

# The Greatness of God

by A.W. Tozer

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*God's greatness is not measured by physical magnitude, but by His quality of life, which is infinitely above ours.*

**Duration:** 39:14

**Scripture:** 1 Chronicles 29:11, Job 26:14, Isaiah 6:3, 1 Timothy 6:15-16, Revelation 4:11, Revelation 19:6

**Topics:** "God's Character"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a mother who takes her young child to the beach to escape the monotony of housework. As the mother reads, she occasionally looks up to check on her child who is happily playing with sand. However, when the mother gets engrossed in her reading, she looks up to find that her child has disappeared. The speaker uses this story to emphasize the importance of paying attention to God and not getting distracted by worldly things. He encourages the audience to focus on God's glory and the coming of Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

The first scripture that Dr. Tozer is reading comes from 1 Chronicles, chapter 29, verse 11. Thine is, O Lord, is the praisement, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty. For all that is in heaven and in the earth to come, thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art Don't let him fool you.

This is a doctor who writes his prescription in Latin, and they say, I don't know, doctors will forgive me, but they say that it's kind of, you know, it gets the layman on the hip. They feel, really, that he's up against something big there when he sees those Latin words he can't understand. He can't even read, and I doubt that the doctors can.

But, uh, theologians do the same thing. They talk about the divine transcendence, and then everybody runs off and buys a book of fiction. Says, I'll read that, I can understand that.

You could understand the other two if you'd get listening. Now, the divine transcendence, of course, means that God is above. All those verses I read says God is high up, God is above, and that's supposed to constitute the eminence, and the eminence means that God's every place means right here.

God in his omnipresence is just as close, closer to you than your own breath. He's closer to you than your own soul. Since your thoughts are heard by me just as loud as your loudest shouts could be, because God is as near to you as your blood, as near to you as your nerves, as near to you as your thoughts and your

soul.

But also, God is so high up that he cannot be conceived. And I will explain what I mean now by high up, or far above. I mean what distance.

God doesn't say anything about distance. I said one time this week, I repeated, what distance to God? You shoot a rocket up into the air, and it goes out of the gravitational field of the earth and past the gravitational field of the sun, and we look at each other and imagine that we amount to something. Well, that's merely the space, friend, and it's practically empty, and there's nothing to it.

So, what are we worried about? God is not high up in the astronomical sense. He's high up in the sense that he has a greater life that's beyond our instinct, and it's important that we think about this right, that we don't think of God being perched away somewhere on a star, or in some far-distant Imperium as the old Greeks did. It's important that we think of God as being in his life and character and doing so infinitely above everything that you and I know that's all of us, so far above that we can't explain it.

You see, physical magnitude doesn't mean anything to God. You people out here are very proud of Mount Cook, and up where you live, you're very proud of Rainier, and out our way, we're proud of Stuttgart. And, you know, that's what we would be proud of.

All right, I thought it was really straight from the bottom to get something extra, but... And we think it's the tallest mountain, you know, the biggest river that we are the proudest at. But, what's that blow in the storm? It holds all things in its hand. There's a small dust in the balance.

It's nothing. You see, physical magnitude in itself, no less than a measure, is the greater life that matters. Now, let me realize this.

I've been making friends with a lot of little girls and boys around over the ground. Sometimes they like me, and sometimes they won't even look at me. But, I like them.

Suppose that a young mother, say, living, oh, in Chicago, or New York City, or Seattle or somewhere, where there's a port, and suppose that that mother got fed up with housework, and said, I'm going down to the beach, and I'm not going down where everybody lies sprawled all around with nothing on. I'm going to go off by myself, and nobody goes, and sit down by the lake, or by the ocean, and watch the waves come in and leave. And she takes her little girl with her, two years old, little blue-eyed doll, and the thing with pink complexion and a quick smile, weighs about, oh, maybe 35 pounds, dripping wet, and just too lovely for words, you know, and sweet.

Who's her mom? Well, she sits down by the lake and reads, and every half minute or quarter of a minute, she looks up and watches the baby. And the baby has a red tail and a cover, and she's shoveling sand into the tail, and emptying it out, and shoveling it in again. And then the mother gets interested in the paragraph, and she reads a little longer than she would have thought she had, and when she looks up, the little child is gone.

She leaps to her feet and drops the balloon. Laura Paulley was in it now, and screams for the child that there's no answer. She looks everywhere, and back is about no answer.

