

(John - Part 49): He That Believeth on me... Greater Works Than These Shall He Do

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer emphasizes that the true 'greater works' of believers lie in their transformation and demonstration of God's nature rather than in miraculous acts alone.

Duration: 50:51

Scripture: Daniel 6:22, John 14:9, Acts 10:15, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 1 Corinthians 12:27, 1 Corinthians 12:29-30, Ephesians 4:11-12

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of gratitude towards God for the deliverance from sin, lies, and addiction. He urges the congregation to recognize the miraculous work of God in transforming their lives and to be thankful for it. The preacher also highlights the danger of ingratitude and the need to appreciate the work of God already happening among them. He shares a story of a missionary in the Dutch East Indies who had successfully converted a group of vile and blasphemous people, emphasizing the power of God's work in changing lives.

Transcript

The book of John, we're in the 13th chapter, and I want to preach from the 12th verse, but I want to read from 7 to 12. Maybe 7 to 13, or 7 to 12. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also.

And from his forth you know him, and have seen him. Philip says unto him, Lord, show us the Father. And it's the sight of us.

Jesus says unto him, Have I been so long time with you? And yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. How sayest thou then, show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the work. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else believe me, for the very work's sake.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also. And greater works than these shall he do, for I go unto my Father. Now that 12th verse has always been a difficult and controversial passage.

There are those who insist that by works here, our Lord meant his miracles. Now, there will always be that type of mind among us that they make religion to lie in miracles. And I do not want to be possessed, because God has good Christians of varying types of minds.

And there are many fine Christians that if they were to preach on this case, they would say, Jesus raised the dead, we therefore are promised that we should raise the dead. He filled the waves, and we are promised great works, so we should fill the waves, and so on. These friends make religion always to lie in miracles.

If it isn't a bit unusual, it isn't from God. If it doesn't have about it something of the eerie and uncanny, it can't be from God. But now, I see many of these friends are good Christians.

But nevertheless, they share their beliefs with pagans. Spirits and various kinds of strange feelings, practices. Because they also make religion to consist in wonders and miracles.

Now, there are those who are the type of mind that can never believe that a thing is from God, unless it is miraculous, and they're always looking for wonders in the unusual. Now, if we make as a Christian faith that we do the same kind of miracles that Jesus did, and then not only that, but raise us. Why? We're going to have to turn water into wine, and we're going to have to raise a little girl 12 years old from the dead, and a young man who has died, the son of the widow of Mainie, and we're going to have to heal a man who is over 40 years old, a cripple from youth, and we're going to have to cast out not only one devil.

But we're going to have to cast out a whole legion of devils, and have them run down and go into a herd of swine. And then, in addition to that, we're going to have to take away faith from everybody that didn't do that, or something like that, or greater than that. And the scripture distinctly says, John did no miracle.

And we do not read that Isaiah ever did either, nor Daniel, as far as I can recall, except where the Lord delivered him from the lion's den, and that was the deliverance of the Lord, and not Daniel's doing. Then, in addition to all that, we're going to have to go contrary to Paul's teaching. Let me read what Paul said about this.

For there are diversities of gifts of the same Spirit, and there are differences of administration with the same Lord. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. For the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man that suffereth withal.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another, faith by the same Spirit, to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another, the working of miracles, to another, prophecy, to another, preserving the Spirit, to another, divers kinds of coming, to another, the impregnation of coming. But all these worketh that one in the self-same Spirit, providing to every man severally as he will. Now, there's only one way to interpret this passage of Scripture, and that is that a normal New Testament church could have all the gifts of the Spirit present in it.

When you hear me say that, I may lose some of you by saying that. Because I heard a man say that anybody that claims the gifts of the Spirit I didn't hear him, but it was reported that he said it in a place where I was recently. That anybody who claims to have the gifts of the Spirit is either an ignoramus or a liar.

Well, that was said in one of our last conventions. But it says here, to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit. And a man once clearly spoke of it and said that the whole creature in doctrine and practice

and movement that believes in the gifts of tongues is of the devil.

Now, I could not say either of those things because Paul says here in the twelfth chapter that there is a gift given to the people of God and that they do have these gifts. It is said about Spurgeon that his prayers raised up more sick people than any doctor in all of London. When he prayed for people, they got well.

You can't deny this, my brethren, by any means. But on the other hand, it also teaches that not everybody has these. That is, not everybody has all of them.

