

# The Voice of Reform

by A.W. Tozer

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*The church needs to return to its biblical roots and prioritize a right divine human relationship, the lordship of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in order to stay alive and be effective.*

**Duration:** 38:38

**Scripture:** Isaiah 30:18

**Topics:** "Reformation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of believing in Jesus Christ rather than trying to explain Him. He highlights ten basic pillars of the evangelical church that have been lost and need to be revived. The preacher warns against the dangers of subtle liberalism and the growing world church. He urges believers to take these pillars seriously, stand for them, and live by them, even if it comes at a cost. The sermon also emphasizes the need to recognize Jesus as both Lord and Savior and to embrace the Holy Spirit along with the Word of God.

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## Transcript

Verses eighteen to twenty-one, And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you. And therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you. For the Lord is a God of judgment, blessed are all they that wait for him.

For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem, thou shalt weep no more. He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry. When ye shall hear it, he will answer thee.

And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers. And thine ears shall hear the word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it. When ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

Let us pray. Dear Lord Jesus, thou art risen from the dead. All authority is given unto thee in heaven and in earth.

Principalities and powers and might and dominion, all these have been made subject unto thee. And thou art the head over all things to the church. Lord, speak thou.

Speak thou. And may we have the wisdom to hear and the grace to obey. Amen.

Now, the church has never, down the years, gone steadily along, but she's zigzagged up and down. The progress of the church from Pentecost to the coming of the Lord would not be a steady, smooth rise like the taking off of a jet plane, but it would be a zigzag from peaks to valleys and back up to plateaus and down to valleys and back up to peaks again on through. Now, we happen to be in the day in which we're living, and I speak not of this church alone.

I speak not of Toronto nor of Canada alone. I speak of the church as I know the church, particularly on the North American continent. We happen to be in a period now of one of the valleys, not as down as far as we have been in other times, but certainly not up on any of the high plateaus and not up at the peak where we could be and where we began when the Holy Ghost came upon that 120 in the day that we now call the day of Pentecost.

Now, the church has, down the centuries, because of her worthy and necessary preoccupation with some vital truths, she has turned for a time to those truths and has tended to overlook the others, others just as vital. Now, this has happened in historic periods through the past, and we have over the last, say, half a century been so preoccupied with certain truths that we have neglected others just as vital. And the result is that we are now in a state where we greatly need help.

Let us not take for granted that the evangelical church, by that I mean the conservative church, by that I mean the church such as this church doctrinally is, such as the Christian and Missionary Alliance is as a society, let us not take for granted that the evangelical church is all right and that there is no use to worry about it, because this is one of the most dangerous attitudes possible to take. They say that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, that if we're not eternally vigilant, we will lose the liberty. I believe that to be true politically.

I believe also that eternal vigilance is what it's going to cost us to be what we ought to be and to keep right and to stay right and to get right. Now, I want to talk tonight about ten areas. It sounds as if it's going to be a long sermon, but I have learned to condense and I'll condense tonight.

I'll condense for the reason that the ten points that I want to leave with you are really subjects for sermons, and they could become sermons in the days ahead for somebody to preach. But I want to point out to you what the evangelical church is going to do, has got to do, if she's going to remain alive, is she's not going to be swallowed up by subtle liberalism under its various disguises, and if she is not going to be swallowed whole by the great world church that is now on its way to realization. I'd like to have you take these down.

I've never written these, and I would like to have you pray over them and think over them. And come to me about them if you want to, because I'll not say a thing that I won't defend, and I believe defend in the light of scripture. We're going to have to do something.

We can't simply sit. We can't simply sit and say, well, it'll be all right. If we don't look, it'll go away.

We can't sweep it under the rug. We've got to do something. Now, what must the church, the evangelical church, what must she do if she's going to stay alive in this hour dedicated to her death? Well, we've got to return to a right divine human relationship.

