

# 'The Causes of Chronic Spiritual Failure and the Cure 1'

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer addresses the causes of chronic spiritual failure, emphasizing the importance of gratitude and a correct understanding of God's mercy.*

**Scripture:** Micah 6:1

**Topics:** "Gratitude", "Spiritual Defeat"

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## Description

A.W. Tozer addresses the causes of chronic spiritual failure, emphasizing that many believers struggle to maintain a joyful relationship with God due to an attitude of thanklessness and resentment. He highlights that God has provided abundantly, yet people often act as if they are owed something, leading to spiritual defeat. Tozer stresses the importance of recognizing our indebtedness to God and the need for a correct spiritual philosophy to overcome disappointment and resentment. He asserts that understanding God's mercy and grace is crucial for a joyful life in faith. The sermon serves as a call to gratitude and a reminder of the need to align our perspectives with God's truth.

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## Transcript

The Causes of Chronic Spiritual Failure and the Cure 1

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

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I have from God a message for you this day. More particularly do I believe it today than ordinarily. And usually, I don't come unprepared to the pulpit. I want to talk about the causes of chronic spiritual defeat. And, of course, how we can remove them. And I'm going to preach a sermon which will be complete in itself this morning, dealing with half of it. But tonight, I'm going to preach a second sermon breaking down these causes and showing how you can escape them.

Now, this came from God to me and I am convinced that it's His voice. I hope that you can be here and that you can bring your friends with you tonight, to this house of God, this chapel, to hear the Truth. I want to read two texts, one from the book of Micah. The prophet Micah in the sixth chapter; here's what he said. Here ye now what the Lord saith, Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy

voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. The simple truth is a lot of God's people can't get along with God. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. Then in the book of Deuteronomy 28th chapter, two verses, 47 and 48. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

Now what does God say here? In the first place, this is written to Israel. But it is an understood truth that these things were written unto us for our admonition upon whom the end of the ages has come. And that they are there for our instruction, and that the spiritual content of them is as true for us and as applicable to us as it was to Israel. Though the historic details may differ, the facts remain the same.

Now, what does God say here to his people? He says, I delivered you. I delivered you and I gave you everything. I delivered you by the hand of Moses. And I delivered you out from the hand of your enemy. I delivered you by blood and fire. I gave you a land for which you had not worked, harvests that hadn't been yours, orchards that were not ever planted by you. Somebody else planted them and you took them. You got them. I gave them to you because they were mine. And yet, you act as if I owed you something and hadn't paid. And because you will not serve me joyfully, therefore you shall serve your enemies sorrowfully.

You will not serve me joyfully though I have done all these things for you. And though you are in debt to me so far that you can never get out. And I'll never throw it up to you. All I want you to do to pay on your indebtedness, to just live joyfully and praise Me thankfully. That's all I ask says God. But you won't do it. You would turn it around as if I owed you something and refuse to pay and says to God, what have I done to you? Testify against me. Bring in your evidence. Why am I, why am I up before the court of your judgment? Because you would not serve me joyfully, therefore you shall serve your enemies sorrowfully.

Now, the reason for spiritual defeat. I am not going to talk about smoking and so on, the causes of chronic spiritual defeat. One cause is this right here. We cultivate, or allow ourselves to cultivate, an attitude of thanklessness, of chronic thanklessness. We allow ourselves to live and think and feel as if God owed us something. And when anything comes to us that isn't as we like it, instead of saying, be it unto Thy servant as thou wilt, I deserve this and much more also, we become sour inside. And we cultivate an attitude of arrogance that grows finally into a spirit of impertinence toward God Almighty. And so, we become sinful. Christians becomes sinful, not the kind of sin that can be practiced outwardly, like gambling.

Incidentally, I read a piece of news today I thought I'd pass on to you. The state of Colorado, the, what would he be? But the head lawyer in the state, ruled that bingo was a form of gambling and therefore forbidden by the laws of the state of Colorado. And immediately, a dear religious brother leaps to his feet and introduces a motion before the state legislature asking that a bill be passed exempting the churches from this ban in as much as they needed the money. And they were nice people and doing good. So, in Colorado, that bill passes and you can expect it. It'll say, this is a sin and they will have a cop throw you in jail if we find you gambling, but it doesn't apply to churches. They can sin under official sanction.

Now, to just let you know that. It's why we don't have any bingo rooms here. We believe gambling is gambling whether it's done by gangster or whether it's done by a Bishop. It's still gambling and men like

that will burn for their deeds unless they repent. And they're not likely to repent if the legislature exempts them. And I'm quite sure in that great day when men rise and spend before the white throne, they won't be able to pull out bill number HR 4, which says it wasn't wrong after all. Well, gambling is a sin, but that isn't what I'm talking about. You can be just as bad as those bingo churches in Colorado and nobody would ever know it at all. Not drinking and not cheating at your business. You can be honest in your business. Not lying and not fighting.

