

# 'We Have Renounced'

by A.W. Tozer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of honesty, candor, and integrity in the Christian ministry, and encourages believers to live in the sight of God.*

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 4:1

**Topics:** "Integrity in Ministry", "Truthfulness in Witness"

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## Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the necessity of renouncing hidden things of dishonesty and deceit in the Christian ministry, urging believers to uphold truth and integrity in their witness for Christ. He highlights that true ministry should not involve cleverness or craftiness, but rather a sincere and candid presentation of the Gospel. Tozer warns against using the Word of God deceitfully, advocating for a transparent approach that commends oneself to the consciences of all men in the sight of God. He calls for Christians to live authentically, focusing on their identity in Christ rather than seeking approval from societal or denominational pressures. As the sermon concludes, Tozer invites the congregation to partake in communion with a heart aligned to God's truth.

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## Transcript

We Have Renounced

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

September 7, 1958

I spent three days last week in New York City. I thought I would be seeing the Lemons there, but I did not. I must have misunderstood or they were busy at something else. I did meet there, to my surprise, someone who sends a greetings. Fresh in from Arabia, Bernice Hess, a member of this church was there. I only had a brief moment with her. But I think we'll be seeing her around here again shortly.

Now, tonight, I hope that you can be present. I want to deliver my soul on the matter of the space age and what it's all about. You're hearing so much about it. And I want to talk about it from the standpoint of a Christian. I told you last week that I had first written an article on the subject and submitted it to a certain magazine, and they didn't know whether they could take it or not because its prophetic views didn't coincide. But I got a letter in New York while I was there that five or six editors had already unanimously agreed to print it so, it will be out I guess. And now, I want to preach sermon about that tonight. Then a

week from tonight, and thereafter. I'll be moving in and out of the city a little for some conferences, but I will always be here for Saturdays and Sundays; preach on the radio and at the church.

Beginning next Sunday night, I want to begin what will be the most costly series of sermons that I ever will have preached. Because, you can't preach what I want to preach and be flippant or careless. It's got to cost you something. I hope that you will be my word-of-mouth advertising agency and tell the people, a journey into the heart of God. I'll preach of course from the Bible, nothing but the Bible, but I am going to make use of some thoughts and ideas presented by the lady Julian whom I have quoted here some, who lived 600 years ago. I preached a sermon here some years back, using a testimony of hers as my outline called, "Four Faithful Wounds, or three faithful ones was it? So please remember that tonight and tomorrow, next Sunday night beginning this series.

Now before the communion service, I want to say just a few words and make some comments on Paul's testimony in 2 Corinthians Four. Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not. But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. Not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully. But by manifestation of the Truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves, your servant for Jesus sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that shined in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now, these are the words of the man of God, Paul. And he's talking about the Christian ministry, not the preachers, but the ministry of the gospel, the ministry of the New Testament, as contrasted with the ministry of the Law, in his third chapter here. So, we will apply it not to preachers only, but to everybody that's a Christian. To every Sunday school teacher, everybody that gives a testimony anywhere or writes a letter, or in any other way, gives witness to his faith in Christ. He says, therefore, seeing, and I have pointed out before many times, that this word, therefore, is one of the great key words of the New Testament, used 350 times in the New Testament and scores of times by Paul. And it means, for this reason. For this reason, he says, and it, it is the great logic word of the New Testament. It teaches us that our faith does not rest upon a fancy nor vision of whim, but it is a closely interwoven, interlocking spiritual system of truth. Or otherwise stated a great cathedral, in which every truth is a course in the stones, rising higher and higher, always into the blue above.

And he said, Therefore, because of what he had said previously, and previously had pointed out, that the ministry of the church, and not the preacher's ministry, but the ministry of the church. It was the ministry of the New Testament spirit, instead of the Old Testament law. Just as Israel was built around the law, so the church is built around the gospel. And this gospel is a witness. And that witness is a witness of glory, a witness of life instead of death, a witness that will finally move on until, we, by the Spirit of the Lord are changed into the image and glory of Christ.