And it also teaches that a Christian could have one, but not likely to have more. Now, listen in the latter part of the chapter, verse 27. Now, ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, in gifts of healing, health, government, diversities, and so on. Are all apostles? Now, that's a rhetorical question. That is, it's a question that contains its own answer.

I'll ask the question, and don't give me a theology. Give me what grammatically here, what the answer is. If you were reading this, you'd think about politics or science or anything else.

Are all apostles? What's the answer? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Getting weaker, but they're still going on. Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? That's what the Bible says. Now, that's perfectly obvious.

Who thinks, first, that as long as the Church of Christ is new, blessed, and healthy, it will have its gifts present, but also, it is not necessary for faith, or a proof of faith, that we'll have any of these gifts, because not all speak in tongues, not all have the gifts of healing, not all work miracles. And yet Jesus said, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, shall he do also. Everybody that believes in me.

If a man believes in me, there is your believer. If he is a believer, said Jesus, he'll do the works that I do, and he will do greater works than I do, because I go unto my Father, this man who believes. Now, if he doesn't do the works that I do, he's not a believer.

Is that fair? Is that fair? If he believes, he'll do the works that I do. If he does not do the works that I do, he's not a believer. I ask you, is that a fair interpretation? I think it is.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned. He that believeth in me, greater works than these shall he do.

So you see, for us to say that our Lord had in mind the raising of the dead and the healing of the sick, and when it says miracles here, it even divides it away from healing. It says miracles. I don't know what kind of miracles there would be there.

I only remember that when George Mueller, that great praying man of Bristol, England, was traveling one time either from east to west, coming to this country, or going from here over, I've forgotten which. And on Sunday he had an engagement. He was a priest at a certain place.

And he would have got down before, and plenty of time, I imagine the day before, or at least early that morning. And he knew that he had plenty of time to reach his engagement. But a fog came up.

And that fog was so serious that they turned off the engines and said we'll ride her out, we'll just wait right here. And they couldn't make one inch headway. And George Mueller said, I've got to be such and such a place, I've got to be there, I have an engagement, I have to pray.

And he went to the captain about it. And the captain said, Mr. Mueller, we're sorry, but we'll be in grave danger if we move an inch here. We've got to stay right here until this fog lifts.

Well, said George Mueller, why not just let's get down here in your office, captain, and ask the Lord. Well, the captain said, I'm a Christian, I believe. And, uh, let's pray.

So down they go. George Mueller prayed. And he said, and here was his prayer.

He said, Father, I have to preach in such and such a town 1045 Sunday morning. The captain here says that if the fog doesn't lift, we will not get there in time, and I'll miss my engagement. Father, please raise the fog, amen.

The captain said, you want me to pray, Mr. Mueller? No, he said, I'll pray. So they went up on deck. And the captain said, through my utter and unutterable assumption, a blue line is beginning to form between the ocean and the fog.

And it got wider and wider and wider and pretty soon away we went. And I got there on time. Now, I believe in that.

I believe a thing like that could happen just as surely as I believe that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. And, uh, I don't think it has to happen very often. I really don't.

But I think it could happen all right because the God that made the ocean and made the fog and made the wind and, uh, that sent his only son to die, he could do a thing like that. Now, the trouble with it is that we want those things to play with. We want God to give us a gift so that we can play with it and have a book written about us.

If somebody says, you want me to go on? No, I want you to tell your story about that man's boat. Wouldn't that be something for me? I'd get goose pimples if somebody started telling how wonderful I was and how I could pray and the Lord would lift the fog. No, God is not going to do that for you in order that you may be a big shot and run around and have a tract written about you.

The Lord is not going to do it. He did it for that simple-hearted German brother because he was so childlike, he believed God, and it never occurred to him there was anything inconsistent about it. He just wanted to preach that morning in that church, and he said, this peep-sucker can't preach, Father.

Do something about it. So the fog began to lift. Well, what are those words? He says, notice, Believe it thou that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.

The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father, that dwelleth in me, we do the work. Words and the work were made synonymous here. There lived in the South, down just outside of Asheville, North Carolina, where my friends and I actually come from, and also they're there.

There lived a man by the name of Licius Bunyan Compton, a mountaineer. And I remember hearing him there many years ago, before he fell on evil times, although he's in heaven now without any doubt in the world about it. But this man said that this passage bothered him.

