

'Denial of Self; Taking Up Our Crosses'

by A.W. Tozer

Denying self and taking up the cross is necessary for spiritual growth and progress, as it requires giving up our ambitions, plans, and wants, and surrendering to God's will and plans.

Scripture: Matthew 16:24

Topics: "Discipleship", "Self-Denial"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the necessity of self-denial and taking up one's cross to follow Christ, arguing that true discipleship requires surrendering personal ambitions and fears. He challenges the notion of timidity in faith, asserting that a true follower of Jesus must be willing to face peril and act boldly rather than react out of fear. Tozer warns against the dangers of a complacent church that prioritizes safety over spiritual power, urging believers to seek a deeper relationship with God and to embrace the radical call of the Gospel. He concludes with a call to prayer, inviting those who desire to understand and live out this call to stand and seek God's guidance.

Transcript

Denial of Self; Taking Up Our Crosses

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

September 23, 1956 Evening Service

Then said Jesus unto His disciples, if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it. And whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works. Those of you who were not here this morning know that I promised that we'd have two sermons today on this one text. This morning I spoke, and we tried hard to listen to our Lord tell us that we must deny self and take up our cross and follow Him.

Now, it's necessary, I suppose to repeat a little. Nobody likes it for some reason or other, but it would seem to be necessary for me to point out that this morning I said that our Lord stood at the threshold of the way of power and said, if any man will come after Me, let him take his cross and follow Me. Let him deny

himself and take his cross and follow me. And I said that it was very odd of Christ, as seen from our human point of view, that He should place such a tremendous obstacle before His followers. And I pointed out that it is exactly contrary to all the techniques and methods and ways that man has of getting things done. No one, if he was going to try to succeed in anything, would lay down conditions that were exactly contrary to human nature; and that's what Jesus did.

Nobody that was going to try to run a human institution would ever be guilty of laying down conditions that contradict the very instinct for self-preservation. And nobody that hoped to win and succeed, if he ran things the way man runs them, would ever deliberately array against himself, all the powers of the self-life, and yet Jesus did. Nobody, I think, who intended to succeed, would lay down terms that would drastically cut down the numbers of those who would follow him and yet Jesus did. Nobody who hoped to succeed, would lay down conditions that all but guaranteed that he would fail. And yet Jesus did all that.

If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and let him take up his cross and follow Me. And everybody knew what Jesus meant when he said, let him take up his cross. Nowadays, we don't, because the cross has been made into hymnology, into art and culture, and church steeples and gold watch chains and Easter cards until it has taken upon itself the beautiful glow that something very, very old and very remote always has. But when Jesus said, let him take up his cross, the word "cross" struck home to the hearts of those ears with tremendous force because they had seen outside the cities in Palestine, crosses with men nailed on them and birds coming down to pick the remains and flies. And they had passed by and turn their noses away. They knew what a cross was.

The cross in Jesus' day wasn't a lovely thing that it is now, that we have made it in Christian tradition. It was a place where a man died. And Jesus said, if any man will come after Me, let him take his cross. Let him deny himself and take his cross and follow me. Now, that's the negative side of the thing. And because some people never get beyond the negative side of it, I guess, we are uncertain and weak followers of Christ.

Now. I would speak tonight about how this can be made active in our personal lives and in the life of the church. Whosoever, said Jesus, will save his life, shall lose it. Now a timid man will never take up a cross because the cross is that upon which men die. And the timid man would never take it up. The timid man is going to protect himself in every way possible.

Did you ever stop to think brothers and sisters, how fear has determined our politics and our systems of economics; and they've gotten in, elected to office and kept them in office and then dumped him out of office. Our fears have done these things. The breed of bold man who used to go in and conquer bears and Indians and mountains and forests, seems to have given way to another breed of men who want to conquer nothing, but to be guaranteed that everything will be alright and that they will not have to face up to anything they're not familiar with. Psychology has come in and cursed us by teaching us that if you're frightened when you're young, that you're certain to develop some kind of a frightful disposition later on. So, we try our best to surround people with walls of protection and we build timid people. But the timid man will never lift a cross. And the timid man will never see the kingdom of God; without are dogs and whoremongers and idolaters and timid people. Jesus said that it said back in the book of Revelation.

