

# 'Whosoever Will May Come'

by A.W. Tozer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of making a voluntary and final decision to follow Christ, which is exclusive and inclusive.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 55:1, Matthew 11:28, John 3:16, John 4:14, John 7:37, Romans 10:13, Galatians 5:13, Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 22:17

**Topics:** "Salvation", "The Will to Follow Christ"

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## Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the universal and conditional nature of God's invitation to salvation, as expressed in Revelation 22:16-17. He explains that while the call is open to 'whosoever will,' it requires a specific choice to accept the Living Water offered by Christ. Tozer stresses that true religion lies in the will, and a person's destiny hinges on their decision to follow Christ, which must be exclusive and final. He encourages believers to recognize that their relationship with God is not based on feelings but on a deliberate act of the will to obey and love Him. Ultimately, Tozer challenges listeners to make a definitive commitment to Christ, highlighting the transformative power of such a decision.

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## Transcript

January 27, 1957

You will notice in the foyer on your way out that the Bible Memory Association has a desk there, and this will be the last Sunday for registration. You will kindly inquire at the desk and see what this is all about. It has to do with memorizing the Scriptures, systematically and toward an end. And it is well worth your investigating. So, see the desk please at the door you go out. Don't forget tonight and for some weeks ahead, I plan to speak on the Four Stages in the Christian's Path Towards Spiritual Perfection. Tonight, I want to talk about the Special Christian.

Today will be one of two talks on the same text. Revelation 22:16, 17. I Jesus, have sent Mine angel to testify unto you those things in the churches. I am the Root and the offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star. And the Spirit and the Bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely.

I want to sum up a truth which is not new to you certainly and which no doubt I've preached many times before along with the other preachers. But that I want to set in a new light, and lay before you this morning and next Sunday morning I want to express the teachings of the Word that if we are saved it is because

we will to be. And then how we can know that we will to be, to a point where we know we are saved.

Now, in the text we find here the full-hearted, joyous and final call of God to men and women who wander in the hot, sandy deserts of sin. The Bible rarely shows the sinner's way to be a pleasant way. It may look pleasant for the moment, but mostly, it is a heavy way if for no other reason that it ends finally in death. But the writer here, among the very last words of the Bible itself, shows a clear, cool spring within reach.

And then he invites everyone to come and drink freely of that Living Water. Jesus says, I am the Root and the offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star. And the Spirit says, come and the Bride says, come. And so, so exciting and wonderful is it that everybody that hears should start saying, come and let him that is athirst, let him come. And whosoever will, that's why he comes, let him take of the Water of Life freely. The Water of Life and Living Water meaning the same things, simply a change in wording, is found throughout the Bible, particularly in the New Testament.

Now, you will notice that our Lord makes this invitation to be conditioned. Everything is conditioned in the Bible. I have a question now waiting to be answered. Somebody writes and says, if I pray and add the words, "Thy will be done," does not that cancel out my prayer? Hasn't God committed Himself so fully that He must answer every prayer? And therefore, why should I say, Thy will be done?

Well, all that error arises and from, and is part of the modern idea that God is to be used rather than to be obeyed. The simple truth is, God never makes anything unconditional. He conditions even His call to the Living Water. Even when he sees that procession of straggling, weary, discouraged persons, dehydrated and in various stages of death, as the result of dehydration, and He knows that there is water within reach, He still makes His invitation conditional. He says, it is universal, whosoever, and that means anyone and anywhere.

But then, He says that it is particular, him that will, and that makes it particular. A specific choice must be made. And that's the point that I want to make this morning. That the Christian is one who has made a specific choice sometime, somewhere back down the years, maybe five minutes ago, maybe five days ago, maybe five years ago. But, he has made a specific choice, whosoever will, let him. Whosoever will, then let him.

So, this whosoever broadens it to the wide world, long before the modern bandwagon started to roll for social equality and integration. Long before any of these moderns ever had been born, the Church of Jesus Christ believed that all men on the face of the earth were within the call of God, and that they were atoned for by the blood of the Son of God. And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. Go ye therefore, and preach the gospel to every creature and make disciples among all nations, teaching them. Now that's been the belief of the church all down the years. And yet to hear the big boom, boom drum today, you would think that it had just been found out the day before yesterday and Mrs. Roosevelt had found it out. When the simple fact is, and I don't mean to be insulting and certainly I don't mean to enter into politics. I just know she's one who has talked loudly about it and there are plenty of others, and it's the big band that rolling now.