Well, there's the lake, there's the ocean, there are the undulating waves following each other in, and gracefully and nonchalantly lapping the sand. And there are the seagulls circling smoothly and skillfully

above, and out there hanging low are the clouds, and there are the ships going by, leaving trails of smoke behind, and all the beauty of the job is given to the seashore. The lakeshore's all over there.

But what is it to her? What is a whole ocean to her now? What are the clouds that store on her now? What are the seagulls that crop and circle and dance there now? What's the sand that stretches away endlessly and on both directions? What anything now her baby's lost? Now, to relieve everybody, let's suppose that a couple of minutes later she finds her out behind a bush, beautifully working on the sand. She's all right, but for that awful moment the mother learned that it's not size, nor amount, nor height, nor depth, nor beauty, she lost this valuable. The kind of life.

What kind of life has that little baby got? Why, she's got a kind of life that all eagles could never have. She has a kind of life that never could be found in the ocean or lake. No, no, no client could say, our father who art in heaven, no sandy beach could throw a fork around the mother's neck and say, I love you mama.

Love and joy and happiness and prayer and worship, they belong to a kind of life. And the little girl has that kind of life that it's not found out in the mountains and out in the oceans. It's only found in man made in the image of God.

Now, I illustrate a kind of life, and I say that God is above in the sense that God's kind of life is infinitely above ours. He's above us in a greater degree or greater than the little child's life. He's above the dead fish or the fish that floats in there by the shore.

So, it's quality of doing that matters, but let me point out something to you now. I know a few young people are following me. There are some older.

We mustn't think of God as being the top in an ascending scale of life. That's a great mistake. If you begin with a cell, the way they're doing biology, and say we'll start with one cell, then we think our way up to, say, the fish, and think your way on up a little further to the bird, and think your way on up to the beast.

You've got an ascending scale of life. Then you think your way on up to man, then you think your way on up to the angel, and then the archangel, and then the cherub, and then the burning seraphim, and then at the top of that greater life is God. No, that's all a mistake.

There's no way to think of it at all. Would you be shocked if I said to you that God is just as far above an archangel as he is above a caterpillar? He's just as far above an archangel as he is above a caterpillar. You see, the gap that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is a finite gap.

Now, certainly the archangel has a greater life that's far higher than the very caterpillar that falls on the leaf, but they are alike in that they're creatures. They had a time, they were not, and then they were. The archangel with his broad-rimmed threads and the tiny caterpillar went along.

They're both creatures of God, but God is not a creature, and he doesn't belong in the creature category at all. You'll have to think of God as separated from, high above, holy beyond, other than. He is God, and there's nothing like God in the entire universe.

God is God. That which is God, the substance God, has no error in all universe. So, we think of God then as being high.

The substance of God is wholly unique, and God can never pass over and cease to be God, and nothing that is not God can ever pass over and become God. The idea that Jesus was a man who became God is perfectly true. Jesus was God as man, but there's never such a thing as man becoming God, and there's never such a thing as God becoming a creature.

That would be, that would be the Christ-God-bound and wholesome majesty of the deity. But, my friends, how can I go on talking like this? How can I speak of that which is beyond all speech and beyond all thought? And, how can I think of that which is beyond thought, and talk of that which would be better that I kept silent so far? See, I have thought that if some watcher and holy one who had spent his centuries by the sea of fire, gazing on the holy face of the eternal God, I have thought if that watcher or holy one were to come to a meeting like this, and stand up and begin to talk, he would not shatter the way worldly people shatter, and I don't know that he would even talk as lightly as we preachers do. I think, rather, that he would charm us and fascinate us by ecstatic descriptions of the great God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who was, and is, and will be, world without end.

And you would cover his face with his wings, and say, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, to the old Latin hymn that goes, We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. All your self-worshipped means the Father Everlasting. To thee, all angels cry aloud to heaven and all the powers that are therein to thee seraphim and cherubim, continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of salvation, heaven and earth are full of the magic, deitized glory.

To thee, our worship of the prophet, praise thee. The noble army of martyrs, praise thee. The glorious company of the apostles, praise thee.

The whole church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee the Father of an infinite majesty, and also thy Son Jesus Christ the Lord, and the Holy Ghost the Comforter. Ah, this is the God, this is the one you're called to serve, my friends. He is the one you're called to serve, and lo, these are parts of his ways, sirs.

These are parts of his ways, but a little portion is heard of him. You see, all the things we've said or have talked about, God, are only a little portion of God, and parts of his ways. They are what we call the rational element.