Now, I want you to notice something about a man with a cross that whenever he takes it, he surrenders his future. You and I, because God put eternity in our hearts and because we have imagination to picture a bright and beautiful tomorrow, we all have our tomorrows laid out for us. And I don't know how Jesus ever

could have expected anybody to follow Him when He said, if you follow me, you're going to have to give up your tomorrows. If you follow me, you're going to have to surrender your plans. If you'll follow me, you're not going to have any future. If you follow me, you're going to have to die. Now, my friends, a man who took a cross on his back didn't have any plans. If he did, he gave them up. He didn't have any ambitions and he didn't have any wants.

I don't want to introduce anything humorous right here because I'm very serious, but I heard this and it actually was true. This is not just the story that somebody worked up for the occasion, but this actually happened some years ago. A young man was going to die in the electric chair, and he had five days to live, a number of young men. And they had five days to live. And the warden came to them and said, boys, you've got five days to read. What would you like to read? So, they selected some books to read and I remember seeing the book list. It's quite surprising the books these fellows, about to die, without any future, without any ambitions, without any plans, and without any wants, that they could ever hope to realize. One of them chose this book, and I have often wondered why. He chose a book called, "Common Mistakes in English and How to Avoid Them;" And he had five days to go.

Now, I don't understand this nor know why. But what do you suppose was in the mind of a man, a young man in his 20s, who knew he had five days to live and then there was a fiery death, and he wouldn't talk to three people probably during those five days. But he wanted to know how to use good English and avoid mistakes. I don't quite think he believed he was going to die. A man who knows he's going to die next Thursday, isn't going to read books on good English this Sunday. There was something in him that dodged it, some blind spot there. He couldn't see that electric chair. It just wouldn't go into focus. They said you're going to die; he heard them and his ears heard but his heart evidently didn't hear. He wouldn't believe it. He visualized and dream of the time when he should get out, and when he got out, he wanted to be able to speak good English and impress people.

Now, my friends, I think that in the church of Jesus Christ, most of us have succeeded in getting a psychology that won't quite face up to the cross. We don't quite believe Jesus meant what He meant, or that when He said what He said, He meant what He said. We don't quite believe it, because He says, take up your cross. And by saying, take up your cross, He means that your ambitions are going to die right now. That you're having no plans. I make your plans from now on. You will have no tomorrows. You have to borrow my tomorrows. You have no ambitions. You're going to have to let me supply ambitions. You have no plans. You're going to have let me make your plans. Take up your cross and deny yourself and cease to be ambitious and cease to plan and ceased to have wants. But the timid man will never do this. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it. And the timid man tries to save his self-life. He protects himself from danger in every way that he can. But in so doing, Jesus said, he loses himself at last.

Now, I want to talk a little about how this operates in practical living. For instance, if he's a church leader, if he's a leader in religious things, I have noticed that the timid man usually backs into his theological positions. I have been among the Christians, and timidity is one feature. You'll find it almost everywhere; like flies on a summer evening, you'll find timidity flying about. And when you get talking with people, they're scared. We're not afraid of the Pope because he's a long way off and he hasn't any particular interest in us. But we're afraid of some theological pope who's the president of our college or the president of our Bible school or the editor of our denominational paper or our pastor or the crowd we run with. We're scared, and we're afraid to go straight ahead. We back into our positions.

I find some people that are never able to move right out and lay hold of an idea and say, this is the way it is. They look around and see what others think. Then they look at the liberals and the the borderline fringe. And they say, well, if they believe that then I won't believe it, and so they back into their position instead of walking straight in. They back in because they're afraid not to go in.

Brother, anything you do because you're afraid not to do it has no moral quality in it whatsoever. Anything you believe because you're afraid not to believe it, is not righteous and it's not good. And even if it's correct, it's wrong. And even if it's good it's bad. So, if you move into it only because you're scared not to, it has no holy quality about it whatsoever. For so, the false prophets did before you. And so, the Sadducees and scribes and priests and all hirelings that have crushed the church down the centuries have always done. They've always been afraid that somebody just mixed over them the next layer of religious authority.

