, I strive for those things which are before me. I press toward the goal to receive the prize and the victory of God's highest calling through Jesus Christ.

Then he takes a breath and says, Therefore, let those of you who are perfect think these things over. That's why we're meeting this Sunday night. And this reason is no reason any other way than if you've got any other ideas about this, well, God is really the mystery.

He said, I'm right about it, and if you don't see the way I do, I ain't said God is really all right. Now, I've given you two mottos, and I want to give you a third one tonight. You know that we're allowing an old, a 600-year-old book to help us along the way called The Cloud of Unknowing.

And we're basing our teaching on the New Testament, and then we're allowing this old brother to help us a little along the way. And I gave you, have given you already, two mottos. They are, look now forward and let do backwards.

You got that one. Last week, I gave you a second one. You will not do but look on him and let him along.

I give you the third one tonight. He is a jealous lover, and he suffereth no rival. Now, I have said that there are four identifiable stages, and a man might find 24.

There's the common Christian, about which I've preached already, and I'm still talking about this social Christian. I talked about that last week. And we're going to move on in the weeks to come into what we call singular Christian.

And then there is the Christian who has moved up into God until he has begun to be perfect, though it is said both by Paul and by the old writer that we may begin in this life of perfection, but never attain fully to it till we attain it in the bliss of heaven. Now, Paul is our example, and Paul said in the text that I may know him. And the word know there means acquaint or acquaintance, and it means experience.

It means these two things, to be acquainted with and experience. You may be acquainted with a man and yet not have experienced the man in any sense at all. If I introduce you, for instance, to my friend, almost lifelong friend, Reverend Miller here tonight, you could say, yes, I'm acquainted with him, but you have not experienced him in the sense that I have, running around with him, traveling with him in his car usually, and preaching with him and going with him here and there and talking with him endless numbers of times and playing with him.

There's a difference between acquaintance and experience. To get acquainted with God is one thing, but to go on to experience God in intensity and richness of acquaintance is something more. And Paul said, I want to know him in that depth and rich intensity of experience.

Because, you see, as I've said many times, personality can't be fully known with one encounter. You may meet a person you don't particularly like at first, but as you get to know them, you get to like them, because you find hidden potentialities in their personality which you didn't know was there. Now, Christ is capable of increasing intimacy of acquaintance, and if I have anything to say to the Church of Christ and to the Alliance and to the evangelicals in the world, it is this, that our great weakness is that we not only are

not going on to know Christ in rich intimacy of acquaintance, but we're not even talking about it.

We don't even hear about it. It doesn't get into our magazines, it doesn't get into our books, it doesn't get onto our radios, it's not found in our churches. This yearning, this longing to know him in increasing measures.

Now, we may enjoy this increasing acquaintance with that. I want you to hear me say that. You say, but Jesus Christ is a he, a person.

Why do you call him that? Now, you may not understand me now, but as Paul says, if you think otherwise, God will reveal even that unto you. Before we can know God as a he or him, we know God as a that. I think that every theologian would agree with me on that, and I find back here in the book of John these words.

First of all, before I read them, remember what was said to a virgin? That holy thing which is born of thee shall become called the Son of God. That holy thing which is born of thee. And now, John, not an amateur theologian, but the man who had laid his head upon the breast of Jesus, begins his wondrous first epistle with the word that.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon in our hands and handled of the word of life, personality is not found there yet. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it. And bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. It's not until the last two lines of the third stanza that he put personality in there. It's that before.

Now, remember, my friends, that Jesus Christ, while he is person, and you know that, we all agree that he's the person, he's the Son, the Eternal Son, he is also that which is the source of everything. He is that which is the foundation and fountain of everything you and I are created to enjoy. He is the fountain of all truth, but he is more, he is truth itself.

He is the source and string of all beauty, but he is more, he is beauty itself. He is the fountain of all wisdom, but he is more, he is wisdom itself, and in him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden away. He is the fountain of all grace, he is the fountain and source of all life, but he is more than that.

He said that I am the bed of life, and I am the life. He is the fountain of love, but he is more than that. He is love, he is resurrection, and he is immortality, and he is, as the song says, brightness of the Father's glory, sunshine of the Father's face.