But brethren, the Bible tells us that we were made of one blood. And the Bible tells us that we are all strung from the loins of a fallen man named Adam, and that we are all descendants of a famous old admiral that once sailed the sea in a little boat with windows at the top looking up to God. His name was Admiral Noah. And we're taught this. We've known this all the time. And I was sitting up here in my study this morning thinking it over, and I thought isn't it funny that for 80 years, the Christian and Missionary

Alliance has sent its missionaries out and we are spending in the neighborhood of, and this year, more than \$3 million a year to carry the gospel to the Aborigines, to the pygmies, to the naked stone-agers, to the Black and the slant-eyed and the yellow and all colored.

And we have missionaries now walking around, ready to drop over, who've spent the better part of their lives living in little, plain homes among people different from themselves who didn't know their language at first, whose language they didn't know and have given up all the privileges of civilization and all the pleasures of living among people of their own kind, and have gone and have gotten old and gray and bald. And some of them have dropped over quietly by their desks and died there. And yet they're making us feel that we haven't got the race question settled.

Brethren, we settled it the right way. We send men to all races of the world and call them our brothers and offer them the gospel of Jesus Christ, and say whosoever will, whosoever will come, let him come and all that hear, say, come and the Bride says, come, and the missionary says, come, and the church says, come and the bell rings in the steeple all around the world. So, don't feel bad my brother, you've been giving to a cause that has done something practical about this race business all down these last years. And you're a part of the great universal church that has done something practical about this business all down the years. Not offer them a job at a desk beside you necessarily, but offer them that everlasting life which makes us one round the world.

I am not as easily shamed out as some people. Some people get red-faced awful quickly. Once that's begun and they beat the drum and they get red-faced and walk away and say, that's true, we poor Christians. We poor Christians, nothing! The church of Christ has been awake all these centuries and years and knowing what she was doing. And we've been telling the world that He is the Root and the Offspring of David and the Bright and Morning Star, and the Spirit and the Bride say, come, and let him that heareth and say, come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely and they've come. They've come from the North and the South and the East and the West.

When the letter came about that cannibal feast in the Baliem Valley to which Ed Maxey and the other minister. What was his name, Bozeman? Why, when I heard it, I said, can these people, can such beasts ever become Christians. And then I remembered the story. I think it was from the China Inland Mission, not from our society of, there couldn't have been China Inland because there never were cannibals in China. But it must have been in African. Anyway, one of the great and recognized missionary societies, the man went in and was killed and eaten. And a generation later, the son of the missionary that had been eaten by the cannibals, baptized the man who had killed his own father. And when led out into the water, he said, do you know that I was the chief and caused your father to die. And he said, I know it. In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost I know baptize you. Rise to walk in newness of life.

Brother and sister, that's Christianity. That's Christianity. Sure, there's hope for them. You can eat human flesh today and be in the kingdom of God the day after tomorrow. That's the wonder and the glory of the gospel of Christ. It has in it more power than all the hydrogen bonds ever stockpiled anywhere by the nations of the world. It has the creative power that made the stars. The gospel of Christ and the call of God have in them the power that made angels and seraphim and created Adam and Eve, and blew into them the breath of life. So, this is the call of God, saying, come, it's a universal invitation. It's to whosoever, but it's also to whosoever will, and that is a limit, a particular invitation. Only those that will may come.

Now, I have said this 100 times, I repeated now, that true religion lies in the will. A man's total destiny depends upon his act of will. Peace or misery depends upon what a man wills concerning a certain question. Saved or lost, depends upon a decision a man makes on a certain question. Heaven or Hell, is not going to be an accident. No one is going to accidentally fall through the floorboard somewhere in the world and land in hell. Nobody's going to happily get in the wrong crowd in the elevator and find that he's in heaven and can't do anything about it? There are going to be no accidents in heaven, and no accidents in hell.

