

# (The Chief End of Man - Part 2): A Mirror of the Almighty

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer's sermon emphasizes that the chief end of man is to worship God and reflect His glory, exploring the limitations of work, education, and pleasure in fulfilling this purpose.*

**Duration:** 38:00

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:27, Psalm 8:4-5, Psalm 45:11, Ecclesiastes 3:11, Jeremiah 29:11, Matthew 6:33, John 14:6

**Topics:** "Chief End of Man"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the tragic nature of the world we live in. He mentions a recent tragic incident where five children drowned in a car accident, highlighting the sorrow and pain that exists in the world. The speaker questions the purpose of life if it is only about indulging in worldly pleasures and entertainment. He then shifts the focus to the ultimate tragedy of the fall of mankind and the redemption brought through Jesus Christ. The sermon concludes with a call to worship and a critique of the lack of true worship in churches.

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## Transcript

Psalm 45, the words of the man of God, verse 11. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, for whom is thy Lord. Worship thou him.

I am assuming, not only these nights, but I am assuming in all of my ministry, everywhere, that there are some serious-minded men and women left in the world who want to know a number of things about themselves. They want to know where they came from, they want to know who they are, they want to know what they are, they want to know why they're here, and they want to know where they're going. Now, there are not many, I admit, in great masses and multitudes, but I believe there are some.

I believe there are enough that, taken all in all, they form a fairly nice congregation almost anywhere you go. If I am wrong about this, I might as well, I suppose, leave my Bible closed, but I don't believe that I am wrong. I believe that there are still many serious-minded young people, as well as older ones, who want to know an answer to the question, What is the chief end of man? And that is, Who am I? What am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? And where am I going? Now, there have been a number of answers given to this question, and there are still answers being given.

Oh, I will take three or four of them only and point out what these who give this answer have to say, and I'll try to be fair to them. There are those who say that we are here to work. I suppose there isn't any place in the world ever from the days of Adam to this hour where there was more honor given to work than on the North American continent.

Canadians and Americans, they don't like to work, but they do like to talk about what an honorable thing it is. Now, have you ever stopped to consider what work is? Work is moving things and rearranging them. Now, that's all it is.

It is that, but that's all it is, just rearranging things. The thing is over here, and you work to put it over there. And there's something in a pail, and you work to put it on the side of a house.

That's called painting. There is something in the cabinet, and you work to put that into a skillet, to put that onto the table, to put that into your husband, and that is called housekeeping and cooking. And you will find that this definition of work is a good sound definition, if not complete at least sound, that work is taking something that is somewhere and putting it somewhere else and rearranging it.

That's work. But always it has a short-range purpose. It never has a long-range purpose, always a short-range purpose.

A farmer has some corn in his barn, and he puts it in the field and covers it up. He takes it from where it was and puts it to where he wants it to be. Then after nature has worked on it for about 3 or 4 months, he takes it from where it is and puts it back where he got it, only there's more of it.

I'm serious about that. That's actually what work is. But always it's short-range.

The next year the corn is gone. The pigs that ate the corn are likely to be gone. Also, having been taken from where they were and put where they were not until that time, so it's always a short-range purpose.

But what's the end of all this? What are you driving at? Why do all this? Why put that green or red or white material in that tail? Why take that out and put that thinly on the surface of your house? Why do that? You say, in order that it might not weather, that it might stay nice and look nice and not weather. Well, that's very good. But then that's not the end and purpose of it all, because there never was a house built yet that won't rot and run down and be carried away sometime and something else built in its place.

So nobody can tell me that I am merely made to work like a horse without having any future or any reason for the work. And somebody else says, well, that sounds all right, but we're here for a higher purpose than merely to work. We're here to educate ourselves.

We're here to develop ourselves, to perfect our nature, they say. We are like, oh, say, a field that needs to be cultivated and trimmed and pruned and all the rest, and that's why we're here. And we're to enlarge ourselves.

We take an ignorant boy and we put him into school and we teach him the amenities of life and we teach him the three R's. We put him further on into college and we teach him science and art and literature and history. And if he wants to go on and do postgraduate work and get degrees, that's all right, but there's just one little catch in the whole thing.

That fellow that we're educating and developing and cultivating, he's got to die. And he's going to take all of that education with him down into a hole in the ground. He's going to take all of that culture, that love of Brahms and Bach, he's going to take that right down into a hole in the ground with him.

Everything we do for a man, he's going to take it right down into the ground with him. And if he gets 40 degrees, they can put the degrees on his tombstone, but he's not there to know anything about it. He's lying down there.

Now, my friend, is that the reason that we were born? I don't think so. The old poet said, Yet a few days and the all-beholding sun shall see no more, do no more in all its course. Nor yet in the cold ground where thy pale form was laid with many tears, nor in the embrace of ocean shall exist thy image.