You know, we try to discover what gets wrong with us when we start to backslide in groups and denominations and churches and individuals, and I believe that our Lord Jesus hit on the head of it when he said, You have left your first degree of love. Not your first love consecutively in the sense that there's love number one, and love number two, and love number three, but he said you've left your first degree of love. And what I'm preaching to try to bring about in the church of Jesus Christ is a rediscovery of the loveliness of the Savior, that we might begin to love him again with an intensity of love such as our Father's knew.

I have said before, and I repeat it now, that the power and greatness of A. B. Simpson was not in his theology, for he positively was not a great theologian, compared, for instance, with Calvin or some of the other theologians. The power and greatness of the man lay in his unquenchable love for the person of Jesus Christ the Lord. There's a song we sing, and I want to read some verses, there's a few sentences that we don't know about.

The first one says, Fairest Lord Jesus, ruler of all nature, ruler thou of God and man, the Son, thee will I cherish, thee will I honor, thou my soul of glory, joy, and crown. We know most that woman to others, but there are others that we don't get, and here's one. It says, Fair are the flowers, fair are her children, when viewed in this unclouded day, yet they must perish.

All will soon vanish, Jesus alone abides for us. Gainst thou upon the world, on your family, your friends, your loved ones, all the lovely beauty of children and young people, viewed in earth's unclouded day. Yet tender and realism compels us to say, yet they must perish.

All will soon vanish, and when they have vanished, we have only Jesus who alone abides for us. Earth's fairest beauty, heaven's brightest splendor, in Jesus Christ's unclouded sea, all that here shineth, quickly declineth before his spotless purity. There are those who would trouble you because you can't get all steamed up about things.

A friend of mine was quite hurt, because I just can't get all if I didn't steamed up about earthly things. I can't possibly do it. I can't possibly stand off and strike an attitude of awe at a poor porthole Buick, or a Cadillac, or something else.

I can't. And the houses they're building that are supposed to be so magnificent. Remember that when you have seen the house or city that has foundations whose builder and maker is God, you can't get excited about any house ever any man in this world ever built.

You can't get excited about it. Somebody said that Abraham saw the city that had foundations whose builder and maker was God, and he wouldn't build a house after that. He said, I'll never try to imitate it.

I'll live in the tent till I get my house up there. It was so beautiful. Well, earth's fairest beauty and heaven's brightest splendor are all unfolded in Jesus Christ, and all that here shineth, quickly declineth before his spotless purity.

That's what one man said about Jesus. Now, I want to tell you that it costs to know Jesus Christ like that. It costs, and most people won't pay the price for it at all.

That's why most Christians are common. They won't go on, because for Christ's sake, they have surrendered evil things. That is, things that are injurious, and things that are unclean and grossly sinful.

Everywhere in Fundamentalism, we have given up the grossly sinful things, and we have all agreed on what those grossly sinful things are. We shudder at the thought of a honky-tonk, though there are some churches and tabernacles that you couldn't tell the difference if somebody didn't yell Jesus occasionally to give it a holy atmosphere. But honky-tonks and unholy places, we stay out of them, and there are certain things we don't do, and for Christ's sake, we have surrendered those evil things.

But this is the mark of a common Christian, and the man who's never gone beyond that is a mediocre Christian. Paul surrendered the good along with the bad, and he said, not only the things that are bad

have I given up, but he said what things were gain to me, those I counted lost, the things that he had a right to, the things that were gain to him, and that he had every legal and moral right to lay hold of and say, this is mine, and Christianity's not going to take it from me. He said, I've given up even that, because I've seen something so much better.

It is that which was with the Father. It is that source, that fountain from which flows all wisdom, and beauty, and truth, and immortality. So, for the sake of that, I have given it all up.

He knew, Paul did, that the human heart was idolatrous, and it will worship anything that it possesses. Anything that you get your hand on, you will worship. As a little child would take his teddy bear to bed with him, so we grown-ups have our teddy bears, too.

We're too grown-up and mature, you know, to be caught taking a teddy bear or doll to bed. But we have what must look to God like teddy bears and dolls. We hang on to them.