Now, he believed in divine healing and prayed for people that were sick, and he believed, oh, we've got to do anything, just anything at all. But he got to reading this passage. Greater works than these shall it do.

So he said he decided to go to God about it and have it out. Now, he said, I've fooled around long enough, and I don't know what this means. So he said, I'm going to go to God and I'm going to ask.

Now, I've done that a few times with passages of Scripture, and I can tell you what they are. Nobody, I never found it anywhere in any commentary, but I know what that was because God told me. And it didn't, it didn't, there was no disharmony between that and any other passage of Scripture.

Well, he went to the Lord and said, now, Father, I want to know what Jesus, my son, meant when he said, greater works than these shall ye do because I go unto the Father. And he said, the Lord said to him, well, now, Locust, I don't know whether he called him Locust, but that wasn't his name. He said, what did my son, what was the main work that my son did? He came down into a sinful world, himself God, and he showed forth the Father to mankind.

And he was a living showcase showing forth the Father to all men. And said, he that has seen me has seen the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? In the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father doeth the work.

All right, he said, then the works that Jesus did, namely, were not his miracles, they were part of it, but the work he did was to demonstrate the everlasting Father to man. Now, he said, Father, it says, greater works than these shall ye do. He said, the voice within his heart went on, saying, all right, my son came down born of a virgin, pure without sin, holy, harmless, and undefiled, and it was relatively symptomatic for him to walk among men, God Immanuel, God with us, demonstrating deity to men.

But he said, boy, here you are, born in the mountains, filled with sin, and born in iniquity, and conceived in wickedness, and brought forth in sin. And here you are, all your life, sinning against me, and sinning against God, until your whole nature became twisted and crooked. And then I come to you, and you believe in me.

And when you believe in me, you begin to do the same thing my spotless Son did. You begin to demonstrate deity to men. And people that see you, see me, and see you, and see me walking among men.

In your meekness and purity and faith and righteousness, you show what God is like, and said, don't you think that's greater works, even, than my son, who had no sin to overcome, no iniquity to trample under his feet, no inborn propensity for evil, but was holy and harmless and undefiled. Well, that satisfied the brother. But he said, I am still not satisfied twice, until, like Paul, I check this with learned men.

So he said he went to Bible teachers wherever he ran into them, all over the United States, including Dr. Torrey and many other of the great current Bible teachers. And he told them his story. And he said, now what I want to know is, does this harmonize with the rest of the scripture, or am I out on a limb? Did I have a sage idea there, or was that God? What do you think of it? Does that sound scriptural to you? And he said, of all the great Bible teachers, not one of them but smiled and said, Brother, that's God.

That's what it means. Now, I believe that if there were greater faith among us, there would be greater miracles among us. But I also believe that the greatest wonder on earth is a God-like man.

The greatest wonder on earth is a God-like man. There's no question about that in the wide world. When Moses turned the serpent, you know, the serpent was there, and he picked up a stick and he became a serpent, and then reversed itself.

Why, the magicians of Egypt did that. But there was one thing they couldn't possibly top it. And that was when he went into the mountains.

And there in awful fear and full of happy trembling, he waited on his God for long days. And when he came back down, there was a glow on his face so bright that the children of Israel said, Please cover your face. We can't stand to look upon God.

And there wasn't a magician in all of Egypt that could imitate that. There wasn't a magician in all of that area anywhere in Arabia that could imitate that. There never was anybody that could imitate that.

So showing forth God, being God-like, is the greatest wonder, the greatest marvel, the greatest miracle that can ever be known on earth. Now, I want to tell you something tonight. I'm terribly sleepy.

Maybe that's why I'm dull tonight. But I didn't get much on the train last night, and just now I'm finding it out. I didn't know it until now.

The age is catching up with me. But you know something? I want to talk a little about the work of God among us. In our eagerness to see God do more things, we often refuse to see what God is already doing.

And so we're guilty of gross ingratitude. I recommend, ladies and gentlemen, that we do something about our ingratitude. Because the work of God is among us.

To take a sinner and make a Christian out of him, to take a bad man and make a good man out of him, to take a person that is evil and make them righteous, that, I say, is a greater wonder than turning water into wine or raising the gyresses up. And we have this work of God among us here. Somebody will want to stampede you and fill your mind with doubt and say, Now, if you, if you don't, if Brother Tozer can't cast out a devil or raise up a leper or steal the waves or change the weather overnight, he's not the man he claims he is.