But another kind of sin which is as bad, and before God I think worse and is as certainly a cause of spiritual defeat and chronic defeat at that, is disappointment, this being disgruntled and sour and resentful. And the reason we Christians get disgruntled and sour and resentful is that we're not taught on a certain thing. We have an attitude that's wrong, and we need a new and a biblical philosophy. And when I use the word philosophy, I'm not thinking of Plato and the rest of them.

I'm thinking about a Bible philosophy, for philosophy means, as we use the word, a viewpoint, a way of looking at things, a body of truth which you hold. And we have allowed ourselves to let the word of God slide lightly over our minds. But we have in the meantime, there's a little silt, a sediment that has come to the bottom of our hearts like the grit that settles to the bottom of a tea kettle after you've used it for a good many months. It settles and gets down there. It's kind of a would-be stalactite or stalagmite if it were somewhere else.

But, in the bottom of your tea kettle, it's just a thick, it's sediment that has settled out of the water a hardened mineral, a rock formation. So that settles into our souls, and we hear the Word taught and we sing about it, and we pray about it. And we give to support it and all the rest. But at the same time, there is a silt, a sediment, a hard, gritty substance, that forms in our hearts. And we can get above it and we're in a state of perpetual disappointment. And oftentimes, it goes on to be a state of disgruntlement. And the result is a sour, resentful spirit. We shake hands and we smile and we sing and we try so hard. This isn't hypocrisy and I'm charging nobody with hypocrisy. I'm charging no one of hypocrisy anymore than I would charge a sick child with evil because it was sick. This gets on us. This gets into people.

And this takes the joy out. It takes the bell out of the steeple and the chimes out of the heart. And God's people go about trying so hard to be happy, but being disappointed and disgruntled and feeling that they have been wrongly treated. And God says I've got a controversy with my people. My people can't get along with me. That's the trouble. They can't get on with me. God and His people can't get on like a father whose children refuse to obey him and won't speak to him and resist Him.

God says, I've got a controversy with my people. Why, what have I done to you to, He says. Where am I at fault says God. Didn't I bring you out and didn't I set you free and didn't I give you everything? And yet you act as if I had given you nothing and what I did give you, you deserved and what I haven't yet given you, I am in debt to you for. And so, you serve your enemies in secret says God. You have served your enemies. You have served them sorrowfully when you were meant to serve me joyfully. But you serve your enemies in secret. And I'm describing a lot of you people. Don't think I'm not. And it's only by the grace of God and a lot of prayer and self-criticism and judgment that I am not describing myself this moment, because, here it is.

Now I want tell you how to get delivered from it. And I'll take for a few minutes now, then I want preach a full sermon tonight on how to get delivered. And I wish I could tell you that there was an emotional experience that would deliver you. But let me remind you of something my brother, an emotional

experience doesn't teach doctrine. An emotional experience doesn't make you a spiritual philosopher. An emotional experience may bring you in contact with a person with God, and it does if it's a correct and right spiritual experience, but it doesn't instruct you.

The Bible is given to you to instruct you. The Holy Ghost through the Bible instructs you. And it's a lack of spiritual instruction that bothers us. And there are some things we've got to learn. And we'll never be right no matter how much we weep and no matter how happy we get. We can sing a hymn by Isaac Watts and feel goose pimples on our wrists and the sense of elation and feeling and all that. And when it's over, 20 minutes after we left here, we can have a fender-scraping accident on the corner of something and something else and we'll find that that didn't instruct us at all. That gave us a lift, an emotional lift. And it properly should but it wasn't enough.

We'll never be right until we get delivered from an injurious, spiritual philosophy. We look at it one way and God looks at it another and there's a controversy you see. We just can't get along. We can't get, some people can't get along with God. Some of His family can't get along with Him. Because of the controversy God has called it, and how else could you have a controversy? And we'll never be able to receive a satisfying spiritual experience until we have a sound spiritual philosophy. That is, until we have been set right about how we should look at things and see them, and when we are set right about it and when we see things as God sees them.

And I'll show how we can see them by going back to Abel and coming down the years. But I want to give you two facts against which everything else in your life must be set and against which all of the sermon tonight will be preached. Although I will repeat probably not more than a paragraph or two tonight. I want to develop rather than repeat.

But here are two facts you and I have to know my friends. Not only know them doctrinally, but know them as a part of our spiritual thinking until it becomes to us a creed. It becomes to us a philosophy. It becomes to us a way of life, a way of thinking.