A baby, of course, has a right to that. I believe in that. We kept teddy bears floating around for years at home, until they got drooling, and they were pretty old when they did.

But the point I'm making is that we are world leaders. We mature people, people even in their teens, when we still insist upon hanging on to things. Whatever you hang on to, you worship.

Don't forget that, because it gets between you and God, whether it be property, or family, or reputation, or security, or your life itself. And Jesus taught us that we couldn't even hang on to our life itself. That if we made our living on earth to be something that we wouldn't give up and hung to, it would get in our way, and we'd lose ourselves at last.

He taught that. Taught it plainly. And then this grasping after security.

Always. We want to be secure. Well, Paul wasn't secure.

He said he died dead, and he was out on the bosom of the sea for three weeks, night and day, and he was always in difficulty. This longing for security. I want security in this life, and eternal security in the world above.

And there we have it, that fundamentalism. Security here, and eternal security there. Brethren, Paul said, I give it all up.

I disavow and disown everything. Now, there are certain things God let him have. He let him have a book or two.

He let him have a garment, a cloak. He let him have his own hired house for two years in one instance, and he let him have some things. But Paul never allowed them to touch his heart.

Any external treasure that touches your heart is a curse. And Paul said, I give that up, that I might know him, that I might go on to deeply enrich and increase the intimacy and vast expanses of knowledge of the one who is infinite and illimitable in his duty, and I go on to know him, and that I might know him. I give all this up.

And he never allowed anything to touch his heart. You see, friends, we have been taught over the last years in our Christian circles that Christ is something added on to a happy jolly, rather clean, but

well-earned earthly life to save us from hell and to get us into the mansions over there. But that's not New Testament way of looking at things.

It's not the way Paul looked at it at all. Paul looked at it as if Jesus Christ was so infamously attractive that we didn't count anything at all to amount to anything. Paul was a learned man, learned at the feet of Gamaliel.

He had what they'd call now Ph.D. Paul was a learned man. But Paul said, that's all wrong. He said, he used an ugly word about it, a garbage.

He said, it's no good. I put it all behind me. And he said, I'm of the tribe of vengeance, and I'm circumcised the eighth day, and I belong to the fathers, and I've got the marks upon me, and my name's in the register, and I can show you who I am.

But he said, for the sake of Jesus Christ, I count that nothing at all. I put that under my feet. Some of you are proud of your Dutch blood, and that's why you're half carnal all the time.

Some of you are proud of your Swedish blood, and that's why you're carnal all the time. And some of you are proud of some other blood. All blood's the same kind of blood, corrupt blood.

And I don't care whether it comes from or earlier from the gutter, it's corrupt blood. But we're proud of things, and proud of what we can do. Paul said, everything, the proudest thing I have, the thing at which I am the proudest, I count it but lost.

But modern Christianity says, stop gambling, or the bomb will get you. Stop drinking, or you'll go down like Rome. Stop this or that.

And you pick out those ugly, vestal things, that nobody wants to do if they're in their right mind. And that's all the things there are. Paul said, I've quit those so long ago.

He never even did them. He didn't even do them. He was a Jew in all good conscience, and he didn't have to quit them.

And that's why I sometimes feel like smiling kind of sourly when I hear a big testimony about somebody that drank and then got saved and quitted. Now, sure, you'll get saved and quitted, but that ought to be elementary. That ought to be way back down to years.

The man who writes a book on how bad he was, you can have the book. I already have books I won't read. Well, friends, now let this old man talk to us a little bit here.

He says, But one thing I tell thee, he, that is God, he's a jealous lover, and he suffers no rival. Now, better than that, what's the matter with us? We're allowing rivals to come up. No decent fellow, nobody that has any self-respect is going to suffer a rival, but he says God won't suffer a rival.

And he says here in this old English, which I'll translate into bad modern English, he says, And him which not work in thy will, but he only would be by himself. He says that God won't work in your will, but unless he can only be there by himself. We have too many gods, we have too many irons in the fire, and we have too much theology that we don't understand, and we have too much religion, and too much churchanity, and too much institutionalism, and too much of too much, and the result is God isn't in there by himself.