Now, he said, therefore, because this is true, therefore. Therefore, we have renounced. Here is a flat, blunt word, renounce, renunciation. There's only one way to handle some things, and that is by renunciation. There are some things you can compromise with. There are some things that you can negotiate. If somebody comes suggesting something to you, having a position different from yours, different from your church's, there are some things you can negotiate. You can compromise it, because you don't have all the right. And if they have some wrong, why, you can eliminate that, and thus you can

get together. That's possible.

But there are some things you can't compromise. And there's no place for negotiation. You're a businessman and you have a partner. And that partner is interested in a business venture, which will include you. It's going to be within the law, but it's going to be crooked. It is going to take advantage of somebody's weakness or the lack of knowledge of somebody. And while you will never be caught by the law for it, it will nevertheless be taking an unfair advantage. And your partner comes to you and suggests you do that. Now there isn't any negotiation possible there. You don't compromise with a thing like that. You renounce it. Someone wants you to drink, or wants you to engage in some evil-only this once. You don't negotiate. You don't compromise, you repudiate.

And Paul says, we have repudiated. What did you repudiate? He said, he repudiated the hidden things of darkness. Seeing that we are following a Christ with unveiled face, why therefore, should we ever engage in hidden things or be interested within hidden things of darkness. Following the Christ whose face shines with light, why should we be found in the darkness?

Now in the church of Christ, secret dealings are unthinkable. In Washington, they have much that they call, top priority, classified. And if the word classified is stamped across a document, nobody dares talk about it. And it's not to get to the newspapers, it's classified. Now, I can understand out in a world where it's dog eat dog and animal claw animal and devil fight devil. I can understand why it's entirely possible for a nation to deal in some secret things, and not tell everything they know to everybody, particularly in times of great distress and wars. But it is unthinkable that the church should ever have anything they can't talk about. It could be possible, and I suppose it might be, that a Board or a man or a group within a church would not want to tell everything they're doing, for the sake if you can't explain what it takes, to take 24 hours of talking to make everything plain.

But if anything is hidden for reasons of secrecy, that is wrong. We dare not try to promote God's work by secret methods. We can't promote God's work by the devil's means. God promotes His work by His means. And God shining as the Light, shines as the Light and hides nothing. And God is never the author of concealment. But perhaps I should modify what I've said. Maybe I should throw in a footnote and just say this, that if you are a Christian and you happen to know that some other Christian, brother or sister, was caught unaware, and his feet were caught in a snare, and he fell. And you know it, but you know also the tears and the repentance and the grief. And nobly and earnestly he got to his feet again, and how now with humility, and a chastened spirit, he seeks to walk with his God. Ah, love covers a multitude of sins, and then you can be right in concealment.

Do not imagine for a moment that frankness and candor requires that you spread around everything you know about everybody. No, no, love covers. And so when we can be quiet about other people's faults, and we can spread a veil of charity over the weaknesses of our brethren. That's good. And so I would modify what I've said, by saying that God is never the author of concealment, and the church can never have any secret dealings. But I would modify it by saying only, where some weakness or fault or sin in a brother has caused him to fail his God, then in quietness and charity, we can keep still about it.

And God forgives and we forgive and it's nobody's business, but the God who was pardoned. So therefore, it is, I suppose, quite proper, that in that way, we can sometimes conceal what we know. But if it's to hide anything because it's not right, if it's to hide anything because we are trying to put something across, if it is like a lawyer, to push one kind of evidence and soft pedal another, never will God have

anything to do with it. Hidden things God hates.

Then, not walking in craftiness, sly and cunning and clever it says that means. Now, the ministry has suffered a great deal by cleverness. The first book I wrote was reviewed as being clever. And I've been ashamed of that book ever since. I think it was a good book, that is, it told the story of a good man. But it was a clever book. And I've been ashamed that anybody could ever use that. Cleverness, my brethren, is not good. Christians of all people should not try to be clever. They should try to be, candor, not cleverness, should be the Christians goal. The Son of God was not a clever man.