Let's put that down and say that the Church of Christ, in her singing, in her testimony, in her preaching, in her writing, in everything, in all of her total witness, the Church of Christ has got to return to the right divine human relationship, meaning by that that we've got to put God where he belongs, the high and holy God

that dwelleth in eternity, whom Isaiah saw high and lifted up with his train filling the temple, who has been brought down at his... He's never been brought down, of course, but in the concepts of the people he has been brought down to a point where he is not a God anymore that can be very highly respected. But we've got to put God again in all our testimony where he belongs in this universe and where he properly belongs, and automatically man will find his place. We've got to put man where he belongs and end this nightmare of man worship, for we've had a nightmare of man worship.

Don't think that we won't worship man. We blame the Catholic Church for worshiping the Virgin Mary, but it's entirely possible for us to focus so much attention upon man that we are guilty in a larger way of doing what we say that they do in a smaller, by worshiping the Virgin. We worship men, and we put men in an altogether too high position.

We've got to return to the right place, and you know where the right place is? Here it is. And Abraham fell on his face, and God spake unto him. Man on his face listening, and God on the throne speaking.

That's the right divine human relationship, and we've got to return to that again if the evangelical Church is to stay alive. And then, second, we're going to have to return to the doctrine of no saviorhood without lordship. Now, we are going to have to stop making Jesus a convenience for carnal people who don't intend to worship him anyway, and who don't intend to follow him, but want to take advantage of anything that he can give and get all they can get and take the loaves and the fishes, but still go their own way.

I would say to you, and in saying this, I would endorse what was preached from this pulpit this morning by Al McNally to the effect that the lordship of Jesus is vital to the Church of Christ, absolutely vital. The lordship of Jesus is not something added, as you might buy a car and then have extras put in, something that you could get along without, but that you can afford to put in, like a radio or some other such luxury. No, you can drive down the highway without a radio, but you can't be a member of the Church without owning the lordship of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Men, I repeat, are not saved by believing on Jesus. They are saved by believing on the Lord Jesus. They are saved by believing on Christ as Lord.

And so we must return to this doctrine and preach it again, that Christ is not a convenience, he's not some Santa Claus God has given the world to give us what we want, and often what we want is what we shouldn't have, but he is the Lord. And it's impossible to have him as Savior if I am not willing to have him as Lord. The doctrine that you can own him as Savior now and be saved, and maybe twenty years from now take him as Lord, is a great heresy, but it is an orthodox heresy, and so nobody's complaining too much about it, but it is a heresy nevertheless, and we've got to get away from this.

I tell you that the great evangelists of the past, such as Finney and Jonathan Edwards and others of their stripe, would never have accepted this idea that an easy belief on Christ gets you in, and then you can make up your mind later whether you want to own him as Lord or not. He is either Lord or he is not Savior, and we're going to have to start believing that again and taking it into our own lives and witnessing to it and letting it become a part of our preaching and a part of our writing and a part of our singing and a part of our witnessing. And then thirdly, we've got one time again to own the Spirit as well as the Word.

Now here is a strange thing that is taking place in this day in which we live. I haven't examined into it enough sufficiently that I am able to give it as much accurate and careful setting forth as I might. But I am learning that in certain sections of the United States, I have not checked whether it's happening in Canada

or not, there are men being filled with the Holy Ghost out of the Anglican Church and out of the Presbyterian Church and out of the churches that naturally wouldn't be expected to be teaching or preaching this.

And that we of the Alliance Church and such churches as this are missing it because we have taken for granted too much and we said it can't happen to us and it's already happening to us. The Holy Spirit has got to be remembered again as very God of very gods, one substance with the Father and the Son, and we've thus got to get away from deadly textualism. I believe that right now in the development of the religion that we call Christianity on the North American continent, right now theology is in such low repute that one hardly needs to speak of it at all because we're not thinking in terms of theology but in terms of something else altogether.

But I was brought up on textualism. That is, I was brought up on if it's written, it's text, and we sang a song. It's written in the Bible and I believe it.