He says, If I'm not in your heart by myself, I will work. He says, Remember that now. Him which not work in thy will, but he only met thee there by himself.

Now, when Jesus Christ has everything cleansed from the temple and dwells there alone, he'll work. An old friend of mine talked about him. He said, God's working like a miner in the depths of the earth.

Have you ever been in a coal mine? Way deep down in the earth, they're mining out coal, or gold, or diamonds, and anybody can fly overhead or walk overhead or travel by and never dream what's going on in the depths of the hill yonder. Never know that way in that hill unseen there's an intelligent force at work bringing out gold. And so he said to Penelon that that's what God does in the human breast.

He works hidden and unseen within the breast. But we're dramatic in our day. We don't want God to work unless he comes with a beard on and a staff playing a part.

We want him to be theatrical and do the thing, you know, with a good deal of color and pyrotechnics, which means fireworks in English. And God won't work like that. God says, No, no, no.

You children of Adam, you children of carnality and lust, you who love a fair show in the flesh, you who have been brought up wrong and have wrong ideas about tonight's con, I won't work. I won't work in you. Jesus says, I can't do it.

I'm sorry, I can't work in you, in your womb or in your heart unless I can be there alone. What some of you need to do is cleanse the temple. You just need to get busy and go out.

Dry out the cattle and upset the money changers and shovel out the dirt and get rid of a lot of things that are rivaling the Lord Jesus Christ. Here's the motto, He's a jealous lover and he suffereth no rival. And he goes on and says this, Lift up thine heart now unto God with a meek stirring of love and mean himself and none of these villains.

And therefore look below. I looked that word low up to Younger Bridge and it's an old English-Saxon word meaning unwilling, be unwilling, hate, be unwilling to think on aught but God himself so that nothing works in your wit or in your will, that's in your head or in your heart but only himself. Now, again, we're back to where we started when I said that himself, when I said that Simpson in the early days talked about himself, and he shocked and blessed the generation because he talked about himself.

He said Jesus himself, it's himself that we need. I suppose you know how himself came to be written. I'm sure somebody, if not I've told you, about how Dr. Simpson went over to England, to London, to a Bible conference and there were three sermons on sanctification.

And he preached the last one. That's a bad spot to be in. But the first fellow got up and said that the way to be holy and victorious in your heart was to suppress the old man.

He taught suppression. Another man got up and taught eradication, and he said deliverance from the old carnal life is by eradication. Get rid of the old man, pull him up, turn him up to the, root up to the sun to die.

And Dr. Simpson had to get in between there, so he got up and he took one word for his tax, and he gave his testimony about how he had tried to get the victory. And he said, sometimes I would get it and think I had it and then I'd lose it. Then he said, when I came to the knowledge that victory, sanctification, deliverance, purity, holiness, all is in self.

Then he said, after that was easy and the glory came to my life. I thought that was a beautiful piece of diplomacy. I also thought that it was the most wonderfully wise way to handle a thing in good theology.

And then around that, he wrote his famous hymn, Once it was a blessing, now it is the Lord. Once his gift I wanted, now it is to give her home, now himself alone. Now, there's got to be more of himself these days.

You know, Christianity has gotten to be, I've said this before and I'm summing it up tonight, it has gotten to be a way of getting things from God. A way of, we give a tithe in order that I'm nine-tenths or go further than they're ten-tenths. And I claim that any business man who wouldn't would be a jackass with long, hairy ears.

A man who would find out that by giving God one-tenth, his nine-tenths went further than his ten-tenths had, ordinary business would lead you to do that, wouldn't it? Sure it would. A man that wouldn't do that, that's not spirituality, that's disease. And if a man wants, if a man wants to be a business man and use God, okay.

But that's not, that's not what the Bible teaches, and that's not what Paul talked about. Paul had given up that years before. That's not what the old writer of The Child of Unknowing talked about.

He said it only himself. And he said, Now do thou that in thee is to forget all the creatures that ever God made, so that thy thoughts nor thy desires be not directed nor stretched to any of them, but let them be and take no heed of them, so that Christian businessmen are in danger. Now, I talk to Christian businessmen and committee men, and they want me to come and beg me to come just to say this to them.