Some fellow had a notice on his desk. It said, if you're looking for somebody with a little authority, I am your man. I have as little as anybody around here. And there are those that are afraid of the next man with a little authority. They're afraid of that little authority. I don't know, was I born in the dark of the moon or something? I don't understand it brother. I never was afraid of people with a little authority, never. I don't know, a farm boy grew up and I never was scared of people and yet here I am. I'm afraid of people, but I'm not afraid of my authorities. I'm not afraid of the man who's going to look over my theology and see if it's correct or not. Chances are I won't understand it anyhow.

But this idea that we've got to back in, and the fear of consequences. Anybody that does anything out of fear of consequences is not doing a good thing even if what he does is a good thing. It's not good, because he stands under the black shadow of fear. And nobody that does anything because he's afraid not to do it does a good act. And anybody that refrains from doing a thing, because he's afraid to do it, he's not doing a good act.

Now, this operates also in this; that they won't take responsibility. I was talking in New York a couple of weeks ago, about a dear brother who's now in heaven. I suppose there never was a more gifted man, probably not a more gifted man on the North American continent than he. He preached to me when I was a very young man. And his voice was as the voice of an angel. He had a voice, not nasal and whiny like mine, but was a great, golden organ of a voice. And he could play that trombone, that voice of his, beautifully and pull in and out. And anything from a whisper that could be heard in the vast auditorium to a musical roar, he had it all, and a brilliant mind and an illuminated heart.

But he never made good as a preacher. He hopped like a flea from one church to another church to another church to another church and ended up taking a few engagements wherever he could. And I was talking to this friend about our mutual friend who's now with his Savior. And I said, why was that so and so, with all his vast gifts, never succeeded in making good as a man of God. He said, I'll tell you why. He would never take responsibility. Nobody could ever lay any yoke on his neck. He wanted to be free. And you couldn't get him to join anything or become a member of anything. You're couldn't vote him onto any committee. He'd resign. You couldn't lay any obligation upon him. He wouldn't take it. He wanted to be free. He was afraid of obligation.

Now the timid man is like that in the church of Christ, and you'll find them in the churches every place. I've preached to people here for years. You'll all right. And when you die, you will go to heaven. Thank God for an escape hatch. I'm Calvinist enough to believe that all right. But you're getting old and you're sterile. And you're not getting anything done. If there's a prayer meeting, you're not at it. If there's a men's prayer

meeting called, you're not present. If there's a visitation to be done in the neighborhood, you're not here. If there's any hardship or sacrifice, you're never here. And yet you're a Christian and I'm not going to un-Christianize you. Hell's full enough. I don't want to put anybody else in it if I could. And heaven is empty enough, I'd like to see you go there by the grace of God. But you're not getting anywhere. Because you will not work in the yoke. You won't take responsibility. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, said Jesus. And the tramp on the park bench is free, but the tramp on the park bench is sterile. And the President in the White House is bound by the yoke of office. But he holds the nation together and holds half a world together.

So, a man that takes a cross can't be afraid at all. He's got to say, well, this may kill me, but that's what crosses are for, and I may fail. If I've failed, what's the idea? I died anyway. And if I fail, I'm dead. I never resigned but one thing in my life, never. I resigned the vice presidency of the Christian Missionary Alliance because after four years of it, I found out that it was a round peg in a square hole and I wasn't fitted to be vice president of anything anymore than I'm fitted to be a cardinal under the Pope in Rome. And so, I resigned, I turned it over to somebody who just fits it like a glove. Because he just knows how to say, all in favor, say aye. And pass that second carbon copy, please. And it's okay. But I couldn't do it. So, I resigned it. I didn't resign it because I was afraid. I resigned it because I couldn't do it.

And then, so I don't say that if you can't sing, you'd try to sing and if you can't play, you'd try to play and that you try to do what you can't do. But I am saying that some people are wasting their lives, tragically, frightfully, terribly, wasting their lives, for they won't take a cross. Take My yoke upon you. Take My cross and deny yourself. And be prepared to fail if you're going to fail. It's all right. Because if you fail, nobody living has failed because you've died and all the rest.

Now. I'd like to say a few things, drawing a few conclusions from these premises if they could be called premises: for this church. And if you're visiting from some other church, maybe you can take the fire back with you and the ideas that I'm going to give you. If we intend to deny self, if we intend to carry a cross here. If we intend to lose our carnal selves and find our eternal self, then there are four or five things I want to tell you have got to do. We've got to open new areas of peril. You've got to stop being overcautious in our projects, in our prayer lives. We got to stop being overcautious.