First is, that it's written in the Book that the soul that sinneth, it shall die. And God says all the thoughts and imaginations of the heart are only evil continually. And He says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And that by one man, sin entered into the world and death by sin. And that It's appointed unto man once to die. And after that, the judgment. Now, that's written in the Book, and that is held by every orthodox believer everywhere. But my brother and sister, we manage somehow to mean, it means everybody but me. And though if we were asked, is it so, Mr. Smith, that you have sinned and the thoughts and imaginations of your heart were only evil continually and you've come short of the glory of God, and that by one man, Adam's sin entered into you, and death lies in you. And that after death which is ahead of you, you will come to judgment. Is that true?

Well, he'd say, oh, that's the Scripture. That's true, but it's one thing to acknowledge it as being written in the Bible. It's quite another thing to hold it as a way of life, a way of looking at things, a dye that colors our thinking and gives it a golden God color. It's quite another thing I say, it's one thing to hold it as a creed. It's another thing to think against it and live against it and pray against that fact, and let that be the black background against which everything else is painted. The dark shadow that lies across the world is sin. And against that dark shadow, and in that dark shadow, we must place every other judgment. And men are rebels and sentenced to death.

Now, here we are. Some of you look as if you had just come down from heaven above. You're all nicely done, and I'm glad for you. Certainly, that's all right. I believe that we ought to do the best we have with what God given us. And you've done it and I'm glad. And some of you look as if you just come out of the cocoon and we're flying about in the sunshine, and nobody would believe that you're very bad and you don't believe it. Then because you don't believe it when you get in a jam, you react angrily against the jam. And you say, well, why should God treat me like this? Now, you wouldn't say that, because that'd be bad. God's people have learned the trick of never saying what they think. And you wouldn't at all say that. But because you don't actually believe that your heart has been desperately wicked and that sin has entered and death by sin and that if you were where you should be, you would not be here now. And that you're a rebel and sentenced to die. We simply can't get our hearts to believe it. And the result is that we react angrily and resentfully against anything that comes against us.

The Bible says men are rebels and sentenced to die and this is what we deserve. Now you'll be sure of one thing, sir. We hear of men dying in sin and we tremble for them and pity them and say, isn't it too bad and we're sorry. And we almost feel as if we'd like to say, God, why did you allow that to happen? God says, what have I done? Why are you blaming me? Because every intelligent order of being yonder will cry, hallelujah for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, true and righteous are His judgments and His ways past finding out.

So, remember that always. That instead of the angels and those spiritual beings who understand what's going on on earth. Instead of their going back to God with a scowl and say, God, why did you allow that woman to get a cancer? Why did you allow that man to get the flu and lose two weeks work when his family needs it? Why did you allow this? Not one of them goes back to God and finds fault with the Holy One who sits upon His throne. They all cried true and righteous are Thy judgments O God. For they see things in the right light. Theirs is the correct spiritual philosophy and ours is the incorrect one.

Now, I want to ask you are you man enough? Are you adult enough? Are you mature enough to take this? I've just been reading in Ezekiel where God says, Son of man, here's a roll, eat it and it will be sweet, but it will make your belly better. Get into it and it will make you better, that is, in your deep heart. It's a hard thing to take, but are you ready to take it that way every day" Your lives are borrowed days. Long ago God said, the soul that sinneth, it shall die and sin entered into the world and death by sin and it is appointed unto man once to die.

And every day you live is a borrowed day. Every day you live is a bonus given you by the kind mercy of God and you don't deserve it. And every dollar you earn is a bonus which God gives you. And every year your child lives and grows up is a kind mercy of God and not anything you deserve. And God said you won't take it that way. You insist on looking at it the other way. Therefore, because thou serveth not the Lord thy God joyfully and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all of these things, thou shalt serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, sorrowfully. So, my brethren, we've got to get this straight. That point number one.

Now, there's your fact. There's your fact. And if you fool with that, or if we try to exempt ourselves from it and say that's true of the human race, but I haven't done anything wrong. All right, you won't serve God joyfully and instead of taking this day, this 10th day of November 1957 as the day the Lord gave you a bonus, something added and extra, which you don't deserve, why you think that it's alright for you to be here and live. Just so long God says, all right, you will be defeated inwardly because you look at things wrong. And you put the blame where it doesn't belong and take the blame away from where it does. And

you make God a sinner and you make yourself the saint. You won't serve me joyfully, therefore, you'll serve your enemies sorrowfully.

Then the second thing is that God is merciful. And this is the second fact. There are two of them. And against these two facts we must judge everything else. I am going tonight by the grace of God come down the years. I hope we can have time for seven minutes of testimony tonight. And then, we don't want to be late, but I want to, I want to start with Adam and come down the years and show how these facts are.