I believe it, yes, fully believe it. I happen to know that a great many of those who were singing, it's written in the Bible and I believe it, had no witness to it at all and had no testimony and had nothing but simply textualism. The unbelievers say we are bibliologists, Bible worshippers.

We got on our knees to a book and one man said, I personally know he gets on his knees to a book, that man, because I saw him in his room kneeling down with a Bible on his chair. Well, I pray that way in my study all the time, but I reject the charge of worship of the Bible. We don't worship the Bible, but it's entirely possible to give the text such a final and sufficient place that the Holy Ghost has no place in our lives.

I believe the purpose of any text of the Bible is to bring me face-to-face with God and bring God face-to-face with me. I believe that. I believe the purpose of any text in the Bible is that I might know God better and that God might be able to fill me and live in me and that my life might become holier.

And if the text doesn't do that for me, it's not the fault of the text. It's because I have been a textualist and I have been satisfied with the wording of the text and forgot all about the fact that the same Spirit that breathed the word breathes now upon the word and makes it live to me. Well, then the fourth thing is that we've got to repudiate this evil liaison between the world and the Church.

There was a day when the Church was separated, completely separated from the world. I just read today, incidentally, and this may seem odd to you, a gentleman who was here gave me a little booklet from England. Mr. Simmons gave me a little book from England and I read about Spurgeon there.

And you know that when Spurgeon began his great preaching ministry in London, they didn't run after him. They considered him to be the scurf of the earth and his own denomination wouldn't approve him. He was looked down upon for many years until he won his way and won his right to preach.

The people came to hear him, but those in authority considered that he was not worth listening to. And they said he's an egotist and they had all kinds of names for him. But he believed in separation between the Church and the world.

But if you don't believe in separation, the Church is living now in a twilight zone so that we can repeat the doctrines of the faith and live the life of the world and the world isn't going to complain. The world won't complain if you give them your doctrine, even if your doctrine incorporates separation as part of it. And you say to the world, I believe in separating from the world, and yet you go with the world, the world won't be

angry with you because the world couldn't care less what you believe.

But the world will make you paid dearly for how you live. And therefore I say we've got to repudiate this illicit relationship between the world and the Church. There isn't anything that I know except murder and adultery that the world does, that the Church doesn't now do.

And in order to justify that, we have what we call the relativity of morals. I've been hearing about that a lot. They say, I stuck my head in a building down in New York last Wednesday, Tuesday evening I think, and I heard a fellow teaching a Bible class.

I just stuck my head in, he didn't see me. And very few people did, so I wasn't disturbing the meeting. But I was walking by, and I wanted to hear what the man was saying.

Well, what he was saying was simply a watered-down version of the relativity of morals. Something about there was a day when the Church didn't drink. The Church thought it wasn't right to drink.

But if you went to Italy, you'd have to drink because the water isn't good. And I suppose if you go to Germany, you'd have to drink beer because the water isn't good. It was the old relativity of morals idea that a thing is right in one part of the world and wrong in another part, and therefore it's not really right or wrong, but it's only right or wrong as you make it so.

And so we Christians, we shake our shoulders like Samson and we're free, we say. Well, that is, of course, rationalizing to what we want to do. We want to live like the world, and so we rationalize to make living like the world all right.

And we prove that it's an old-fashioned, puritanic and Victorian idea that we can't live the way the world lives and still follow Christ. So we imitate and kowtow and get as much like the world as we can. You get out with the average Christians and you will find their language is shot through and through with the language of TV and radio and television and sports and all the rest.

And that there is rarely a mention made of God or Christ, rarely a mention of the need of the soul and of the Holy Ghost, but a great many quips bore a brush, stolen maybe, if there's a better word, right off the entertainment world. So we've got to repudiate this and put it from us and say Jesus Christ has called me to come away from the world and leave it behind me. Somebody complains.

And they say, but Mr. Tozer, I don't think that's right. We will lose our young people if we teach this. You know, that's just the odd thing.