A businessman that is going to make a success, he's got to risk capital, invest \$100,000. It may turn back a million and it may turn him back a goose egg. He's got to risk it. The explorer has got to risk the unknown. He's got to pass beyond the known to the unknown. And we at the Alliance church, like armyworms on the top of a jug, we've been chasing each other around and round and round and round and round. And we're keeping in the safe, proved path where we can't fail because we haven't succeeded and where nobody is in any danger because we're perfectly sure we're not risking anything. And we're allowing our conservatism to narrow the top of the jug little by little by little and we are on each other's heels now, round and round we go.

My brethren, you got to pass beyond the safe, known to the perilous, unknown in your spiritual lives. And that's the reason that some Christians never get anywhere in their spiritual lives. They get hungry for a while. They'll hear a Redpath or somebody else preaching. They'll get ravenously hungry and have a crying time. And then they'll say, all right now, this just doesn't look practical in a world like ours. And so, they compromised with their carnality and settled down to the old religious humdrum and carry their Bible and their tracts, but they're not going to get anywhere. They're in the wilderness. They're not going to cross Jordan. They are just crisscrossing their old trail. And they see a footprint and they say let's follow

that, forgetting that it's their footprint they made two weeks ago. And so round and round we go as fast as water flows.

Brethren, it's possible to allow our very conservatism to slow us down. You know what you got to do sometimes. You're going to have to become very, very courageous and reckless in your spiritual lives. God loves reckless people. He loves people who look toward Him and say, God, look out now, I'm coming. And I'm on my way, and I will be there in a minute, and meet me, Lord. Oh, I don't know whether I ought to preach two sermons tonight or not, but I'll risk it.

I wrote one time about the inner witness and somebody wrote me and said, Brother Tozer, I agree with you about that inner witness. Every Christian ought to have an inner witness to his salvation. But now, said the writer, you haven't told us how to get the inner witness. Now, write some more and tell us how to get the inner witness. Well, if I'd scared easily, I would run for a storm cellar. But I don't scare easy and so I'm not running.

My brethren, there are some things nobody can tell you. There are some things you're just going to have to find out from God. And our problem now is that every step in salvation no matter what, every step in salvation has all been laid out and marked. Do it yourself projects, you know, are quite a rage. And so, text number one, text number two, text number three, text number four, and you're there.

No, my brethren, all any honest man can ever do is what John the Baptist did: Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, and he faded out. And after that, everybody was on his own. He had found the Lamb of God. He found the Lamb of God on his own. Nobody can take you by the hand and lead you in. Doctrines and texts and teachings and instruction and counsel can do nothing but point you to God.

And then there is a zone of obscurity. There is a zone of shadow. That obscurity is the light that surrounds God. And nobody can help you cross there, nobody. No midwife can help you across. You come up against that zone of obscurity where your soul is stunned and driven down by the whiteness of the light of God. And you've got to make a leap across the shadows into the arms of Jesus and nobody can help you. Nobody with his marked New Testament can help you at all. All he can do is point and say, go ahead, but he can't take you in. And that's why I'm not running for the tall timber, because somebody writes and says, you say a man ought to have an inner witness, but you don't tell us how to get the inner witness. Repent. Turn hard unto God. And after that you're on your own. Believe on Jesus Christ and you're on your own. And anybody that tries to midwife you into the kingdom of God and pick you out of the shell and help you to be born is ruining your spiritual life for all time to come.

There is a mystery here, a wonder here; a light that no man can approach unto. A call to come and a little light that repels. And only the bold and the courageous and the cross-carriers and those who are finished with the old world. They don't want Christianity tacked on to make their human life a little better. They're ready to give up all of life and take Christianity alone.