Man's total destiny depends upon his act of will. The Bible everywhere makes this plain. The Bible repeats it, declares it, assumes it, repeats it, assumes it, and declares it again all the way through the Scriptures. That the benefits of Christ's redeeming work, whose benefits wait on our act of decision and faith; Christ's redeeming work waits on nothing. It is done, the great transactions done, He died, He rose, He lives, He pleads, and the blood is there on the altar, or on the mercy seat. And nothing can be added to the totality and perfection of that work of redeeming grace. It is done. It is done.

That's why I love to sing the Easter songs better than I love the Christmas songs. For lots could have happened between Christmas and Easter. But after Easter nothing can happen but what is good. For Christ the Lord is risen today, let all men and angels say. His redeeming work is done, fought the fight, the battle won. And Christ is at the right hand of God the Father, there to appear in the presence of God for us. So, that His redeeming work is finished and there's nothing that can be added. No supernumerary merits on the part of anybody. No angels, no cherubim with little wings and heads at the bottom of pictures. No men with illuminated hoops, men with illuminated hoops round their heads; and no gaunt-looking, half-starved fellows dressed in black, running up and down their beats. They can't add anything, anything, it's done.

And when He said it's finished, it was finished. And when He died, the sun was blackened and then the earth shook and the graves were opened and men walked into Jerusalem out of their graves; as though three worlds were concerned with its astonishment, that a work of redemption had taken place, and was finished and settled and done.

But, this benefit. the benefits of this work weighed on the voluntary choice of men. And no one can be coerced into being a Christian. You can catch a man and squirt him with water and make a Catholic out of him. They used to take a sword and hold it up to a fellow's solar plexus and said, do you believe in Mohammed. Well, sure he was a believer, why, certainly. And so, he became a believer. You could become a believer that way. You can coerce a man into being this or that. Pressure can come so you vote Democratic or Republican.

One of our Alliance preachers was down in a little town in the South here a couple, two or three elections ago. And when he went to register, they found that he was the only Republican in the whole town. He was the only one. But, if he'd been a weakling, he would have gone Democratic, but he was Republican. So, he registered Republican. They didn't want to believe it, but it was so. So, just before election, they call him up and said, Reverend, the law requires that we have one person of each party present at the polls and watch the polls. And you're the only Republican in town. Would you come down and watch the polls? He said sure, and they paid him for it.

But you can get under pressure, you know, and join a party under pressure; that can happen. And you can you can join a union you don't want to join, or get out of one you don't want to get out of, or move from a

piece of property you want to stay in. You can be forced to do a thousand things. You can even marry a man you don't want to marry; or live in a house you don't like to live in; or have a job you don't like. But nobody ever became a Christian that way. You can't be coerced into becoming a Christian. You may be coerced into saying that you are. Many a man got off by saying he was a Christian, as many a man has gotten off by denying that he was one. But that doesn't make a Christian.

No one can coerce a man into being a Christian and no one can cancel his choice. No matter what you do with a man, take his Bible away, put him in jail, refuse to let him go to church. Beat him if he gets on his knees to pray, shut him away from every religious influence imaginable. And if he's a Christian, he's still a Christian. There's nothing you can do about it. He's a Christian. He is one because he made a choice. And if he is a Christian, that act was voluntary. And if he is a Christian, that act will be exclusive. That is, it will exclude all opposing factors, and everything that would hinder him will be excluded by that one act of his will, when he says, when he comes and drinks of the Water of Life freely. The Spirit and the Bride, the church, I would assume say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.

And then, that act also will be inclusive. It will embrace God, or Christ, and God's good pleasure. You know, if you're interested in insurance, say, just as an illustration, you can get all sorts of insurance. You can get insurance that will cover you if you bump somebody, and if somebody bumps you. But, if you have another kind of accident, it may not, may not cover you. You can get insurance that if you're sick in a certain way, you will get help. But, if you're sick in a certain other way, you won't.

I have a miserable little policy on hospitalization with a little rider that says, this is not effective if he dies of so and so. The only thing that is wrong with me is one they won't work, won't give me anything for. So, you can get all sorts of insurance policies. You can, you can take part of a thing and not take the rest of the thing. But you can't take part of Christ and not take all of Christ. For the choice, the will to life, the choice that takes salvation, is a choice that is exclusive of everything that God refuses and inclusive of everything that God gives.