It's just exactly the other way around. You don't. If you tell the young people that they should live for Christ, there's something in them that will rise up and say, I'll do it.

This idea of making it easy so our young people go along is one of the great heresies of the Church. Young people are not all jellyfish. They're not all made out of jello and whipped cream.

There are some young people who have spines. And I appeal to those young people with spines, and I believe that they will rise and say, I don't care how hard it is, I will follow Christ. I will.

We Christians who set out to revolutionize the world and are following a man who carried their cross, we have to make things so easy in order to hold our people that the Communists all laugh in our faces. They haven't anything but the devil, and yet they're tougher and more sacrificial than we are. Seventy-fifth

anniversary of the Christian Missionary Alliance has posters around here.

Simplicity, sacrifice, and what is separation? I almost laugh when I hear simplicity, sacrifice, and separation. Very good 75 years ago, they believed it. I wonder if we believe it now.

I doubt it very much. And the difference is they had power and we don't. They believed it and had power, we don't believe it, and we're weak.

And yet we put it on our posters and can argue a half a day to show why we shouldn't try, it wouldn't be old-fashioned, but should try to live in the day in which we live, the swim in which we live. They said that, I suppose, before the flood. They said that in the days of Pompeii.

They said that in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. Well, another thing is that the Church has got once more to put the cross in the heart as well as on the hill. We sing about the old rugged cross on the hillside, and the old rugged cross on the hillside, by the grace of God, was where they stretched a man who was both God and man, and who represented us as a man and God as God, and united the two, and died that just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.

That was done out there on the cross on the hillside, the old rugged cross. But there is another aspect of the cross, which is being forgotten by the people of God. InterVarsity tries to emphasize it, and that's why I like to get among them some.

And Keswick tries to emphasize it, and they do the best they can. But I think it falls on dead ears mostly. But we've got to put the cross again back in the life.

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abided alone. But if it died, it brings forth much fruit. People are willing to do everything but die.

Old Thomas Acampus said, Christ has many friends of his kingdom, but very few friends of his cross. And we want his kingdom without his cross, and we want his glory without his shame, and we want his power without his separation. We want all this the easy way.

We've got to put the cross back in the heart and deal with the matter that we call human flesh, deal with carnality again. However we deal with it, we must deal with it or it will deal with us. And again, we must return to internalism away from externalism.

Now this is not to contradict what was said from this pulpit wisely and rightly said this morning, that subjectivism, that is the doctrine that the word of God is only what I subjectively hold it to be. And if I read the Bible and it doesn't affect me, then that part of it either isn't true or it isn't for me. But if I read a text and I respond to it subjectively, that's the very word of God to me.

Now that's the mistake made by the neo-Orthodox, and it's the mistake made in a less theological way by the existentialists. But I don't believe that. I believe in the objective truth.

I believe that when God wrote the book, he wrote the book here. And it's true whether I believe it or not, and it's true whether it inspires me or not, and it's true regardless of any response I may make to it. It's still God's truth, all of it.

That's one thing. But externalism is quite another thing. By externalism, I mean living in the environs of religion instead of in the holy place.

By that, I mean living for the outside instead of for the inside. The kingdom of God is within you, said Jesus. And he talked about the heart of a man.

And it's in the heart of a man, and out of the heart of a man, that everything worthwhile flows out of the heart of a man. Now, today, size and speed and noise and activity and talk, they are the gods. They're thy gods, old Protestantism.

The bigger, the faster, the noisier, the more active, the more talkative, we need to get back to loneliness. We need to get back to Christ in you, the hope of glory. We need to get back to a belief that the Holy Spirit lives in the nature of the people who are called Christians.

For a long time, I had a difficult time visualizing God dwelling in me because I tried to think of God dwelling in me as a canary might dwell in a cage. And I tried to think of God dwelling in me as he might dwell in my ribcage, somewhere inside of me. This is not what the Bible teaches.

The Bible teaches that the Holy Ghost lives in my nature. And because my nature inhabits my body, therefore my body is a temple of the Holy Ghost. But it is in my nature that God dwells.