Christ is not simply something more added like another degree in a German university or a penthouse on your already too big building, or a swimming pool in your lawn. Christ is all in all. He's not in addition to anything. Jesus Christ is being preached as an addition. You've got everything, only you lack Jesus. Now take Jesus and it will be all fixed. That's heresy, pure and simple and ought to be blasted as heresy. Jesus Christ is not in addition to anything. Jesus Christ is all there is. And all we can do is say to the sinner is behold Him who Moses and the prophets did write and then pray and watch and hope. And the sinner

moves cautiously toward Jesus and his sin is on his back and the glory of the person that Jesus Christ—one pulling and one pushing. Finally, he makes the leap and into the arms of Jesus he goes. Nobody needs to come and reason with him. Nobody needs to come and say, now verse so and so said this and two verses below said that, and the conclusion ought to be this. No, he's past the zone of obscurity. His heart has found God. And he's come through and know the Lord for himself.

But he had to put himself behind himself. And he had to stop being afraid. And if you and I are going to carry the cross and be real Christians in power, we're going to have to open new areas of our being to peril. We're going to have to pass beyond the known and the familiar and the safe in our spiritual lives. Some of us are on our way to heaven scared stiff. Every shadow, every night bird, every cricket, every hoot owl, every train whistle, every barking dog has our hearts fluttering. We're afraid of this cult and we're afraid of that creed and we're afraid of this big fellow and we're afraid of somebody's fanaticism and we're afraid of the failure somebody made. We're on our way to heaven scared to death.

Well, no child of God ever ought to be afraid of anything. Did you ever stop to think the man on his way to the electric chair isn't afraid of anything? Did you ever stop to think about that. They say, stop, or I'll shoot. He grins and says, shoot. I don't care. I'm finished. I have no future. I'm on my way out to die. You can't frighten me. I'll take away your property. God can't use property. You can't scare a man who's on his deathbed. And Jesus said whosoever will follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and whosoever will save his life shall lose it. And our problem is we're always saving something.

Talk about the pack rat that saves everything or the jackdaw that steals buttons and looking glasses and saves it. We're the savingest bunch of people, always surrounding ourselves. You know, that gets into organizations too. It gets into schools and colleges and missionary societies. The first founders were usually those who hadn't anything to lose, so they weren't afraid. There was only one way to go and that was up because they were already down. And they founded an organization and somebody else comes along and steps in without a heartbeat and without a tremor and without the loss of anything and moves into their shoes. And then they begin to surround themselves a protective wall, a bit here enacted and herein there in article number two section three, it shall be thereafter. Oh, I get sick in my head and sick in my heart with this fear, afraid, scared.

The prophet never protects himself with bylaws. The prophet said, I heard God say and He said to me, go tell these people and they go tell the people. The more backslidden and unspiritual the church gets, the more regulations it has to have to keep from falling apart. And you can usually tell the spirituality of the church by the length of its constitution. If the Constitution is long and carefully worked out, it's a scared church. There's no cross there, the safe, the familiar. And everybody's frightened and watching carefully out the window peeking through to see if there's anybody coming. The man with a cross, the apostle, the prophet, the reformer, the man who knows what God's saying to his day, the cross-carrying Christian, never peeks out to see who's coming. He doesn't care. He wants to know what God wants him to do and he will do that.

Now what does this fear do for us? It weakens the church, and it withdraws it from its area of power. For always remember that power always comes following peril. Church history shows peril and power ran hand in hand. And I'm not trying to be alliterative. I'm not an alliterative preacher. I avoid it all I can. You can't separate peril from power. And wherever the church of Christ was in mortal peril, she was usually in glorious power. But as soon as we find a safe retreat and box ourselves in, throw up walls and stockades, power goes. You don't need power when you're surrounded by stone walls. And this fear gives the enemy

territory that he never fought for and doesn't belong to him. Now, that's number one, we got to open up new areas of our lives to danger.

The second, we've got to act instead of react. That is, we've got to hear from God and act boldly. I'll explain what I mean. A man said this morning to me, God bless him. He may be here tonight. I think he is and he meant it and I agreed with him. He said, Brother Tozer, I don't know how many people understood your sermon this morning, but I believe it's Scripture. So, I'll try to break it down and explain what a mean.

Being forced into things because it's in vogue. Because other Christians or other churches are doing it and then their leaders say, well, other churches are doing it, and just as sure as you live, if you don't do it, you will lose everybody. That's what you call reacting instead of acting. It's a reaction from fear. Many a heartbroken pastor is doing things in his church and permitting things in his church that he hates like the devil. But his Board has forced him to do it because they're scared. And they say, now listen, we got an institution here that has got to go, and we got to have so much money if it's going to go. And unless we do what the others are doing, we will not have the money. Well, you can always join the Salvation Army. You can always break up and go somewhere else. But that's what you call reacting instead of acting.