There are men living today that are clever. As I have said here before and used as an illustration, I listened to interviews on the radio quite a bit, these Capital Cloak Room and Capital Assignment and Face the Nation and all of these, where newsmen will get some key public figure and interrogate him. And it's quite amusing to see how little you can get out of some people. They're clever. They asked him questions, and some of those newsmen get positively blunt in their questions, they get almost nasty as they question these figures. Some of them come out boldly, and blunt and talk right out, a lot of them do. But most of them don't. When you're through, if I were to ask now, Mr. Tozer, will you write up, give us the conclusion. What did this public figure say? I'd have to throw up my hands and say, I don't know. Because he didn't want anybody to know. He's clever. And he stands before the electorate and delivers clever talks, and he gets elected, because nobody's quite sure on whose side he is. Or that is rather I should say, everybody thinks that he's on their side. That's better. And then everybody votes for him.

Well, that's all right in politics, if they want to do it, but there's no place for a Christian. The Church of God never should have anything like this. We should seek not to be clever, but to be holy. And yet I know that there are preachers who have majored in clever sayings, and have gone all over the world repeating dutifully those clever sayings, and they get the same laugh from the same audiences over and over and from the new ones always, and they write them into books. God forgive us. No cleverness, my brethren, we have renounced these things. We have renounced hidden things and walking in craftiness.

Handling the Word of God deceitfully, we renounce that too. That's another thing. Now, that means adulterating the Word of God, so that it, for a purpose. And that means using the Bible for bait. You know, the difference between bait and food, isn't what you think it is. Because a bait is food too. The difference between bait and food is, that food is food and nothing more. Whereas bait is food with a hook in it. And that sounds clever. I'm merely trying to explain. There's no attempt there to be cute, but just saying that bait is food with a hook in it. A fish goes around, swimming comfortably around in the water for years, when it sees a bit of food, it goes up and sucks it in and eats it. And then one day it sees a piece of food and it recognizes it. It's a worm or it's a grasshopper, and it goes up and sucks it in but it has a hook hidden in it. Pretty soon, the fish is up on the dock or up on the bank and the boy is unhooking it, putting it in his little basket.

Well, that's the difference my friends, and the Word of God should never at any time be used as a bait to get something else. It should be delivered, whether it's a witness given by a layman, whether it's a teaching in a class, or whether it's a preacher or an evangelist or whoever it is. The Word of God should always be preached with sacred candor. And if you don't get the fish, then you don't get the fish. But nevertheless, you will please God and fulfill your duty by giving the truth. And never soften it nor smooth it nor make it easy.

I got a letter from somebody living in St. Petersburg, Florida. I don't know the lady. I never heard of her before in my life. And I don't even know that I can help her. Here's what she said. She said, some years ago, I read something by the Puritans about the Holy Spirit. And you said, this and this. And she said, I couldn't stand the searching. So I put it down. And she said, but God has never let me get rest. And now, I've got to have it again. I've got to know. I've got to get right with God on this. And she said, if you can tell me, she said, I think my husband lent it out, and I can't find it, and I don't know the name of, but if you can tell me where to find it. I will get it and go to my knees and wait on God and pray through.

Now, she got a hook all right, but it was never a concealed one. It was right there for anybody to see. And she threw it from her and said, I don't want this road. I can't stand the searching. But the Holy Ghost has taken some months to do His work, and now she wants to be searched. I believe that the Word of God should be so presented, that the blessed Holy Ghost can put His kind net around the individual. But never, never should a man use the Word of God as bait to hook somebody, or as a means of getting money or getting fame or getting something else. Complete candor is what we want.