That is, the thoughts you can get ahold of in your head. You know, people would like to pull God down and make God the same size we are, and chum up to him and make him a pal so that we would have a God our size, a little bigger so he'd help us when we were in trouble, but not too big so we wouldn't be afraid of him. And that's the kind of God they're dishing out these days here and there everywhere in evangelical circles.

The God of the average evangelical church is too small. He's not the God of heaven and the God of creation, but he's a homemade, handmade God who's been pulled down. He's a stuffed shirt, he's a static cloth, he's just an old, old book that we want to keep on his good side so when time comes he can make it rich, or help us with our studies, or help us in a business deal, or help us to hit a home run, or help us to get a movie contract or something else, you know? Kind of have God around to keep the stars in place, and keep the rivers running, and kind of be a divine janitor looking after things, ready to hop whenever we say, I'm going on help.

That's the kind of God the evangelical church has now, all up and down everywhere. The God that can get me on my knees has to be infinitely higher than I am. He's got to be so high and lofty and joyous that I can use those angels and cherubim and cherubim to cry, holy, holy, holy Lord God of heaven.

He has to be so mighty that he can take the world in his hand and hold it there and shake it. He has to be thicker than the devil, and greater than kings, and mighty as the mountains, and grander than spires. He has to be that kind of God.

Any God that I can speak with my head, I'll never get down on my... I'm an American, and I am relatively free. There was a day when I just said, I'm free. But since 1932, I say relatively free.

Amen. But I'm an American, and I don't bow to simple English. I don't, you know, excuse English, but I don't.

I don't bow to simple English, and I don't like the idea of class. Some call it the big shot, and some call it the little shot, and the little shot gets down on the knees of the big shot. That's not the way to be an American, and it's not the way to be a Christian.

God made us all, and the humblest little child here tonight is just as valuable to God as a stuffed shirt with lots of money to write big checks and drive these big cars. So, let's remember that we're not to be classified, little and big, one, two, three, five, and ten. That belongs to a world that we don't inhabit over here on this blessed continent.

Let's keep ourselves as free as we can, but let's remember that when it comes to God, down we go. When it comes to God, down we go on our knees, and the mightiest men and the potentates and the plenipotentiaries. Now, what does that mean? Oh, that means big shot.

That's all teams, you know, vice presidents and presidents and ambassadors. They're called plenipotentiaries and potentates. Well, uh, they put their pants on one leg at a time, just like other people, and some of them aren't even very good people.

And, uh, and I'm talking the limit, but when it comes to God, instantly we're on our knees, instantly we bow because he's infinitely removed. This great God, how shall forlorned mortals dare to sing thy glory and thy grace? To leap thy feet we lie afar and see the shadows of thy face. This great God.

Brethren, Jesus Christ is that God, and though he walked among men and took babies in his arms, he made the atoms out of which the babies were composed. When they nailed him on a cross, he had created the nails they used to nail him on the cross. He had caused a tree to grow, but they ruled for a cross to hang him on.

He made the very sun that did itself in shame while he died for our sins on the tree. He was God, he is God. He is not God the Father, and he is not God the Spirit.

He is God the Eternal Son, the Lord of the world without end. And when we say, accept Jesus, we're not doing Jesus any favor. Some evangelists make it out as though he is doing Jesus a great favor to come.

You don't do Jesus any favor when you give your heart to him, and he doesn't lose anything when you refuse to give your heart to him. You withhold your love, and he's lost nothing. Give and he gained nothing.

He already has the world without end. Infinite mortals will be regained, and the poor beasts, and the orphans, and the living creatures, pour their vows before him and cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, where is the land that was saved? So let's not imagine we're doing Jesus a favor by testifying or witnessing that we're doing Jesus a favor by giving our heart to him. No, he's doing us infinite favor in stooping to receive us to his bosom.

The mighty God stooped to be man, and stooping to be man, he stooped to die and rose again. And now he stretches forth his hands, this mighty Lord Jesus. So don't let that too power.

When I hear people say, Jesus dear, I want to walk out of their prison in a disillusion, for the Jesus Christ that rose from the dead and had all power given unto me in heaven and earth, he is not going for one second to allow himself to be pawed over and is slobbered over by kind old men and women whose concepts of love they got from Hollywood or Broadway. The transcendent God, ah, no, God is called the Tetragrammaton. In the Old Testament, they had a four-lettered word, J-H-Y-H-Y-H-W-H, and they didn't try to pronounce it, and the result is it's lost now.