Now brethren, the New Testament is our authority, and if we obey it and follow Jesus Christ and meet the condition, we'll have His mighty presence. And the church that has His mighty presence is a New Testament church. Do you believe in the apostolic succession? I do. Do you? I believe in the apostolic succession. I believe in the perpetuation of Pentecost. I believe in the organic unity of the church of the 20th century with the church of the first century. And wherever the church of the 20th century is really found, under whatever name or denomination or group, wherever the true church is found, she'll be organically one with the church at Pentecost.

In my mind, that's success. Twenty-five people sitting around worshiping Jesus Christ waiting for Him to say go, that's the Church of the Firstborn. That's the New Testament church. That's it. And nobody ever needs to worry about that church.

Now, the third thing we've got to do. We've got to break from the religious rat race. I mean by that, competition, biggest church, most expensive building, most famous pastor, largest enrollment. You hear that all the time. Some of you know our good brother who preached here, Brother Woychuk of St. Louis. I don't know whether he was a Presbyterian or a Baptist. Which is it? Somebody ought to know here. I've forgotten. It doesn't make any difference.

He wrote me a letter about something else altogether. He told me he was sending me a book, a complimentary copy of his new book, and then he sent along a folder. And the folder says this, featuring the greatest array of Christian talent ever presented on a St. Louis platform. About the speaker it says, nearly two years spent in campaigns in the British Isles, Europe, South America and other foreign countries. Featured speakers in scores of colleges and universities including Taylor University and Moody Bible Institute Founder's Week. And then about another musician it says, widely known pianist. About another, a singer this time it says, has given command performances at the White House and before royalty. They're so dumb they don't know that a president has no right to ask command performances. And about a musician, it says master of the keyboard and famed pianist. And about a woodpile beater it says, the world's greatest marimbaist. And then it says inspirational music, wonderful prizes and fun galore. And our good brother Woychuk wrote above it in blue pencil, how cheap can you get? How cheap can you get?

Is this the same Jesus Christ that wrote this New Testament? Is this the same Jesus that is now forced, in order to keep from failing and going into bankruptcy, to gather together an array of Christian talent such as never was presented before on a St. Louis platform? Is He compelled now to ride in on the coattail of a man who once spoke at Moody Institute Founders Week? Is He now forced to be sponsored and paid for by a widely known pianist and a world's greatest marimbaist. If that's the same Jesus, I confess I'm cross-eyed. I can't notice the similarity.

This awful, glorious, wondrous, magnetic Jesus that walked among men and said, if anybody will follow Me, let him deny all this and take up his cross and follow Me. And now we have His name and His gospel and His language, but instead of denying all this, we build our church on it. And nobody dares say a word or they say you're negative and a fanatic.

Well, I'm too old to care and too happy to mind. But all this, brethren, is a rat race. This is a religious rat race. I don't know how much longer I can continue to be an editor. I don't know. I've got to look at too many magazines. And reading magazines is one of the most discouraging things I possibly know. I told an editor not very long ago, I said, Brother, when I start the front of your magazine, by the time I've leaped to the back, I'm so blue I can't get spiritual again for for hours.

They're building on Adam's flesh, no cross, all ambition, man's way of doing it. They learned it from Bruce Barton and Dale Carnegie, and all the rest. For Jesus Christ stands tall and strong and glorious, and looks down upon a people and says, all that belongs to Adam. All that is flesh, all that rots, all that dies, lift up your eyes and see another kind of world. The world where the power of God alone keeps things going. A world where you don't have to be afraid of people and things. Where you can act and not react. Where you can walk straight into your beliefs instead of back timidly into them because you're afraid of somebody. A world where you don't depend on big business methods, but you depend on the methods that come down from above. Where the power lies not in psychology, but in the Holy Ghost.

So, I say, we got to quit the religious rat race. If there's anything of it in you, pray God Almighty will pump you dry and fill you with something new. For all this is vainglory, a show in the flesh, and it's condemned on every page of the Bible.