So, it is also a final act. There's no alternative, no possible alternative. They say there's an old proverb that says that he's a wise rabbit that has two holes. He gets into one and he can get out of the other. And, as a boy on the farm I knew that there never was a groundhog, never a groundhog that ever got into a blind alley. He always had another way out. And when you were a dog and you were digging and barking, that is, the dog was barking, and you were digging and helping the dog dig at one place, your groundhog would be half a mile away sitting up on a log looking down at you. He'd had another way out.

And a lot of Christians are like that. They are never quite willing to be final about it. They're tentative and experimental. And like the woman that was baptized by three different modes, so that if one didn't work, the other one would. They're never sure of anything. They're experimenting, and the whole thing is tentative, and I can back out if it doesn't work.

Like the Irishman that feuded with his neighbor. And the time came that he thought he was going to die and he called his neighbor over and asked him to forgive him and said, I'm a dying man. I can't afford to die with enmity in my heart. He said, would you forgive me? I'm sorry. And so they hugged each other and shook hands. And as the fellow was leaving the Irishman called him back and said, now, if I get well, this business is all off, remember that. It's a question of a tentative and experimental religious act. It's not told for fun, but many a man who has a deathbed repentance, if it wasn't his death bed repentance, he'd be

back to his knees in the wallow in twenty-four hours.

They used to have a rather cynical saying down where I used to preach in the South, that the only way you could be sure some people ever got to heaven was to get them to the altar and then knock him in the head. Because, sure enough, if you gave them three weeks, they'd backslide. People like that never were converted, they simply never knew what it was to make a decision that was a final decision. It was neither exclusive nor inclusive nor final. It was a tentative nibbling at the bait of salvation. A lot of people are like that; they nibble at the bait.

But our Lord Jesus Christ addresses Himself to the will all through the Bible, all through the New Testament and here of course at the close, the Bright and Morning Star addresses Himself to the will of mankind. And the whole work of the Spirit is to get people to be willing or, that's not it. No, willing is passive. It's not that I mean at all. I mean, to get people to will to follow Christ. A person might be willing to follow Christ and yet do nothing about it. But to will to follow Christ puts teeth and activity in it, and takes it out of the passive into the active.

And the hard job of the Spirit all down the years is to get people to be willing to follow Christ. The ethics of Christ, lots of people talk about that. And the hardest work of the church and of the Christian worker and the preachers always has been to get people to make a complete, inclusive, exclusive and final decision to be a Christian. And get them to do religious work, that's not hard. It's never difficult to get people to have religious interest.

Religious interest may be found almost anywhere, and where it isn't found it can be created. I don't want to be silly, but I'm sure that I can think up forty different, crazy notions that I could get people interested in. I am convinced that if I had a little money and a little time, that I could get a lot of tender-faced, loving people in Chicago interested in providing knit sweaters for squirrels. And sure enough, an old folks home for starlings that didn't fly south in the Fall. I'm sure of it, because they'll do anything.

Do you remember the dear old lady that went down to Springfield and worried the lawmakers to death until they finally passed the law to put bells on all cats. And Adlai Stevenson vetoed it and said you can't change the nature of a cat by law. But you can get people interested in almost anything, just almost anything. Anything at all, there'll be somebody sit around and knit and sip soda, or tea and talk about it and get all thrilled about it. You can even get people interested in good things. The Gray Ladies and the Boy Scouts and all, doing excellent work and don't think that I'm knocking, all doing excellent work.

If it wasn't for people who are willing to go all out and do good things in a bad world, what kind of a hell would the world be in a short time? If it wasn't for good-hearted, honest sinners who go out and roll bandages and do good and why, I don't say all of them certainly are sinners. And I know a lot of Christians that do it. But the point is, it's religious activity and it's no problem to get people interested in religious activity. How long did it take them to raise the money to pay off the Grime's home? No time. They burnt the mortgage the day before yesterday.

