

'Three Words-Alienation, Propitiation and Reconciliation'

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon explores the concepts of alienation, propitiation, and reconciliation, highlighting the need for Christ's death on the cross to satisfy God's justice and make reconciliation possible.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:12

Topics: "Reconciliation", "Alienation"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the profound theological concepts of alienation, propitiation, and reconciliation, illustrating how humanity's separation from God due to sin creates a vast alienation. He explains that propitiation is the act of Christ's sacrifice that satisfies God's justice, allowing for reconciliation between God and humanity. Tozer urges believers to understand these terms deeply, as they encapsulate the essence of the Christian faith and the necessity of personal transformation through Christ. He stresses that while the world is aware of its alienation, the message of universal propitiation and the call to be reconciled to God must be proclaimed. Ultimately, Tozer's sermon serves as a reminder of the hope and restoration available through Jesus Christ.

Transcript

"Three Words - Alienation, Propitiation and Reconciliation"

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Now, there are three, many, many, but there are particularly three great mountain peaks of truth that stand out, each tall and snow-capped and sun-kist shining in the beauty of the morning. But they're not separated from each other. They're part of a range joined at the base. And they are described in three words, or summed up in three words, and I want you to get these three words. Communists are indoctrinating their people. Catholics are indoctrinating their people. But only the protestants are trying to run on inspiration. You can't do it my friend. Inspiration grows out of information. And without information you have only emotionalism.

So here are your three words. And not one of you listening to me, not one, from smallest, youngest, to the oldest, but should be able after this morning stand up before a communist or an unbeliever or anybody in the world, to tell them what these three words mean, and then tell them what they stand for in theology. The words are alienation. propitiation and reconciliation. They are long words, more or less rumbling, sonorous words out of the Latin into our English. But never be afraid of a big word. I have found that big words are usually either necessary, as here, or in many instances the effort of a man who's a bit unsure of himself, to cowl his audience. The man can say a simple thing with big words, when people don't know what he's saying, is rather shallow. They are overawed by the size of his words. But here we have these three, and you never need to be afraid of them. The one is alienation. We find here a vast alienation. And then we find the universal propitiation. And then we find that effectual, and efficacious reconciliation.

Now the alienation, of course is first. And Paul talks about being alienated in mind, and this is the worst kind of possible alienation. In fact, it may be the only alienation there is. An alien of course, means a foreigner, stranger. Alienate means to make a foreigner and a stranger out of you. And therefore, to say that there has been an alienation means that two persons who were close, have become separated so that they are strangers to each other as Jesus said, let him be a publican and a sinner unto thee. That's alienation. And this alienation doesn't necessarily need to be physical. It is mental or physical.

We have what we call alien laws, meaning laws governing persons who come from other countries. And yet I have met people from other countries speaking with an accent or trying to speak our language with an accent, having difficulty, with whom I felt an immediate affinity, or for whom I felt immediate affinity. And there was no alienation, no sense of being an alien. I knew it once that I belonged to them and they to me, because we were not alienated though they were aliens. And if I were to go to their country, I'd been an alien. But if they had met me at the station, there'd be no alienation, because the world wants to draw lines around its nation. Draw a line between here and Canada and between here and Mexico. And then say now north of us they're aliens and south of us they are aliens.

Actually, you can go to Canada and if you're careful, nobody will suspect that you're an American. And sometimes they will say after they find it out, why we wouldn't have known you weren't a Canadian. That is their way of complimenting you, making you feel at home. There's no sense of alienation. It would be a little more going to Mexico because you have to jump the language barrier. But you can take care of that with lots of American money and you will find you're not an alien. But because distance and space and imaginary border lines don't make aliens. They do in law, but they don't, the human heart jumps over border lines. But when the human heart is alienated, then you have something as deep as hell.