I'm not condemning my good friends of the Christian businessmen committee, or my good and loved friend who edits their magazine back here, but I say, Christian businessmen can get to a thought where they make Christianity to be a way to have a prosperous business down here in a mansion in the sky. Either way, you'll win. If you follow the Lord, you'll prosper down here.

Brethren, to follow the Lord doesn't always mean, in fact, I would say it rarely means to have financial prosperity. But following the Lord has meant down the years to count those things but lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. And where a fellow prospers in spite of himself, by then the way he gets around it, he gives everything away, as much as he can at least, and keeps enough to live on.

Thank God he's still here, body and soul held together, and a place to live, and a car to take him to church and to work. But further than that is not much concern. But we have made Christianity to be a way, a technique by which we can get things.

Paul didn't know. He knew better than that. He said, Yea, doubtless I count all things but lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

I have suffered the loss of all things, and I do count them but one that I may win Christ, and that I may know him through the power of his resurrection. Now, it's himself who said, Let them be and take no heed to them. That's why, that's why, that's why you can't get anywhere, and that's why some of you are going to stop coming to hear me preach this series, because we're getting around to where you live.

Before, we weren't so near to you, but they're beginning to stick the needle in a little, and you just don't want that. You'd like to have a deeper life. That cat could be given to you with a syringe, or that could be given to you with a glass of water and then a pill.

They'd take one pill three times a day, and the fellow said, You just can't do that. But some people, that's the way they get their religion. They want it in pill form, and they buy books to get it in pill form.

Later in, there isn't any such a thing. There's a cross, there's a gallows, there's a man with stripes on his back, there's an apostle with no property, there's a tradition of loneliness and weariness and rejection and glory, but there are no pills. But some want the pill.

But I say himself, himself, himself. Well, friends, I don't know. I wish, yet I don't wish.

I don't wish anything. I pray for it, and if it isn't God's will, why, I don't want it. And if it is God's will, why, I don't wish or pray.

But I would like to see somewhere a recapture once more, before I die, of the glory that men knew, of the beauty of Jesus. One old brother said this about him, many dubious names, thou bearest, and I might say that as you students know, but the average person wouldn't have any reason to know, ishi, i-s-h-i, is the word for husband in the Hebrew. And so, he wrote a poem about Jesus.

This old brother, and he said, many dubious names, thou bearest, brother, shepherd, friend, and king. But there none unto my spirit such divine support can bring. Ishi, ishi is the jewel.

Mine is while ages roll. Angels taste not of such glory. Holy ishi of the soul.

Other joys are short and fleeting. Thou and I can never part. Thou art altogether lovely.

Ishi, ishi of my heart. They sang that once. Where could you sing that now? I think we could sing it here, brother.

But there aren't many places where you can sing it, because people don't have the experience that it conveys, you see, that it embodies. Whenever a song is rejected, it's rejected as a rule, it's a good song, because the people don't understand it, and they find it dull. If you like rock and roll, you won't like ishi.

And if you like tender lady watches over me, you won't like ishi. And if you like tea, you won't like ishi. Ishi is the jewel.

Mine is while ages roll. Angels taste not of such glory. Holy ishi of the soul.

And this is the teaching of the deeper life. It is to put away all the features that ever God made, and stop trying to promote your family. Stop trying to promote your business and use God to do it.

Stop trying to promote anything and use God to do it. And put everything away with God, for he lists not work in my heart unless he can be there alone. Put everything else out.

Some young preacher will study until you have to get thick glasses, take care of his failing eyesight, because he has an idea he wants to become a famous preacher. He wants to use Jesus Christ to make him a famous preacher. He's just a hopster, buying and selling and getting gain.

They'll ordain him, and he'll be known as Reverend. And if he writes a book, they'll make him a doctor. And he'll be known as Doctor, but he's still a hopster, buying and selling and getting gain.

And if the Lord comes back, he'll drive him out of the temple along with the other cattle. But we can use the Lord for anything. I'll try to use him, but what I'm teaching to you and what Paul taught here and what

was picked up by the centuries and brought down the years and what gave birth to the missionary society that you and I know about and belong to was just exactly the other thing.