And then fourth, and that's all. If we're going to be the kind of church we ought to be, we're going to have to seek New Testament message methods, motive, and power. By message, I mean the message of Christ, and nothing added. God Almighty never allows Himself to follow a plus sign. God Almighty never allows His holy Son to be on the right-hand side of a plus sign. It's not something else plus Jesus. It's Jesus and nothing else or you're no Christian. It's not the Bible plus something else.

And then methods. They've got to stick to New Testament methods if we lose everything but will not lose everything. And motives. What are the motives that are back of most of our spiritual activities? I get frightened when I think about it. In the Alliance, the desire to have the biggest missionary offering in the Alliance or next to the biggest or the third and from the biggest motivates many an offering. And I would like to say to you right here, any church that gives because it wants to be known as a big missionary giver, is as carnal as a third chapter of First Corinthians. Our motives have to be pure.

Back here in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul said, though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels-there goes the order-and have not charity, I'm become a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Though I have the gift of prophecy-there goes your profits. And understand all mysteries and all knowledge and though I have all faith-there goes your famous man of big faith-so that I could remove mountains and have not love,

I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor-and there goes your philanthropist. And though I give my body to be burned-and there goes your martyr-and have not love it profiteth me nothing.

The only motive God recognizes is a crucified motive. The desire to glorify God and bless humanity and not to be known or heard or seen, that's the only motive. What a terrible hour it'll be at the judgment seat of Christ, what our Plymouth Brethren friends called the Bema, when we shall stand all stripped, no degrees will go there, brother. No degrees, no write ups in the press will ever go there with you. No great fame will ever go there with you. There you'll stand along with black and white and red and yellow, and big and little, unknown and obscure, mighty and small and rich and poor who have believed in Jesus. And there we'll all stand without a degree.

The average preacher can last out five years hiding behind his honorifics. He starts out with Reverend and goes on to DD, and then he gets a few more degrees tacked on. And after a while he gets so he can hide. He can last at least five years hiding behind his degrees. But before the Bema, no degrees will come. It'll be a naked soul. And it'll not be how many sermons did you preach, how famous were you. It'll be what were your motives? What were your motives? But O Jesus, I gave everything to Thee. Why did you give it? O Jesus, I was a silver-voice speaker. Why did you speak? O Lord, I died for Thee. Don't you remember, Lord? Why did you die? Not what did you do, but why didn't you do it?

And that goes for every dime dropped in the plate. That goes for every teacher that teaches a class. That goes for every solo song. That goes for every sermon preached and every book written, and every Christian deed done. That goes for every soul we try to win, for every missionary activity we carry on. That goes for everything we do. Not what did you do, but why did you do it?

And we can say, Lord, Thou knowest my heart, and I Thou knowest. But back there in Chicago, I gave my all to Thee and died and said Lord, I have no ambition, no plans, no future. Thou art my future and I am as ready to be obscure as I am to be famous, as ready to be unknown as I am to be known, just so Thou art glorified, Lord. He put His arms around this man and says this is your reward thou good and faithful servant.

And then lastly, finally now, we've got to return to New Testament power. I think now it's time. Every place I go, people are coming and saying, Brother Tozer, did you hear so and so was filled with the Holy Ghost? Somebody else would say, did you hear about Dr. so and so? He's gone to a wonderful experience having been filled with the Holy Ghost.

I was over in Highland Lake. They came to me and said, did you hear about the man who runs Highland Lake, he was wonderfully filled with the Holy Ghost. I was up to the InterVarsity in Canada, a man came to me and said, I'd been talking with Paris Reidhead and I'm on my way now to Hong Kong, but unless I'm filled with the Holy Ghost, I want to die. And I laid my hands on him and prayed that God would give him his heart's desire before he reached Hong Kong.

They're rising here and there, here and there. They're not Pentecostals, the tongues people, they're ordinary evangelicals. But everywhere I find them, they've read something that puts salt in their water and made them ravenously thirsty. And they say it in different ways, but it all adds up to this, I want to be filled with the Holy Ghost or I don't want to live. They'll be filled all right. We must seek New Testament power. Have we the courage to seek an outpouring and take the consequences?