The hypostatic union, the union of God with man, didn't end in the incarnation of Christ, but it carries on. And today, and now, and here, and this evening, it is still valid. And when I am born anew, and when the Holy Ghost enters my heart and takes over, there is a union of human nature with divine nature in my heart.

So that this, this we must keep in mind. Not the externals, but the internals. Our Quaker friends lived in their simple little places, little unpainted places, or they worshiped God somewhere.

We have to have everything beautiful. And I like something nice. I believe we ought to have as nice a place to worship in as we have to live in.

And I don't believe that there is any excuse for us stingily and selfishly decorating our houses and leaving our churches look bad. But let's never believe for a second that the externals mean anything to God. God is not impressed by human beauty nor strength, nor is he in any wise ever led astray into believing a man is no good because he looks no good.

I have met people who looked no good, but oh, they were saints. And I have met people, on the other hand, who looked as if they were another Saul, but they hadn't anything. God looks on the heart and man on the outward appearance.

And the Church of Christ is going to live again. If she's going to continue to live and stay alive, she's going to have to learn to be internal. The next is, we've got to recapture the Holy Spirit of worship again, the holy art of worship.

I felt a little of it in tonight's service, a little of the spirit of worship again. God's people, when they come together, do not come to sit in the audience and look at paid performers on the platform doing religious acts and saying religious words for them. That's not a New Testament church at all.

But that's where we've gotten in Protestant circles today. Certain men, maybe they'll have on long robes or maybe they won't. But there they are, they're the paid performers.

And the people who pay sit in the audience and have no contact at all except sight and sound. I don't believe in this. I believe the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is a worshiping body and that we ought to mingle together as worshipers.

We ought to come to the Church of Christ to worship God in the beauty of holiness. And I believe that if we worship God, the sinners will be converted because they will be caught in the beautiful golden web of worship. And they will feel a desire to have that which the worshipers have.

We've got to recapture the art of worship and have less of program and more of Christ. And then we've got to return to New Testament methods if we're going to stay alive. The Church is going to stay alive.

We cancel out our Bible message. It's possible to preach this way and have our methods going this way and never the two meet. It's done often.

Often. Many of our popular gospel churches and pulpit ministries, accurate enough, it goes this way. But the methods go that way and the people follow the methods always and not the message.

I believe that the message and the method ought to harmonize and work together and go together. But instead of that, we preach the spiritual truth or the biblical truth and then try to carry on the Church of Christ by carnal methods. And in the great day of Christ, we'll find wood, hay, and stubble.

I fear this. I'm afraid of it. And by God Almighty's grace, I'm not going to let it happen to me.

Well, then the next is we've got to get free of our fear of the Holy Spirit. You see, what happened to us was this. Dr. A. B. Simpson came along and a few others, and they began to teach the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

And then a little later than that, Pentecostalism came along, tongueism came along, and because people were afraid of this often very wild and strange manifestation, they fled from it. And they fled so far from it that we got afraid of the Holy Spirit. I think that may be why the Holy Spirit is coming and filling certain people from other denominations, because those in our kind of Christianity have gotten afraid.

We're afraid of what'll happen because we've seen some strange and inexcusable things happen. We're afraid of the Holy Spirit. When I was a boy, they used to take a crow and shoot it and hang it up on a stick so it'd be there in plain sight in a corn patch.

Now, the theory was that if a crow came to steal corn and he saw a dead crow, he'd say to himself, well, this is not a healthy place for crows, and he would just fly on. Now, that's the theory, but the devil has used it very beautifully. He's gone right into the middle of God's beautiful corn patch, and he's put a few fanatics and has hung them up by their heels there.

And when the people of God come, they just go right by. They say, I don't want any of that. I believe it's time, my brethren, that we sift the chaff from the wheat and that we put the chaff away and stay by the wheat.