Oh, God, we don't want anything as we want thee. That's the cry of the soul on its way up. That's the cry of the soul.

In England, they say there is a bird called the skylark. We don't have them here. The nearest thing you have to it here that does the same thing is what they call the wild canary, the American goldfinch.

But it's a poor little weak example of the skylark. So they say the skylark will mount and mount and sing as it mounts. And the poet had talked about it, Ted, that the skylark mounts and sings hymns at heaven's gates.

And it mounts until it's out of sight, they say, and they can still hear the song coming down while they can no longer see the bird mounting and singing as it rises. My friends, this is what I'm teaching about, but this is what most people don't want. I think most of you must, or you wouldn't be here because you knew what I was going to preach on.

Another thing a man said about him was this, that I've always loved to quote. Love sits on his eyelids and scatters delight to all the wide regions above. Their silks and the cherry of them veil in his sight and tremble with raptures of love.

These people who have to have whole cut loads of gadgets to get their religion going, what do they do when they don't have anything like that? The truck can't get where they're going. I heard a man boast this afternoon on the radio to come to his place because they were going to bring in equipment from Pennsylvania and Ohio to serve the Lord with. Equipment? What equipment do you need to serve the Lord with, brother? For as the dear little camp meeting ladies used to say, this is my harp of ten strings.

He said, this is my harp of ten strings, and I praise the Lord in your old wrinkled hands with brown spots, you know, on them. And they clap their little old wrinkled hands with shining faces. Your harp of what do you need? What clap-clap do you need? Do you need a bushel back, a basket full of drops to serve the Lord with, brother? If you have two knees, and even if you're stiffened up with arthritis so you can't get on your knees, you can look up in your heart for prayer isn't getting on your knees.

Prayer is the elevation of the heart to God. That's all a man needs. You can pray in a prison, you can pray on an airplane, and I do, and you can pray in a ship.

You can pray anywhere, and you can worship God because it's himself that we want. Himself. Love sits on his eyelids and scatters delight so all the wide regions above and their faces are charioted with veil in his sight and tremble with raptures of love.

The only kind of revival that I'm even remotely interested in is the kind of revival that will cause people to tremble with rapture in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's all. No, I'm nearly through.

But I'd like to say this to you. I've been reading the Proverbs devotionally every day, and I've gotten into the 13th chapter, and I rather smiled when I read one of the Proverbs there. I don't remember how it runs in King James, but I have it in two other translations here.

One of them says, Every sluggard is employed in wishing. That's the Septuagint version, the old Greek version translated in English. Every sluggard is employed in wishing.

And the Knox translation says, Idleness will and will not both at once. Now, there we have a lot of Christians. They're sluggards.

And being a lifelong student, I wouldn't take that word sluggard at its face value. I said, What's a sluggard? So I looked it up to find out what a sluggard was. Well, a slug is the sort of a streamlined snail, and when they crawl along, they do about a mile a millennium.

They just crawl along, leaving a wet streak behind them. That's a slug. And a lazy slug.

Some fellow looked at it, and then when his son wouldn't work, he said, You're like that slug, you're a sluggard. And that's how we got their word in the English, a sluggard. And the Bible says that every sluggard is employed in wishing.

Goes to church, chases from one part of the city to the other, you're an evangelist, hoping that he can become a spiritual man, but he's too lazy. He's a slug. He will and he will not, both at the same time, it says.

Now, that's the way a lot of Christians are, and what are you going to do with them? Dear God, do I have to wake them up? I can. I've set up every alarm clock I could wind up and print in public, and I just can't wake people up. Sluggards will be sluggards till the Lord comes, I suppose.

But I think some of you here are going to get some wings and get rid of the shell. I'll tell you this, that if some of you women kept house like you keep your soul, you'd be in for a divorce, your wife, your husband wouldn't stay around. And if some of you men kept your business the way you keep your soul, your wife couldn't live because you'd go bankrupt.

What's your response? Rather than close in your seven minutes? Your little brother says this, and I found it true. He said now, and I'll paraphrase him and then read. He says, if you're going to go on now, no, God, get up and stir yourself and lift your heart to God and put away things and desire for property and things and seek himself alone and let him work in you without any rivals.