And it says here, you're alienated in your mind. We were strangers to God, foreigners, aliens, broken off from God by a vast alienation that separated us from God. And the world is thus separate. The world has nothing but its racial memories of God and perhaps a little evidence or vision of God somewhere in nature. Further than that, the world knows not God.

We Christians are going to have to stand up, grit our teeth and be true to the faith here, because we're being brainwashed by a lot of soft talk about everybody being God's children, everybody in his own way moving toward God. We got to watch this because the world is alienated and they will remain alienated until they are reconciled through their propitiation and His blood. They've got to keep this in mind and stick to it and stick to it even if you have to anger people. And even if you have to alienate people, stick to it. We're already alienated. We're alienated from God. Broken off from God by the fall, by sin. That's first.

Somewhere, sometimes, a universal dislocation took place which threw everything out of harmony with God, everything out of harmony. Like someone were to come here, some vandal come here and get under the lid of that piano and twist and turn bolts and screws and pegs. And when we come in here next Sunday morning, every string was out of tune. No harmony there. No music there. They just throw their hands up and say we'll use the organ until we get this thing fixed. Then if somebody had come and taken out tubes or gone up to the sound chambers and wrecked them with screwdrivers, we wouldn't have any music except the vocal music which is the best after all, but that's not part of the sermon.

But the point is, the world has been worked on by the devil with his screwdriver of sin. And he's gone into the music room of God and He's broken strings and twisted and turned and pried out pegs, and the whole world lies without harmony. That's a vast alienation. It's the alienation of the mind and this alienation antedated man. It went back of man. It went back to the beginning, back somewhere among those strange creatures of which we know little now that we read about, principalities and powers and dominions and demons; and the angels had kept not their first estate, back there it went, back there, this alienation began and it got to us. We were involved and the earth was involved through the sin of man, and death entered the world. And so, the dark shadow lies across the world. And we live in the ruins of a bombed-out city.

This is the Bible explanation of the condition of things and of the world we live in. Don't you ever believe anything else for that is it. Don't ever believe anything else. Those who've traveled in Europe and have come home since the second World War say that there are still, despite of the recovery made there, there are still great sections of the cities lying in ruins. They have never gotten out from the rubble.

If I were to make a trip there to some of the cities of Germany or England and say, what is this section here? What is this? Roofs are all down and the walls are burst out. What is this? They'd say, oh, that's the architects plan. That's all planned this way. Give it time and it's coming up. It's coming up. It's not coming up at all. It went down, bombed down, leveled, and rubble where there was beauty.

So, the human race says, what's all this we see around about us here? Why, why, what's the matter with it? Somebody says, oh, its man struggling upward from the, from the protoplasmic mist. It's nothing of the sort. It's man in his condition of loss and ruin. Man has fallen; and we're all fallen creatures. What happened to my hair? It's not serious. It's more humorous than anything else. But what happened to it? God put hair on your head when you're born. He said, hair grow there and then we lose it. What happened?

What happens that a child of three or four years can tumble around, fall off the things and twist and turn like a pretzel and get up and never noticed? In your 20s already, you start stiffening up. By the time you're in your 40s, you keep everything off the floor because you don't like to pick anything up. Why? Why? You say it's not dignified? Not dignified I'll admit, and it's not comfortable either. Your body's going to pieces on you. That's all that's happening to you. God gave you that wonderful thing you call a human body. Did you ever pick up a newborn baby and examine him? Did you ever pick up a little wiggly fellow and look at his little fingers? Every nail in place. Everything in place. Look at his little feet. Examine him all over, perfect, perfect, God made him. He's perfect. And he'll grow.

And if he could just be assured that there was nothing in him killing him, what a joy it would be but every mother knows but she won't admit, but every mother knows that with the first baby cry begins the first wail of death. Alienation, alienation, sickness and age and every kind of disease, delinquency and crime. It's all here. It's because there's been a vast alienation. We live in the ruins. We live among the rubble. We're like

house pets rushing about, hunting here and there for scraps among the rubble of a bombed-out city. And worst of all, it's hit us too. That's the world we live in. You can see then what a condescension for Him to come down from heaven above?