Then he says, we commend ourselves to the consciences of all men. To what should a good man of God seek to commend himself? To the prejudices of his groups? I've told you, I think in other times, how it's possible to get men to become a member of a church and have your own little group and want to live so as to commend yourselves to the prejudice of your group. No, it won't do. Too many abuses, too many errors come from there. Billy Sunday, you know, said one time in a sermon. He was a very rough preacher. He didn't try to please everybody. In fact, he didn't try to please anybody. He said one day, they claim I rubbed the old cat the wrong way. He said, my message to the old cat is, turn around. He was rubbing the right direction, but the old cat was headed the wrong way.

Now, we commend ourselves to the consciences of all good men. And if we try to commend ourselves to the prejudices and narrow views of our own little group, pretty soon, we'll be stroking the right way. But the cat will be facing the right wrong way, and and we'll be wasting our time. Let us always stroke the right direction. And then let people turn around or else let the sparks fly. Did you ever take a cat and stroke her and a partly dark room the wrong way. They always spark.

Well, the next thing is, should we attempt to commend ourselves to denominational loyalties? I am psychologically unable to understand how anybody can commit himself to a denomination and say now whatever they believe, I believe, and I won't question it. I don't know how this could be. With a Bible open, if I had no Bible, I could do that. But with the Bible before me, I can't do it. It's impossible that I should do it. So, I'm not going to try to commend myself to my denomination. Denomination is not the master. Truth is the master and Christ is the Lord. So, we are to commend ourselves to God and to the consciences of every man. Or shall we seek to commend ourselves to the current religious vote? No. The true man of God is seldom found on the side of the crowd. Very rarely, that he gets on the side of the crowd, and that's usually in a windstorm, and he hasn't got his bearings yet and the dust hasn't cleared. But as soon as the dust clears, he usually withdraws from the crowd.

Old Thomas à Kempis said, as many times as I have gone among men, I have returned less a man than I was before. And the ages have read that book and loved it. But if the masses are for it, the chances are very strong, that it isn't right. Jesus walked alone, and I think His children walk alone pretty much. We walk with Moses and Isaiah and Ezekiel and Jeremiah and Isaiah and Peter and Paul and James and John, but we don't worry about the crowd. We can mend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and appeal away from prejudices and from denominational loyalties, and appeal straight to the hearts of

men.

So live that when Thy summons comes, every honest man will have to say, you were a good man. And even if they didn't go your way and didn't follow you, their honest heart, so far as it's honest, has got to admit, at least to themselves, that you were a good man. In the sight of God, those five words are very significant words to me, in the sight of God. You know, my friends, it won't be very long. They're going aren't they? Old Brother Savage is with his Savior now. Old dear old Brother George Hoffman, who never would let me calling Mr. Hoffman, He insisted always it was George. So George Hoffman, he's about to go, I think he'll never come out of the sleep he's in now.

Well, to one that time is going where they'll only have the sight of God, that come out of all the caves and hiding places everywhere, and stand in the sight of God, it won't be very long for anybody. It may be very soon for some. I'll tell you this again. I gave it a sermon some years ago. I forget this man's name. I'm sorry that I do not recall which of the great celebrated artists it was. But he was a Christian as well as an artist. And when he died, or before he died, of course, he gave when he knew he was dying, he gave an order that an epitaph was to be on his grave, chiseled into the stone that marked his last resting place. And here were the simple words, here lies, whoever it was, and beneath it, What I was as an artist meant a great deal to me while I lived. What I was as a Christian, is all that matters to me now.

In the sight of God, what I am as a preacher, I suppose, maybe means more to me than I think it ought to mean to me. But there will be a day on what I am as a preacher, will never be mentioned. What I am as a Christian, it's always going to matter.

Now we're going into this communion service. And it's for everybody, whether you're visiting a child of God, you're welcome at the Father's table. Whether you're a member here or any Alliance church or no Alliance, church. If you're a member of the body of Christ, we welcome you. Only try to do what you do in the sight of God. We'll try to do what we do in the sight of God. So, let's have as our motto, this we do in the sight of God. Brother, lead us in a song as in the sight of God. Brethren, come in the sight of God. And we'll have our communion service, as in the sight of God.

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