Well, he says, all the fiends will be cured when I do this. And they will try to defeat thee in all that they can do. You won't get us to the corner without some fiends who'll be after you.

So if you want security, don't seek God. If you want security, the devil will give it to you for a while and then send you to hell. If you're afraid of fiends and all the rest, don't try to seek God.

But he says this, and I like it. He says, let not, therefore, but travel therein until thou feel this. Now, I'll explain that.

I don't want to be baffled. But let not means don't be hindered. Don't let anybody hinder you in your seeking after God, but travel therein until you feel desire.

They're all such practical men, these old saints. They claim they were dreamers. They weren't dreamers.

They were practical men. He said, when you first start out to seek a new height, to become something other than a common Christian, he said, the first thing you'll find the devil facing you to stop you. And he

said, I exhort you now, don't stop because of that, but press right on whether you feel like it or not.

There are two times to pray, when you feel like it and when you don't. And some want to be emotionally lifted and wafted into the sky, but the old saints knew better than that. Now, they knew that there are times when you've got to, by what he calls a naked intent under God.

I want you to take that. A naked intent under God, he says. Now, that's what we need, brethren, is this naked intent to know God, to know Christ, to put the world beneath our feet, to put things beneath our feet, to put people beneath our feet, to open our hearts to only one lover, and that is some of God himself, and keep everything else out of us.

And from there on, we mount and go up. I've said I don't think anybody was ever filled with a Holy Ghost who didn't go through a time of awful darkness, and what he called the cloud of unknowing, the shadowy cloud where you couldn't seem to get through. But you believed God and you trusted Christ, and whether you felt like it or not, you went on, and you believed and you obeyed, and you prayed when you felt like it, and you prayed when you didn't, and you obeyed, and you did what you should, and you straightened things out, and you got adjusted in your business, and you got adjusted in your home, and you got adjusted in your relationships, and you quit wrong things, and you gave up things that had been hindering you, whether you felt like it or not.

He says it's all a naked intent under God. Here's the strangest thing. If you talk about mysticism in the day in which we live, every fundamentalist throws his hands high in the air as though you were invoking the spirit of Old Stalin, and you say, what are dreamers? They believe in emotion and feeling.

Every one of them that I'm acquainted with talks, you've got to believe God by a naked, curved intent of your will. Then the other things follow along. The most unusual thing, I got a letter this week from the Reformed Church asking me to write a review of the book on mysticism.

If you can get mixed up any worse than that, I don't know how, but they wanted me to review a book on mysticism that had been written by Dean Means years ago. Mysticism? Is it possible that we find a hard, cold, square doctrine that all the genes are not enough? Is it possible that people everywhere are seeking something better? Yes, it's possible. All together, it's possible.

More than possible. But remember, thou feelest in thy will only a naked intent unto God. Have you got that tonight? Naked intent unto God.

This brings the cross into your life. You're going to be that kind of Christian, and you're not going to let anybody stop you or fool you, and you're going to keep right on, and if you don't feel like it, you're going to believe anyway, and you're going to pray right on through with a cold, naked intent unto God, believing the truth. Oh, I have this to say.

God will out of your stormy grief he'll raise a basket. Out of the tomb he'll lift you into the sky. Out of the darkness he'll lift you into the light.

Old Moody went down to here and lay on his little tummy on the floor in the kitchen. I understand there was another cook's home, and prayed that he might be baptized with the Holy Ghost, but he got nowhere, and then went out from there to a city news, and when the blessed Holy Ghost fell on him, he cried, Oh, God, stay thy hand or I'll die. Out of his stormy grief God raised him.

It's always so. But the cheap saintless and the undersized pygmy Christians, they won't be happy unless they can be happy. They just won't.

They just demand it. I wouldn't put it past some of our so-called evangelical leaders to send for perfumed feathers to tickle the chins of the saints to make them happy, to make them laugh. They'll do anything in the world to make people temporarily tickled except for Jesus and himself.

But if we get himself, we'll get all the joy and delight and all the rest with it. I'm a hard man in some ways, but there are times when the joy of the Lord lifts my heart very, very high. There are times when I sit down here looking as if I was dead, I suppose, they say I do, colorless and unemotional, but in my heart there's such a joyous look towards God that I could scream out my joy.