Pretty soon, Christmas will be upon us and everybody will be beating the drum for Christmas, telling about Jesus coming down, saying peace on earth. The angels sang peace on earth. But did you ever stop to think of the condescension? To come down from that heaven above to this rubble we call the world, this bombed-out, fallen city. This city crawling with disease, the vermin of iniquity, and the rodents of crime and sin. Here He came. He came down from above and took on Him not the nature of angels, but the nature of Abraham, the form of a man, how wonderful. He came because of the alienation.

Then the second word, propitiation. And what does that mean? It means that an offended God, an offended God who was justly and properly offended. An offended God had something happen somewhere in behalf of the one with whom He was offended. That could allow His mind to be changed so that He could not be offended anymore. Propitiation, that's what it means. It means that when Christ died on the cross, He did something out yonder. Don't ask me what. I'm glad it's a mystery. I'd hate to explain it. I'd hate to be able to explain it. I would hate to think that I, in my condition, could explain the mystery of that propitiation. I don't know how He did it.

Don't write any books about the blood, the chemistry of the blood, and don't try to tell how Jesus did it. Nobody will ever know how He did it. When He was doing it, nature in shame and all, pulled the dark veil of secrecy down and He died in darkness. Nobody saw and nobody knew what the angels desire to look into it and can't, but that propitiation was effective. That's all I know about it. It's an efficacious works. The universal propitiation was made. The old prophets taught that there was a golden one coming, that there was one coming about whom all the prophets did write. And He was going to be born to propitiate mankind and to undo the alienation, and to build again the Golden City.

This the New Testament declares was done The Old Testament declared it would be done. The New Testament declares it has been done. And Christ made peace through the blood of His cross. He made peace through the blood of His cross. There were difficulties there. I tell you, difficulties there. Nobody talks about that much now, but the old theologians did. They say there were difficulties with moral government.

The judge that sits on a bench and lightly charges a jury, or influences a jury to set a man free that he knows is guilty, has tampered with the basic foundation of his country. And where there's a moral government, and where within that moral government there are men and women who are being alienated against the government and against the God of the government, there's real difficulty. You can't get it by praying soft prayers and writing nice poetry. There are real difficulties that shape heaven and earth.

And Jesus Christ, when He came to make that propitiation had to grapple with those difficulties and solve them. And He did it. He did it there in the darkness in some way that I don't understand, but all of the requirements of moral government were met in the Son of God. He had to be Jesus. He had to be God to do it. A man couldn't have done it. I was thinking as I read over this passage and other such passages, I'm wondering about those who claim that Christ was a good man and did a wonderful thing, but He wasn't God and that the Bible doesn't teach He was God.

How my friend? How? Let me ask you. How, let me ask you, could it be that anybody less than God could do what He's said to I have done? In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness

of sins? Could that had been said of Abraham? Would that have been said of Jacob? Could we have written Moses, in whom we have redemption through his blood? Why, our hearts cry out against it. Could we have said that that man whose soul was like a harp who wrote the 23rd Psalm and the 103rd Psalm? Could we say, David, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. The whole human heart would scream, no, no. Don't desecrate a holy thing. And don't put David in danger by saying that David's blood and David's redemption, never. Not a man that ever lived could write Augustine's name in here or Anselm or Aquinas. Wesley never, never. Only His dear Son who is the image of the invisible God.

Then again, verse fifteen, who is the image of the invisible God? Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature? Could it be Charles Wesley? Could it be Augustine? Could it be Chrysostom? Could it be David Livingstone who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature, for by Him are all things created that are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers? When you will read that, every man is on his knees from Adam down to the newest child born five minutes ago.