Those who want to pronounce it are dead, and they never even know how to pronounce it. So we call it Jehovah, or Yahweh, or some other such expression. The Tetragrammaton, they called it the incommunicable name, and even to this day when we have our King James Bible, we have the word Lord's letters only used six times in the King James Bible.

Why? It's the name Jehovah. But the name Jehovah, Y-H-W-H, the Tetragrammaton, occurs many times, but those reverend old Jews who want every Tom, Dick, and Harry pronouncing that all the way, so they covered it over when we pronounce it Lord, are tired of the fact that it's the incommunicable name. And they tell me I've never been in Mohammedan lands, but they tell me that among certain Mohammedans who can't read, if they see a piece of paper lying and they don't know what's written on it, they pick it up carefully and put it on a shelf or somewhere where it's safe.

They're afraid the sacred name might be written there, and they don't want to be guilty of chanting on that sacred name. Why, they're more irreverent than a lot of Christians are, those Mohammedans. They go down lower before Allah than a lot of Christians go before the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

But do you know this awesome thought? With the sense of dread, philosophers have called God the *Mysterium Comendum*, the tremendous mystery, the awesome mystery. And before this *Mysterium Comendum*, old Jacob cried, how dreadful is this place? This is the house of God. And Peter said, depart from me, Lord, for I am unclean.

And he loses the sense of preacher consciousness. Do you remember Abraham said, I am but dust and ashes? And before this God, there's a sense of ignorance. We're so ignorant.

What shall I answer thee, said Job? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Job was speechless before God. Job was an orator.

He'd have made a good politician for Los Angeles. He could just open his mouth, and words would flow out like water out of a spigot or a tap. But when God revealed himself to him, Job laid his hand on his mouth and said, oh God, excuse me, I can't talk.

And you know why some of you dear people aren't getting any place. You've never met that kind of God. Your little God who's been made for you, and spun out of evangelist stories, and cheap fiction, and old,

made planograph, and general all-around low-grade goofiness so that you don't know his true awesome God, before whom you feel utterly ignorant.

I've been preaching since I was 19, and I'm 62, and the older I get, the dumber I get. And I mean it, and I'm not trying to be funny. I know so little.

And people come and ask me things, and I want, I knew what the school field Bible was, and said about it, and I could have answered the question with a snap of my finger, turned on my ear, and stopped away. I knew, but I don't know so much anymore. I know God better, but I don't know things as well as I used to.

I'm getting more stupid all the time as I know God better, and I believe it ought to work that way. Nobody in this crowd will ever be accepted into the awesome presence of the most holy God, the God who knows all that can be known in one easy, effortless act, and knows all power, and all relations, all substance, all spirit, all mind, all matter, all relationship, all energy, all history, and all the future, and knows it instantly. You and I know how little we know.

To get clear proof, all I need to go is to go to a good bookstore, and look over the books that I haven't read yet, or go to a library and look at the books that I haven't read, and never will be able to read. None of us knows very much, and the man who thinks he knows the most is the man who, according to Paul, knows the least. But the feeling of ignorance that some of you dear people will just admit how utterly, exquisitely ignorant you are, you have to begin to get somewhere with God right away.

But you're quarter of the heads in your row. Somebody said the only proper rule to pray is standing up and praying a little bit higher, and God will hear you. He'll hear you.

He isn't interested in your head. He isn't interested in how many degrees you have degrees on. But if I didn't preach any better afterwards, maybe not at all.

Degrees don't mean anything, and yet some people imagine if they don't have degrees they just aren't anywhere. Oh, friends, some of the simplest people in the world know God way better than the Ph.D. does. Then, weakness.

Weakness. God wants to know how weak you are. Listen, Daniel said, I set my faith toward the ground.

I became dumb. There remained no more strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. That is the effect of plenitude of being and plenitude of power holding the man, overwhelming the man.

Do you know your trouble? We've had a lot of people of the order here in this camp more than in most camp meetings, no matter who the evangelist is. But do you know something? A lot of people are going away disappointed. Do you know why? Because they've got a controversy with God.

They're holding out on God, and they have been talked down to, and the things have been excused, and it's been explained to them, until they imagine they can fight God as long as they want to, and after they've fought God a half a lifetime, finally say, well, think of quit fighting God now and surrender, and everything will be all right. Boy, don't let them fool you on that. Let's not be caught in that terrible trap.

A controversy. God once had a controversy with Israel, and he has a controversy with some of you. Some of you are students, some of you are teachers back home, some of you are known as being very promising young people, but you're not getting anywhere here.