And if this church doesn't see that kind of thing all the time, it's not the church they say they are. All right, now I want to tell you something, Brother. What have we got among us? You listen.

We've got some ex-liars among us. Don't get mad at anybody. I'm not saying that it's you.

But we've got some ex-liars among us. For a man to be born with a lying tongue and then one day when he's 20 years old or 25 years old or 30 or 35 or 40 or whatever he is, come to the Lord Jesus Christ and Christ stretches out his hand and touches that man's tongue and that tongue instantaneously becomes truthful. And in exchange for being a lying tongue to a truthful tongue, you tell me that if that man had a cancer and the Lord healed his cancer, it would be any more of a miracle? I tell you it's a greater miracle when God can touch a lying tongue and make it a truthful tongue than it is for God to take a leper and change that leper into a clean man.

Now, if there's anybody here that wants to jive about any of our people being ex-liars, I used to lie myself when it was convenient, you know, when I was a young fellow. But the Lord helped me so that I tell the truth. Now, I get accused of lying, but I don't.

And remember one thing. If anybody, I don't suppose anybody here tonight would scoff at this and say, what a congregation that fella has. What a fine bunch of tramps they are.

He admits that they're ex-liars, some of them. Well, the trouble with a scoffer is he's not an ex-liar. That's the problem.

That's the difficulty. He isn't an ex. He hasn't got any ex before him.

And he'd still do it if it came necessary. Now, he wouldn't practice it just as an ordinary run of the mind achievement. But if he needed to lie, he'll tell it.

And then he'll laugh and scorn it because I have the courage and the honesty to get up to him and say, well, some of us used to tell lies, but thank God we've been converted and washed and made clean and the blood has never lost its power and we've gone out of the lying business and we won't tell lies anymore. Up at Buell Beach last week, a little old lady came up and she had a son. And he was a missionary in the Dutch East Indies.

And when the Japanese took over there, this young man had made converts, many converts. And he had a little church formed there of Dayaks, headhunters, and poison barrel users and blasphemous, obscene, vile people that had been converted. And he had a church there.

And he was sort of a head over that whole outfit, you know. And the Japanese were on the way and they knew they were coming. The grapevine and the drum and so on kept telling them.

And the Japanese were coming. Now, these Christians, these Dayak Christians came to this bus. And they said, Listen, teacher.

Now, we'll take you up country and we'll hide you where not all the Japanese in Japan could find you. We know how to do it. We'll fix you so you'll be just as safe as possible as it can be.

Nobody will ever find you. And if they come and ask if there's a white man up here, we'll tell them no. The missionary said, Is that what I came to teach you? Did not I come to teach you to be Christians, to tell truth, to keep your tongue clean and never tell lies? And would I save my hide at the expense of your lying? You baptized Christians.

You won't be born again. Out of your love for me, you lied to the Japanese soldiers. Oh, no, no.

He said, To save you from telling lies, I'll go down and give myself up. Well, he promptly went down and met the Japanese soldiers and he said, I'm a white man you're looking for. And they started on him and the little lady told me about her boy.

She can't get over it because she still talks about him. She said, I learned from the soldiers what they did to John. I tried to get away because I didn't want to open the wounds again.

But we're old friends. I've known the lady and her family for a long time. And she said, I found out what they did to him.

She said, They said to him, Now, you're a spy, aren't you? He said, No. Now, don't lie. You're a spy.

No, he said, I'm not an American spy. I'm an American missionary. I'm a Christian.

I'm here preaching to people oughtn't to lie. I'm here teaching Jesus Christ. Well, they said, We know you're a spy.

No, he said, I'm not a spy. They said, All right, all right, if you're not a spy, sing to us. Do something.

He got his hymn book out and sang two songs to us. And then I heard a Japanese soldier pick up his musket and ran with a bayonet to his chest. And John Wilkinson went down to martyr and buried him with his body.

Greater works than these are you doing. And I stand here before you this night to say that I believe that was a greater miracle than when Jesus healed at the well or at the pool of Bethlehem. To have a young man who no doubt when he was a younger fellow and when he was a boy he was alive.

But David said, all men are alive. But he when the ships were down would rather die with a bayonet to his chest than to lie as I let these people lie. All right, we have a moment here tonight to make quickly.

