

The Man Who Met God in...

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the necessity of personal experience with God, as illustrated by Moses and the burning bush, to transform and empower believers in their witness.

Duration: 35:58

Scripture: Exodus 3:2

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by expressing his love for the congregation and his intention to speak to them for three mornings. He mentions that the messages he will deliver are by request, indicating that they have been well-received in the past. The preacher then reads from the third chapter of Exodus, where Moses encounters the burning bush. He emphasizes the significance of Moses' encounter with God and the transformation that occurred within him, urging the congregation, especially young people entering religious service, to be like a burning bush that reflects God's presence.

Transcript

There are persons most difficult to love, and to re-imagine as one of them, I love them all of them. Very big, wonderful audience. I figure that this will be pretty much captive audience, and I mean by that that I will be speaking to them every morning for the three mornings that I shall be here.

Therefore, I want to make, before I begin to speak, I want to make a few preliminary remarks which will not be repeated for the reason that one of them is that the messages that I want to bring to you are by request. All preachers are edgy about repeating sermons, but the handbook uses which I gave as a banner seem to please them. They ask me to overlap them, and those interested in me, philosopher, complained that nobody is a carpenter.

He should be a man who does. So, it is God. God makes this.

And while there may be gifts or missionary medicine that I wouldn't have to have, or that a Christian truck driver wouldn't have to have, there are no graces necessary. Therefore, I shall speak about the man, not the doctor, and make a man, a man of God. Although there's much theory in the Bible, that is, there is much that is, well, I do not want to talk to you.

I believe the greatest need of the hour is the incarnation. The reason there's so much about Christ, it is that God knew that we, so I shall speak to you this morning, tomorrow morning on the man, a man lifted up in the third morning, I'm not sure, possibly, but now in turning to the text, and be backside of the dead, and the angel of the Lord, will now turn aside and seize it very tight by the bush. When the Lord saw that he turned aside and seized, he got in the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses, and he said, Jeremiah, and he said, draw not an eye at her.

Moreover he said, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses did his thing, for he was afraid on God. Now, we see here a great man, but up to this, and almost completely, he was to be a lawgiver, he was to be, and the man said, he was to be the leader of the nation in the world, a statesman, and teacher of the ages.

And the man was not prepared for the job. He wasn't ready. He wasn't a young man.

And yet he had had enough preparation that we would have given him an honorary degree, and we would have made him head of almost any mission board. He could have gotten on the district, and the chorus, the grace, and he had grown up in the chorus, and then he took a post-graduate course, keeping shape. And I'm serious about this.

God sent him out to see if he could undo some things his education had done for him. And there, for a great many years, he kept his shape. And yet he wasn't ready.

After all that, it could have been a poet, and an artist, and all that ass. God had to do something for him. He had to give him a sense of safety.

He had to stun him, and beat him down. With an encounter, he had the doctrine, he was smooth, and he had had lots of time to dream and to think. But he still wasn't ready.

He could make him ready only by bringing him to him. And so, here, God revealed himself to the man at the bush alone in the running brow of Sinai. He experienced God.

And God revealed himself as fire. ...that a little, talk a little about it. You know, they say that God is inscrutable and ineffable.

He's a lot of other things, but he is those two things. ...with your mind. I'd like to say this to you, but I can't because I haven't the time.

But this rationalism that's passing for Christian theologism irks me because we are trying to figure God out with our heads, and you can't do it, my brethren. You can only... God rises infinitely above the possibility of ever any man's grasping him intellectually. ...knowing that he's ineffable, cannot be spoken forth, inscrutable, cannot be reached, dwells in life that no man can... You remember that God came to Israel as the fire by night and the bush by... the cloud by day and later on when the temple was built, he dwelt between the wings of the chariot, then as a fire, they call it the... And then at... the Holy Ghost came upon those 120.

He perpetuated that idea of... He disciplined to show Moses who he was and bring him into an encounter with himself in experience. Now, if there are any inclined to be shy away from the word experience, I'm not one of them. I believe in experience.

You know, experience has been defined... conscious awareness of something by somebody and that's how we know. That's how we know. And somebody that he was aware of... Moses experienced God and from here on, no longer theory, no longer knowledge by description, it now became knowledge by... by acquaintance.

...the Scottish philosopher Carlisle... ...in the church and he linked his arm in the minister's arm and said, Reverend, what this parish needs is somebody who knows God otherwise than... I'm convinced that a great many of us, even evangelicals, know God only by hearsay. He is what... or hope that he is rather than what we... And I think tragic... ...circles is this one, that we have used doctrine as a substitute for spirit. Spirit should be the outgrowth of doctrine, but we make doctrinal... doctrine terminal and if we can recite... ...the notes of the... and we have it, but a lot of people stop right there and need to experience God.