The reason is you're resisting, you're refusing, you're fighting God. You've had so many gentle little stories told you that you think you can get away with it. No, you can't.

God is still the awful God that set fire on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and turned them into ashes. He's still that God. Remember, if you've got a controversy with God, remember two things.

You can't win, and God can't lose. If you're fighting God on any point, some girl's fighting God. She's going with a young fella, but secretly he's not good, and he's not good for her, and she's left her eyes out and crying until she's soaked her Bible tears over him, but she's still drawn to him.

She's caught in the middle, and she's fighting God about that young fella. Listen, young lady, you'd better have a thousand times leaving, and if you never find everybody else, die a blessed old maid. Than to let a young fella lead you off and tie you up to a marriage that'll be a curse as long as you live.

You can't win when you fight God, and you'll never win while you're resisting God. Some of you have business deals, and you're a little doubtful about what you should do. It's legal, but you're wondering about the ethics of it, whether it's right or not.

I say to you, men, do what's right and lose everything, rather than do what's wrong and dock in the face of God and hold out against his holiness. So, with all morality everywhere, all acts of right or wrong, God calls you to holiness, and righteousness, and obedience, and your carnal human heart calls you away from that. That's why some of you come to the prayer down to the altar and go away and don't get anything.

You wonder if it's worthwhile. You say, I'd like to have it explained. It isn't explanation you want.

It isn't explanation. It's obedience. It's surrender.

It's stopping your controversy. Quit your fighting. Surrender.

Give up. Say, God, here I am. Throw yourself in the hand of God.

Now, you can't win as long as you're resisting God, and God can't lose because God is sovereign, and is working according to a plan that he made before the foundation of the world. And when it's all over, the crown will belong to heavenly Jesus, and his bag will waffle him into the presence of the Father with great joy. And God will win, but all those who fought will lose.

Either God will win over you now through your everlasting blessedness, or God will win over you later through your everlasting loss, and sorrow, and shame. Now, that's why some of us are praying and not getting any place. We're resisting.

We're refusing. We're rejecting. We pray, O God, through me, and tighten our hearts against him.

We say, come in, Holy Ghost, and shut the door on his face, because we're hiding something. We've got a gloomy Babylonish garment in a gold pouch hidden somewhere like this, and somewhere in this whole place isn't giving up. End the controversy tonight.

End it tonight. Stop fighting God, and you will win instantly, because God loves you. Jesus loves you.

He died for you. The Holy Ghost is here to apply the blood, to break every fetter, set you free. He's here to do it.

He can't do it while you resist, and now think about it. You, a little creature that yesterday were not, and tomorrow you will not be, and yet you dare to raise your fists against the transcendent God, the majesty in the heaven, and say, no God, I won't. Someone said, I'm not sure whether it was C.S. Lewis.

I quoted it before. He said, the church is filled with two kinds of people. Those who say to God, thy will be done, and those who say to God, all right God, have it your way.

You know, there's an awful lot of God's people that have said, all right God, have it your way. Sour. Sour.

Obedying God, but they're sour, getting nowhere. Ah, let's all surrender tonight. Let's all surrender tonight.

Let's all bow ourselves at his blessed feet. Let's all go off and seek to the transcendent God, and say, I'll fully sharpen to fight and resist. I quit.

I throw down my gun. I give up tonight, hands up before my God. I'll do anything you tell me to do, Father.

So long as I live. Well, if you do that, if you take that attitude and hold it, it'll be like the coming of a refreshing rain in the springtime, it'll be like the coming back of the sun after the long winter, it'll be a bursting forth of life and power and fruitfulness and joy to you such as you never dreamed could be yours. The reason you don't have it now is you're resisting and fighting, and holding God off at arm's length and disobeying or refusing to obey, which is the same thing.

Will you quit it tonight? Will you tonight throw yourself across the altar and say, I mean it, now I give myself to thee, never to resist again? Will you do it? Would you stand with me, please? Now, we're going to sing a song that would normally be a surrender song. Not fully surrendered, if you please, brother. Fully surrendered is kind of gloomy, and I think we ought to surrender with a lot more joy than there is in that song, if you'll excuse my expression.

But let's surrender tonight. Surrender, will you? And we'll go down before God, and we'll face tomorrow's happy Sabbath day ready for whatever God sends all day long. All right? Have thine own way.

All right. All right. The first scripture that Dr. Taser is reading comes from 1 Chronicles chapter 29, verse 11.

Thine own are the greatness, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty.

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