I don't see why it couldn't be that in this church among the people to whom I am now preaching, that we couldn't one after the other now and again be filled with the Holy Ghost so that people would get up and say, listen, you know what happened to me? And dare to tell it. Instead of that, we're scared, we're afraid. The devil has intimidated us by showing us people who were not sexually right and who didn't know the

world from the flesh and so on.

And you say, well, but they're supposed to be spirit-filled. Let them rave. There is still a place where the people of God can be spirit-filled people, living right and supporting their spirit-filled life by moral lives that are right with God.

And then we've got to teach once more the sufficiency of Christ. Jesus Christ is enough, my brethren. He doesn't need any support.

We don't have to have Jesus Christ supported by science, and we don't have to have the support of philosophy for Jesus Christ, and we don't need to have the support of psychology, nor anything else, nor anybody else. The early church went forth telling that there was a man who had come from heaven who said he was God and had been slain by wicked hands, but that the third day God had raised him from the dead and made him Lord in Christ and put all things in his hands. All authority was his in heaven and earth.

And they said, he told us to go and he would be with us and be afraid of nobody, but to go and tell it, and he'd bless and forgive and cleanse and deliver. And without stopping to reason it out, they simply got Jesus in their focus and went out telling about it. And the world was evangelized in the first 100 years.

Maybe you don't know that, but you'll find it's true. The known world was evangelized in the first century. So they've got to get back to Jesus Christ again.

They have divided him, they've torn him apart, they wondered about him. A man came to me once, an Anglican rector, Episcopalian, they call them down in the States, and he said, I have some questions to ask you. He was very friendly and actually wanted to know.

He thought I knew more than I did. And he said, I'd like to have you tell me, how do you explain God entering time in Jesus Christ? What's your explanation? What's your answer to the question? And I said, Brother, I don't have the answer. I don't even have the question.

I'm not bothered at all by it. Why should that bother me? Nobody ever thought of that for 1500 years. And then some wise aker got to thinking about it and wondered how the Eternal God could enter time and how the Spirit could enter flesh and so on.

Now we're going about with solemn faces and are trying to explain Jesus Christ. You can't explain him, my friends, but you can believe on him. And he'll respond and make good just as you dare to believe.

So God is waiting for a company to appear that will dare to take these things. I've only given you what would be the great ten basic pillars of the church, of the evangelical church, the witness that we've lost. And say, we've got to start witnessing to these things again and continue to witness to them.

God's waiting for such a company committed to these truths to a point where they'll stand for them and live by them and cast in their lot with them, let it cost what it will. This is what kind of preaching I've been trying to do in my days, and it's not only been unhappy because I get invited to preach places where they've heard about me and they want me to come and I go and they don't know what I'm talking about. And they listen to my doctrine and they approve that and invite me back.

But their methods and their morals go another direction. There must be a coming back of our morals to our message. There must be a reunification of our method and our message.

We must live as we preach. We must come back again and dare to live what we believe. And when we do, God will honor us.

For them that honor me, I will honor, says God. And God will honor the church that will dare to take her place on the New Testament and stay by the New Testament and wave the world aside and the worldly church aside. And as much of Protestantism as she needs to wave aside and say, I'm following the Lamb, I'm doing a great work and I cannot come down.

God will honor that church. He will honor that message. And he will honor that Christian.

We need a revival, brothers and sisters, and we'll not get it by beating benches. We need a revival and we'll only get it by obeying God and doing what we're told and coming back to New Testament methods again and to the right emphases, laying the emphasis where God lays it. And as we do this, we'll know power.

And God will give power and God will honor that church and he'll honor that ministry. I believe that. We need a revival, all right.

But we need a revival that is based upon biblical principles, that goes out of the Bible, rests down upon the Bible, trusts the Bible, believes the Bible, and above all, obeys the Bible. I don't want any revival that leaves dirt in the congregation. I want a revival that cleanses dirt out of the congregation and you'll have a purified people, a spotless people, a white people, a holy people.

Send that kind of revival, Lord. Amen. Let's sing.

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