Now God is merciful, full of grace, long suffering, and the grace of God has appeared to all men. And He is so merciful and gracious that He gave His life for the very ones who took his life. You hear me, He gave His life for them that took His life. This would never be done since the beginning of time, no nor ever after, that any man should give himself for them, who took his life away. And yet He did this, so that against our sin, our unmitigated sin, against our unqualified sin, the sin for which there's no excuse and no, cannot possibly be extenuated. Against that sin is the shining mercy of God, full of mercy and full of grace and long suffering. And this grace of God has appeared to all men. And Jesus Christ came in that grace of God and brought life and immortality to light and remitted for a while the sinner and because God is merciful, we who were sentenced to die, still live. And because God is gracious, we who ought to be dead are still alive. Because God is gracious, we who ought to be in hell are on earth, and we'll be in heaven. What have I done against you, said God? Why can't you get along with me? Why are you always in the state of sour defeat and grumbling? Why do you live like that? You blame me and you can't get on and you're serving your enemy secretly. You're serving the enemy.

And you've listened to the devil and your brain has been poisoned, and you've got a wrong outlook on life. Keep these two great facts before you. I ought to be dead, and I am alive. O wonder of wonders, it's the goodness of God. I ought to be in hell, but I'm on earth and I'll soon be in heaven. Wonder of wonders, how good God is.

My brother, if you will get that attitude and hold it and keep it, then maybe on top of it, God can give you some spiritual experiences that will last and stick and turn you into a saint and make something out of you and out of me. We deserve to die, yet we live. And by whose mercy do we live? By the mercy of God, this poor soul is set free. And we took a life away. In addition to all our other sins, a Man came to us and we took His life away. And whose life did we take away? The only man in the world who didn't have to give it up. There was only one man since the beginning of time who didn't have to give a life up, and that was the man Christ Jesus. When He came squalling into the world and cried his baby cry, death turned away and shrugged his angry shoulders and frowned and said, I have no claim. Here's a baby I've got no claim on. I thought I had a claim on every baby; and every baby that's born has a mark on its forehead. Death puts it there.

But there was one baby born that didn't. He looked like any other baby and nobody knew the difference. It was a seven or eight, nine-pound baby boy and there had to be a mother and He nursed at her breast. He got His little clothes changed and His little bits, a whisp hair brushed back by the shining eye, with the hand and the shining eyes and happy mother. He was like every other baby and nobody knew the difference. But death knew that he had no mortgage on that Baby. And if He ever died, He'd have to do it voluntarily. Everybody that's born, he owns a first mortgage on their soul.

Death holds a first mortgage and he will foreclose when he feels like it. But not that baby. He had no mortgage and he couldn't foreclose. But one day that Baby, now grown to be a tall Man, mature and

strong and wise, walked out and died and gave Himself. He gave Himself for all the other little babies who had the mark unseen. His mother examined the tiny little brow and smoothed it and pets him and coos over him and says isn't he pretty and he is. They're nice, they're nice. But death sees under the skin what the shining faced mother can't see. I've got a mortgage in there, tattooed into his brain. There came One who had no tattoo from hell on Him. And that death had no dominion over. And He gave Himself to die, the Just for the unjust and took our place and died and gave us His place to live. And we're alive now only for that reason. The angels that sinned and kept not their first estate, God hurled them down to hell. And the demons, those strange, sinister creatures from somewhere, God sent them into darkness. But us He let live. And we're here because God is merciful. Do you get those two facts? We ought to die, but we're alive. We ought to be in hell, but we're on earth and will soon be in heaven. And through the infinite mercy of God, He lets rebels reign as princes in the house of David.

Oh, my people, what does God owe you? Oh, my people. What does God owe you? You won't serve him joyfully. Therefore, you serve your enemies in frustration and resentment and bitterness, and I'm describing some. Instead of receiving the kindness of God joyfully and going about filled with gratitude as a man might be who was sentenced to die, but who walked out of the death cell a free man and raised his hand in the sunshine and thanked God he was alive. Instead of that, we fault find and criticize. A solo is off key. Yours wasn't Brother, but the soloist is off key. What kind of singing is that? The sermon isn't quite as good. The old man is slipping. A Board member doesn't come through quite as they should. What's the matter with that Board? And so, it goes on all the way up and down the line. Brethren, what has God done to us? We see, we look at things wrong.

Tonight, I want to explain from Abel down and show how today you and I ought to be the most thankful, it's a little early for Thanksgiving, but the most thankful and the most grateful and the happiest people in all of wide world. And we will be when we learn to get along with God.

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