Bible doctrine is a highway to lead us to God, but there are many evangelicals asleep beside the highway... ...the credo of the Christian, but who experience... and I believe that there ought to be some prophets rising... ...and declare that God can be experienced, that we can know God, that we don't have to make God a logical deduction from... ...that we can experience... ...and they were my grandchildren, I could prove they were by deduction. And he did. He did and... and took all the self-confidence out of the man and beat him down and then raised him up.

It's always God's way. Some of the things that I think he taught Moses there, and I think he wants to teach you and me, if we're going to be used at all of God, I'll give you now. One is that the fire dwelt in the bush.

And the bush was at the mercy of the fire. It accepted the rule of the fire. You know, when you hold a creed, that's all very well, but you'll never amount to anything till the creed... As long as you hold the doctrine of God, that's all very well.

It's better than being an atheist. But until God hoses you as an extension of his own hands, you're not yet where you ought to be. And this indicated here in a beautiful figure, if not in the type, that the fire dwells in the bush.

Now, I'm a great believer in the indwelling in you the hope of glory. Not Christ with you only, though that's true, but Christ in you, which is the hope. The problem of personality, interpenetrating personality, isn't a heavy one for me.

I get blessed on lot who don't understand. And I admit I don't either, but they look good to me. And God blesses me, as the brother said, without much provocation.

I get help. I get a lot of help when there are a lot of problems that I don't have. An Anglican pastor came to me once and said, Closure, I'd like to ask you two questions.

One, how do you explain the problem? And I said, Doctor, as for that first problem, I don't have the question, the answer to the question, I don't even have the question. It isn't even a problem to me how the eternal God can enter time's low tabernacle and become flesh to dwell among us. But the problem of how personality interpenetrates personality was settled.

That is, my head got hold of it, by the iron in the fire. You put the iron in the fire and blow the old fashioned bellows and pretty soon you have the fire in the iron. You do not have the loss of either personality.

The iron is still the iron and the fire is still the fire. And if the fire goes out of the iron, it's true. So God enters the human breast and fuses his divine, uncreated personality with the created, with his child.

And they do not become metaphysically or ontologically one, but the fire, he becomes a little like God. There's much of God in him and about him. And yet he is not God and God is not the man.

Forever and forever God remains the man and yet their personalities and he is saying that to us. That's what we need for Christian workers, any kind of Christian workers. And then I notice, secondly, that the bush was purified by the fire.

I suppose that it passed. And ask your definition of sanctification. There are 700 of me, they tell you, and we'd have 700 in boots over the word.

But I believe that God wants his people to be holy. I do believe that. But I do not believe holiness is ever God.

God is holy and only God is holy. And where God is, there's holiness and where God is not, there is just us. As any of you used to try to make it any otherwise, the bush was purified by the fire.

You ever stop to think that all the fungi and all the larvae and worms and all perished out of that bush, there wasn't a single thing but bush and fire. The presence of God burning in the human breath purifies that breath and as long as it burns there on him, those evils that used to follow us around and be part of our presence burned away and there'll be nothing to show where they used to be. I don't know much about medicine, you know.

I'm a preacher and of course I read the Reader's Digest. It's an awful lot of medicine. You can get a tremendous amount of medical education.

But I read that there are heat-proof, there are heat-proof microbes that you can boil them for two hours and they still come up smiling, can stand raw fire, all life dies before the flame. Evils in the breath that can understand the presence of all kinds of revival meetings and religious meetings and there are sins that can get on a board, that can take the Lord's Supper, that can get baptized, that can stand out of the indwelling God. Now the third thing is that the bush was transfigured by the flame.

That bush of thorn and the cage of bush and there were millions of them growing around there and Moses had seen them by the hundreds. But this bush, the most famous bush in all history and still remains the most famous bush in all history, its glory was a derived God did not make the bush great. He simply got in the bush and was great in the bush.

And so the attention was drawn to the bush. The Sunday school teacher was teaching about the bush and he said, you know, Moses was a great scientist. He was observing that.

And when he saw the fire burning in the bush, his scientific spirit came out and he said, now I'll go and turn them this. Imagine that, those poor kids had to listen to that kind of stuff. The simple fact is anybody with an IQ above six and seven would have turned aside to see a fire come down miles from human habitat.

Moses did. He turned aside to see that bush, that transfigured bush and it became, it took on meaning and significance there. It itself was related by nature to the fire.

We just had a hectic Christmas period, but if you got past the lights and Santa Claus and the rest of it, you could see the beauty of Jesus. All the fragrance, the aloes and myrrh and cashew from his holy garments. He as though he was slain on a hill outside of Bethlehem, this dirty world in which we are here.

Well, there's an attractiveness about true Christianity. And I don't mind telling you, I'm not as happy a man as I ought to be, irresponsibly happy. I pray God will never allow me to become an irresponsible, happy jingle bell Christian ought to be.