And all the human race must come to its knees before this dominant Being who fills the universe. Principalities and power were created by Him and for Him, and He's before all things and in Him all things hold together. They say the Bible's New Testament doesn't teach the deity of Christ. If that's not the deity of Christ, then it's the most insane piece of writing ever written outside of an insane hospital. No, no my brother, this was done, this was possible. The difficulties with the moral government had to be handled by somebody able to handle it. Nobody was. Nobody from Adam on down.

So, He came, Jesus came, the glorious Christ of God, He came, and all the demands of pure justice He met. And all the problem of sin and God's holiness were all met in Him. We can sing about it and pray about it and thank Him and all the rest of it, but we don't know how He did it. We only know He went to a cross and God pulled the dark curtain of silence down around Him. And there He died and cried, it's finished and gave up the ghost. On the third day He rose again from the dead.

And have you noticed friends that at the cross were present all the evidences of the great alienation? First, there was the hate and the tyranny, and the antagonisms of men were all there around the cross. There were the thorns upon his brow, symbolic of all that it was wrong with the diseased and fallen nature. There was the suffering too great to name or describe, symbolic of all suffering from the hour that Eve looked at her murdered son and burst into her first tears. There was darkness symbolic of all the night of hell that settles around the world. And there was separation, bleak, grim separation when He cried, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me? And there was death. There are the marks of the alienation, hate and thorns and suffering and darkness and separation and death, and they were all there. When God pulled the curtain down, He did something there between Him and His God. It meant propitiation and the alienation was ended.

And now the reconciliation. That's the third word. What does that mean? Reconcile means to bring two things or persons together in harmony by means of a change, The change may be in both parties or one. Or if it's in two parties, alienated parties, the reconciliation may be a compromise, or by a complete change on the part of one only. And that's exactly what the Bible teaches. It teaches that God was propitiated by what He did there on the cross. It teaches also that man was potentially reconciled by what He did there on the cross. But that man must be reconciled to God one at a time now and turn to God in reconciliation.

God changes not. Only man changes. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he's a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not even imputing their trespasses unto them, and committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now we're ambassadors with Christ, be reconciled to God. We see the reconciliation was done by God for us. And the propitiation in Romans 3 is God's propitiation. This reconciliation includes all who during this age are reconciled. I don't know who they are, but all who are reconciled in this age unto God, by faith, by receiving and believing upon Jesus Christ the Lord. The potential reconciliation made by Christ on the cross makes it possible for us now to change, and the change is all ours, not God's. God doesn't need to change. He didn't go wrong. We need to change because we did go wrong. And we need to change 100%, because we went 100% Wrong.

All I say, who during this age are reconciled, and the earth when Christ comes again as King. Read the 72nd Psalm and see He is the King. Thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son and on it goes rising higher and higher until it shows a King, a glorious King ruling over all the earth. All the oppression is put down. All evil is banished. He reins from the river to the ends of the earth. That's the 72nd Psalm. It's the story of the Christ who reigns over a reconciled earth.

And then, in 1 Corinthians, the fifteenth chapter, we learn that not only man and the earth are to be reconciled to God, but we read that there has to be a reconciliation that is to include the universe. 1 Corinthians 15:23, 24, then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. He hath put all things under His feet. But when he says all things, he explains he doesn't mean God. God isn't put under Christ. And when all things, verse 28, shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that is God; that God may be all in all. So, there is the reconciliation of the universe.

So, we saved ones are sent out with only one message really. It is the message of propitiation, because the alienation, we don't need to tell them. The missionary say we don't have to tell them, they're sinners. We don't have to preach sin to them. They already know it. It's all about them. And the lowest tribes, the most primitive groups, they have their sense of sin, laws and taboo and the rest showing what's wrong with them-sin. No one has to go with the message of sin. They know it. But go with the message of universal propitiation in Christ Jesus the Lord and say, be ye reconciled to God.

So now we have the three words. I hope you've gotten them. Alienation, propitiation, and reconciliation. In these three words, we have summed up theology faster than all the philosophies of men and as eternal as the throne of God. Amen.

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