How long did it take to get homes for the Hungarian refugees? No time at all. American people are the most generous people in the world because we've got it. And we pity people that don't. And so, anything at all, we've got money back of it, that's easy. To get people to become interested in religious projects. That's easy. But to get people to make that all-inclusive, all-exclusive, final decision from which there is no retreat, that's absolutely impossible. And only the Holy Ghost, who majors in impossibilities can do it. And that's why soul winning can't be learned in a book.

Some fellow is selling a book called, Now, Soul Winning is Easy. He'd better be selling insurance. Soul winning is not easy. It never was easy, never was easy. Easy to get people to say yes, I accept Christ. Easy to get people to say, sure, I'll join your church. Easy to get people to say, certainly, I'll join your club for the betterment of tulips. You can get people to do that. But to get them to exclude everything that God hates, and include everything that God loves, and commit themselves to Jesus Christ forever with no bridges to go back, that takes the Holy Ghost who specializes in impossibilities. And it isn't done by reading a seventeen-cent book.

And yet, without this act, without this act of will, this sudden, all-embracing decision for Jesus Christ, I hate to use the word decision because it's used so much. People can stand up with no more emotion than a wooden Indian and make their decision. But they've not made their decision, really. Because the decision that is made for Christ, this will, whosoever will and when that will actually gears in and engages the cross of Jesus, there is a change in the life more radical than when we come out of jail into freedom; more radical than when we go from the single state to marriage; more radical than when we come from sickness to abounding health; more radical than when we come from poverty to abounding riches; more radical than when we go from ignorance to a good education. It is a change that is radical and exclusive and revolutionary. And yet, until we've made that decision, we're not Christians at all, because religion lies in the will.

A dear little lady, I have a daughter old enough now that I like high school kids, and I get letters, slangy little letters from them. I enjoy them. I got a letter from someone named Judy somebody in a university out in the East. And, dear Mr. Tozer, and it was all slangy and funny and she said, I'm a Christian, and I love Jesus, but I am afraid I don't love Him as much as I should. What shall I do? And I wrote back and said, you love him some or you wouldn't be writing me to know what the trouble is. And I said again, Judy, remember, the love of God is not the love of feeling, but the love of willing. We love him because we will to love Him, not because we feel as if we love Him. Willing is a byproduct of obedience, and obedience is a direct result of willing to obey.

The man who was willing to obey Christ, and who will still love Christ, he loves Christ. And it's so recorded in the high annals yonder, here's another soul that loves Christ. But that he or she may grieve that they don't love more, that's another matter. And I say, let's go on to love Him until our love becomes a burning fire. But remember that you're not a Christian because you feel like one. And you're not a sinner, because you don't feel as if you're a Christian. You either are or you are not. And it's a matter of your will, whether you have willed to follow Jesus or whether you have not.

And now how about you? All the grace of God can never reach you until you've made that final decision. Yes, Lord, yes, Lord, I take Thee blessed Lord, I give myself to Thee and Thou according to Thy Word does give Thyself to me. So, if you have made that decision forever and forever, and there's no bridges back of you that you can retreat, no second hiding place, nowhere to look, but at Jesus Christ or blackness forever and you know, and you've set your will to love God and be obedient, you love God alright. And don't you let a bad liver or jumpy nerves make you think otherwise. Love is of the will, not of the feeling. But as the little girl said in her testimony I once heard, she knew that salvation wasn't by feeling, but she thanks God for the feeling. It's a kind of a dessert to go along with her salvation and it's true.

So, if we will be obedient Christians, and will to love God, why, there will be some happy emotions come along with it too, many happy emotions. Moody, had such a sunburst of happy emotion fall on him as he

walked down the street in Philadelphia or New York, whichever it was, he crawled up an alley and prayed that God would stay His hand lest he die under the joy of it.

So, there's joy in serving Jesus. But you don't start there. You start with willing to serve Jesus. Lord, this day I will be a Christian. Let it cost me what it will. I will to believe in Thee. I do believe in Thee Lord Jesus. This is the prayer to make. I do believe in Thee Lord Jesus. And Thou hath said, whoever loves Me, he will keep My commandments. And therefore, I now dedicate myself to obeying Thy Word as I understand it. Teach me O God and I will be obedient. And then, following hard upon that, there will come the joy of the Christian. But it's the willing and the obeying first. What about you? Have you made your decision?

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