I think we ought to take the weight and woe of the world and of the Church on our shoulders and we have to be miserable saintly and dedicated to God and suffer through it. And one of the things I'm miserable about part of the time is the unattractiveness of Christianity in our day. The tragedy of unlovely orthodoxy, of unbeautiful Christianity is without doubt what it is today.

Now, I heard the talk last night given by Brother Blockner, and he tipped us off that he would say things that we didn't believe, and I tried my best, I couldn't, that I didn't agree with him on. But he was talking, he gave us a bird's-nest of commissions all over the world. You know, one reason I believe they exist is this.

This mess we're in all over in missions everywhere. ...is that we have taken a decadent, degenerate Christianity and we've transplanted it on foreign soil and we believe that we're doing God's service. My friend, it doesn't make a man holy to cross the water, whether he goes over on the Queen Mary or whether he flies by a bull.

He's just the same man when he gets over there as he was when he was here. You can put it on here, you can put on... We, in our sense, we do all, we do everything but bow down to missionaries. There is too many, it's pretty well, and they are their people, the same as we are.

And they will transplant and take with them over yonder. If they were brought victims, they'll soon be writing cheap religious fiction for the... or national, excuse me. And instead of having pure Christianity, Western Christianity transplanted on eastern soil, for to leave the great tragedy of unbeautiful, unlovely Christianity.

And the sorrow is that most people, they see the ugly thing that passes Christianity today and think that's all there is. When actually what we want is the beauty of the Lord, our God in human breath. A winsome, magnetic saint.

500 promoters and gadgeteers and religious engineers. Used to be, you know, give a man a songbook and turn him loose and you had an evangelistic town. Send a missionary over there with a kid to perform surgery and a pair of pliers to pull out teeth.

And he, you had a missionary. And nowadays you've got to take onyx to get through. It's a big, ugly, top-heavy thing.

And sometimes I wonder if it won't be the will of God being down and start over. But how will we start? We'll start with saints, my brothers and sisters. I believe in saints.

The comics, and I've met the promoters, and I've met the founders who put his name on the front of the building. Founded it. And I have met converted cowboys, not too well converted, and converted pugilists that all got converted but their fists.

Met all kinds of weird Christians throughout the United States and Canada. But my heart is looking for saints. I want to meet who are like the Lord Jesus Christ.

A good many years ago in the state of Ohio, I heard an old gentleman losing his lecture. Now the odd thing about it is, I don't know what he said. I don't remember what he said.

But all I know is what he looked like. He looked like my conception of Jesus, if Jesus had lived to be old. What a beauty.

I sat entranced by that beautiful face. But I don't remember too much of his sermon. Dr. Jonathan Goforth, the great Presbyterian missionary.

Later on I was preaching in Toronto. Came out and said, Dr. Jonathan Goforth has died. He will lie in state in such and such a church.

Passed by by the hundreds and I imagine thousands upon thousands to look at the face of the man who had looked like Jesus. Ever written a great book? I don't think he ever did. I've never seen it.

He'd never painted a great picture. He'd never founded anything particularly. Had lived what he believed.

And the fire glowed in the bush until Dr. Grace told more than his tongue could tell. So they went past and looked down on that dead face. Not even the way the beauty of the Lord God that had been so long burning in that personality.

That is what we need, my brothers and sisters. That is what we need. So to you, particularly to the young people going out into religious service, I would say that you are called to be a burning bush.

Called to be a bush that has fire in it. This is the world sundown and there are just alone looking for somebody that looks like God. Somebody that has fire.

A lonely man somewhere is looking your direction. And it's my conviction that unlenity has done more to turn more people away from Christ than all the liberalism in the world. Though I'm not a liberal.

I'm an evangelical. I pray a little and stretch it and put a few footnotes around it. I'm even a fundamentalist.

But at least I'm an essentialist, a believer in historic Christianity, the faith of our fathers which is living still. And yet I believe that until evangelical Christianity gets through and meets God in the fire, gets God burning and glowing within it, we're going to have all these troubles and we're not going to solve them by confidence. I'm sorry.

We're going to solve them. You're going to do a lot here and I'm for you. But you're not going to solve this one basic problem unless you solve it automatically.

For it's not techniques to follow, methods to be followed. It's the man and his God, God and the man, the man in God and God in the man, the fire of the Holy Ghost burning in the breast of the man. And brother, if that burns hot enough, it'll burn through an awful lot of problems that you won't be able to solve in a thousand panel discussion.

That's all for this morning. And may God help us as we go out from here to serving in his world. We may remember that the most important thing is that we should have met God himself in living spiritual

encounter.

Father, we pray that thou will be pleased to bless these words. Thou knowest how, how our words fly about like birds around a chimney. Oh, but Jesus, take the words, at least the text, and carry it home to our hearts.

Put in us, we pray, a great longing after these, a great desire to know thee in living encounter by the Holy Ghost through the blood until all our self-confidence is gone and we rest not. We ask these things in the name of Jesus.

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