Again, I'm not going to identify him. But there was a day when you were on one end of the neck of that bottle and the bottle was on the other end of the neck and you liked to take it down. But the Lord God Almighty converted your soul and you hate the smell of this stuff now.

And you haven't drunk for a long, long time. Somebody says, and they wandered in here off the street and he says, I've always suspected that Alliance Church as being an aggregation of more or less trash. Now, the pastor himself says they have ex-stipplers among them.

Yes, we do have ex-stipplers. But in case you wanted to get funny about it, let me tell you a little story. There was a great man by the name of Abraham Lincoln one time and he had a famous debate, or a series of debates with a famous judge by the name of Douglas.

And Douglas, of course, was sharp. Now, I don't think he was because Lincoln won the debate but don't think that he was up against ordinary sandlot competition. He had major league competition all right to win.

But, one night they were lamb-hooing each other unmercifully and, of course, no hoes were barred. So, one night in their debate one would talk and then the other would talk and the way they do in these debates. So, Douglas got up and he began.

He said, now, ladies and gentlemen, he said, this man was a Samaritan who pulled me here in this debate. I were the opponent. He said, I'll tell you something about him you probably don't know.

He said, here he is a lawyer now and he's got some fame but he said, I knew him when he was younger. He said, I knew him when he used to run a little store up in the mountains and he said, he sold liquor in that store and he said, I actually used to go in and stand on this side of the counter and my worthy opponent, Abraham Lincoln, sold me liquor over the counter. That wasn't a place to ask.

Now, Lincoln got up, came out there looking like a praying mantis with all legs and arms, took his place and said, ladies and gentlemen, Doug Douglas says, that I used to have a store that used to sell liquor and I stood on one side of the counter and he stood on the other. He said, here's one thing he didn't tell you. I long ago have given up my side of the counter but he still sticks faithfully to his.

And I got that more often. Yes, sir. And so that was a home run.

Now, I'm telling you here tonight, we may have here tonight some men who used to drink but drink no more but don't you say anything to me because I'll suspect that you're still sticking to your side of the counter and there are lots of good people that were drinkers that drink no more and we may have some probably do some ex-deceivers who used to have to deceive and walk down the dark sides of the street but now they live pure transparent lives because, you see, they've got nothing to hide anymore. They're Christians now and you can follow them all day long and they won't have to hide anything. The day of their deceiving is over with.

Now, if anybody wants to turn up his nose and say there's a bunch of deceivers down there, I'd say we're average by nature. But by grace we've gone out of the deceiving business. We're not deceiving anybody anymore.

We're Christians. And I'll tell you one other little thing. What God has cleansed, that's all not thou unclean.

God made his heaven and God made his fountain and God sent his son and God called the unclean a deceiver too. And if I as a deceiver go to my savior and I'm cleansed from deceitfulness so that I can now walk upright and men can follow me all day long and know that I'm living right. Brother Water, who are you to criticize if God almighty wants to wash a black thing clean? Who are you to condemn it? Well, there's some ex-blasphemers around too.

Men who formerly used evil and obscene language. I grew up in the country of Pennsylvania on a farm and men were known there by their ability to swear. And there are two things that men did there.

That's how they got their faith. They swore and fought. The man who could fight and was quickest on his feet and could knock another man down quickest.

He was the big man. Even my father believed until he was converted man that that was proof of manhood. The ability to bounce a fist off a fellow's feet and walk away rubbing his hands and saying, thank God that's over.

And the other fellow crawled away with a brush and went off home to lick his wounds. Men's ability to swear. Men swore at their horses till they wondered how they kept from burning their hide up.

And I grew up with that kind of thing. It was the only kind of emphasis people knew out there. I could still use it fluently if I didn't have better language and didn't know a better language.

Emphasis falls. You know, when a man really swears, he can speak very, very picturesquely. And there are lots of picturesque fellows walking around that will be converted tonight and they'll never swear anymore.

Never anymore. And we've got a lot of them here tonight. One time they used to take the name of the Lord in vain, but the only time they take the name of the Lord now is when they sing, pray, or try to win somebody to the Lord.

They're free now. Their hearts are right. And for a man who was a blasphemer to become a tender worshiper of God is a great work, a greater work than any of these soldiers do.

Now, another thing we've got. Maybe I'll get chased out of town for this, but I'm not identifying anybody. We've got some ex-covetous people, some people who used to be as tight as the skin on an orange.

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