We're such a lovely bunch here at the Alliance. God bless our cultured souls. Our education level is very high, and we live in nice homes and pull up in great big, smooth cars that stopped without a jar. And we're well known as being safe and spiritual. Are you ready to have God pour Himself out on you in such power? And some of the evangelical bigwigs will say, have they gone crazy over at the Alliance?

Are you ready to be a fool for Jesus sake? Are you ready to give up your place in the rat race and seek to compete with nobody anymore, except to love of Christ more than anybody else and then wait for God's smile alone. For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father. And there are those who think it won't be long. It won't be long. He shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels. And then He shall reward every man according to his works.

Well, you don't have to like me, and you don't have to like this severe preaching. But I tell you, He's coming in the glory of the Father. And all of the religious pretenses will perish like a leaf in a furnace. And all the noise and all the great array of Christian talent and all the two years of campaigning in somewhere and all of the widely known pianists and masters of keyboards and world's greatest marimbaists shall stand in trembling fear before the eyes that are like lightning. Before the head that is white as wool and feet that are burnished brass.

And I don't want to face Him unless I can face Him right. I'd rather have died by the grace of God, a black, snub-nosed man in a hut in Africa that never heard of God or Christ than to go out to the judgment seat knowing what I know and yet not having my motives right nor my heart right and never having taken a cross or denied myself but live for what I can get out of it. And use the church for a sounding board for my pride and use the poor sheep to feed me and pay me.

I say I'd rather die a colored man in a forgotten tribe in the hinterlands of Africa than to die a Chicago fundamentalist. And face Jesus Christ, having preached His cross and never carried it. Having preached self-denial and never denied self. Having preached pure motive and never had it. My God, what a terrible day it'll be. Oh, those eyes, and that terrible face. Or is it going to be the sweet smile of the Savior who says, well done, good and faithful servants?

Please pray brethren. I want to help them, God. The rut, the routine, the safety of our position, our forms, all of that we've been the victims of. And I want to be courageous enough to take a cross on my shoulder and wave goodbye to grandfather Adam and all of his dirty brood and say, Jesus I come to Thee. I take my cross Lord and I follow Thee. That's what I want to do. What do you want to do?

How many will say tonight, Mr. Tozer, pray for me. I understand what you're talking about. I'm going to conferences myself and I've got to preach three times to brethren of this district and conference. And I got to be right, and I've got to be more than a name. I've got to have God.

And you say, Mr. Tozer. I want you to pray for me too. I'm not preaching this week, but oh, I know what you're talking about. I've got to have this too. And I want to know what it is to die and to have no future except God, and no ambitions except to honor Him. And want to know what it is to die and rise in newness of life. Would you pray for me? Who will stand and say pray for me, Mr. Tozer.

We're going to pray. Who will stand and say, pray for me. Pray for me that I might know what this is that Jesus meant. We've heard Him say today, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. And I want to know what this means in living, vivid experience. Pray for me Brother Tozer. Who else? God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

If this is just a religious show. I don't want any part of it. If Jesus meant what He said, then this is a glorious and terrible thing. So, who else will stand and say pray for me? Pray for me.

O Lord Jesus, here we are in Chicago's Vanity Fair surrounded by Sodom and Gomorrah. And every temptation and every evil, and concentration and meditation and contemplation are all but impossible. And with radio and television and magazine and newspaper and billboard. O my God, Thou knowest how we're brainwashed and our psychology is secularized and materialized and made worldly. But O Lord, even here Thou hast some who never bent a supple knee to Baal. They'll die before they'll do it. And their motive is pure. And now, here are some standing who say, they want, Lord Jesus, to know what this means in its intensity and fullness and depth.

They want to know. They don't want to be fooled. They don't want to be fooled by men's secularized Christianity. They want to know the Truth. God bless these young people. And Lord, fall on them with an infusion and an effusion of power that will make them firebrands in their day. Lord, Thou knowest we're looking back, back, back all the time. Thou art the God of today and tomorrow and Thou can meet these people, everyone. Send them out not to quip off what they've heard, nor laugh off the day, but seriously to seek Thy face and put their tomorrow on the cross and their ambitions alongside of it. Graciously blessed Lord and we'll give Thee the praise. Let's all stand.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/denial-of-self-taking-up-our-crosses/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net