Well, my friends, what about it? It's 8.30 and I'm going to quit. Do you want what I'm talking about? Do you want to move on past the low level of the common Christian and go on to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering and the excellency of his knowledge and the increasing flights of spiritual elevation? If you do, I've taken you a little further tonight than I think you do or you wouldn't be here. Now, let us pray.

Now, before I pray, I want again tonight to know who wants me to pray for. You're a little puzzled. You're even a little upset.

The neat little step-by-step, step-by-step formula that you have been traveling on has sort of bothered tonight with this kind of preaching and you're wondering whether you ever want to come back, whether I'm a little lost and I've been or just lost. But in your heart of hearts there's just one thing you can recognize and that is a cry, Oh God, I want thyself. I want thyself.

I want thyself, Isha, Isha. I want to know a husband in my heart. I want to know what the old prophet and what the Holy Ghost meant when he said, Thou shalt call me no more, Lord.

Thou shalt call me Isha. For I will be a husband unto thee. And you want to know that the eternal husband, the spiritual bridegroom of your heart, that you do know.

You're not so sure about all the doctrines, but there's one thing your heart cries after, Oh my God, that's what I want. And I want to pray for you. And if I pray for you, now remember this, I'm going to pray that God will be as rough as he has to be and will be as hard on you as he used to be, that he might bring you through out of this fleshly morass in which Christianity is wallowing now, up the sunlit highlands.

And it may be tough on you. Maybe someday you'll have to go back and write a letter home and straighten out things. Maybe someday you'll have to pay up where you didn't pay.

Maybe someday you'll have to quit certain things that you've been very close to. But anyway, you're going to put everything under your feet and say, Oh, that's what I want, Brother Tozer, that I remain no human. I don't care what it costs.

Pray for me. Who raised your hand? God bless you, sir, and you, who else? Put the hand up. Yes, I see you.

And you. Yes, who else? Put the hand up. Yes, sir, I see your hand right there.

And you, sir. Oh, Lord Jesus. Lord Jesus, how nice to be living in a world where peril and danger is already upon every hand.

And life is short and time is fleeting and judgment is coming and Satan is busy and all the fiends are squaring themselves across the path for trying to prevent us from going ahead. But we hear you calling from the mountains each and we want to know thee and the power of thy resurrection and the fellowship of thy suffering be made conformable under thy death. We want to know the beauty and wonder that is thee and we pray for thee to request a prayer.

Oh, Christ Jesus, Christ Jesus, Christ Jesus, thou who didst come in olden times in the form of a dove and sat upon Philem's fire and thou who didst come to Peter and to the Moravians and to the saints of New England, thou who didst come, O Lord, in spots here and there in Borneo and Korea, oh, withhold not thy glory from us. We cry, show us thy glory, Lord, show us thy glory and teach us how to go on and now grant, we pray, that this may be a good week and if the devil makes it the worst week we've ever had, we'll understand it. We'll have a naked intent and determination and we'll calmly, quietly believe even though we should be attacked, even though the darkness should cuddle over us, we'll know it's the cloud of unknowing.

It's the dark night of the soul that precedes the bright morning of the heart. And we won't be frightened, for we know thou didst go through the garden and through the cross and into the darkness and out of the darkness and into the tomb and out of the tomb and into the glory. So wilt thou lead these and lead us and lead this church and, oh, we pray, bring us to a place where soon we may be under grace, spiritually prepared for a mighty outpouring of the Holy Ghost, an outpouring that shall bring in reality that which everybody's talking about and nobody has.

And we shall come back to New Testament spirituality, back to Book of Acts Christianity again, and maybe out from us here there shall flow streams into the desert way and fire that shall touch churches and groups everywhere. Bless us as we wait, and above all, ensure us thyself, thyself, Lord, and show us thy glory. Hide us in the rock as thou passest by and show us thy glory so that all the glory of this world shall appear as ashes after that wondrous sight.

This we ask in the holy name of Jesus. Now, as we close, I'm going to ask Brother Ray to sing a little solo for us.

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