Earth that nourished thee shall claim thy growth to be resolved to earth again and lost each human trace. Surrendering up thine individual being, thou shalt grow to mix forever with the elements, to be a brother to the insensible rock and to the sluggish clod. Yet not to thine eternal resting place shalt thou retire alone.

Thou shalt lie down with patriarchs of the infant world, with kings and the powerful of the earth, the wise, the good, fair forms and hoary seers of ages past, all in one mighty sepulcher. The sweet babe and the gray-haired man shall one by one be gathered to thy side, by those who in their turn shall follow them for the dead reign there alone.' That was written by an eighteen-year-old boy. My brother, he was considering what the end of a man was.

Well, I say that it can't be simply for the perfecting of my nature, the educating, the developing of my brain. I'm supposed to do that, and I'm supposed to work. But that's not the reason it came.

That's not the end. What's the end of man? Well, there are others who say, and not so nobly, that we're here to enjoy ourselves. There lived an old Greek by the name of Epicurus, and Epicurus, of course, was the father of Epicureanism, and he taught that pleasure is the end of man.

The old boy earned himself a terribly bad reputation, but he wasn't as bad as it sounds, because Epicurus did not teach that we were to go out and go on a glorious three-week binge, or that we were to smoke open, or that we were to do any physically evil things. He taught something quite the contrary. Though Epicureanism has had a bad reputation, as it should have, because it's a false philosophy, nevertheless, don't let's pin the label of rape or nirval well on the man Epicurus, because he taught something quite otherwise.

He taught that pleasure is the end of man, but not low pleasure. He said high pleasures, the pleasures of friendship, and the pleasures of beauty, and the pleasures of literature and poetry and music and art, the noble pleasures of a good conscience. He said, this is what we were born for, in order that we might enjoy.

But he had it all wrong in that all these joys pass away. The joys of the mind pass away. The old man used to sit and listen, enraptured to the music of the classicists, now sits and nods in the corner and doesn't know Brahms from Frank Sinatra, doesn't know one from the other, because his mind is gone, you see.

He's sitting there. Now, is that the reason, then, that he might enjoy himself? Certainly not. And, of course, there's something still less noble than Epicurus, and that is that the thrills of life are all that matter.

Now, this has never been made into a philosophy. I don't think anybody would have the courage to write this up as a philosophy and seriously offer it to men. But it is the philosophy, nevertheless, that is widely

practiced and held by most people that aren't Christians.

It's the philosophy that sex and food and sports and excitement and the gathering of many goods, that's the chief end of life. They say that. If they don't say it, they live it, and that's what matters.

But I tell you that all that are this night spending their time trying to get thrills out of life, there's going to be one of two things or both things happen to them. They are either going to run down physically and mentally until there's no thrill left. There isn't anything quite so terrible as an old rogue who hasn't got a thrill left in him anymore.

A bored, weary-feet, blase, burned-out old bum who has spent his life getting physical thrills wherever he could find them at any cost, and now he's old and tired and burnt out and nothing thrills him anymore. Trying to get a thrill out of him is like sticking an ice pick into a wooden leg. There isn't any response nor reaction, there's no life nor feeling there.

So is this the chief end of man, that I should run around and drink until I'm fat and spend my time neither in person or looking on the television at men knocking a little hunk of something around on the ice, or go down in the states in a paroxysm of excitement, wondering who learned who in the world series? Well, is that all life is for? If that's all life is for, I think God made a tremendous mistake when he created this whole shebang. If all there is in the world is that I should get an education to take it to the grave, if that's all, then with my hand over my face and with my knees bowed, I can cry to God Almighty and complain and say, Why did you make me thus? But that is not all the reason. We come to the light now, to the scriptures themselves, and it's from the scriptures themselves and not from philosophy that I draw my answer to the question, What is the chief end of man? The scriptures teach us a number of things.

The Bible teaches us that God created all things out of his own pleasure, for out for thy pleasure they are and were created. And he created them for the pure joy they brought to him, the pure joy of doing something for somebody. When God decided to create mankind, it was a high day in heaven, there was a big celebration there.

In Job 38 it says that when God laid the foundations of the earth and created all things, that the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. That is, the sons of God being angels in that context, they all shouted for joy, and here was the heavenly host jumping up and down with delight when God decided to create the heaven and the earth, and he created man to worship him. Now, this is not only taught in a few places in the scriptures, this is taught throughout the entire Bible, that he created man to worship him, and that, I shall say, is the chief end of man.

You see, man is God's darling. Man is the darling of the universe. There are a lot of unbelievers who deny this.

I heard a man say the other night, as I have said, I listen to debates and interviews and so on, and one of your very fine Canadian writers, a very brilliant man, I could tell that by the way he talks, said they asked him, What do you consider to be the biggest mistake or error made by people? He said, I consider the biggest mistake to be the belief that we are special pets of Almighty God, that we are more than other things in the world, and that God has a special fondness for people. Oh, brother, I base my whole life on that belief, and I base my life on the scriptures, and I don't care how brilliant this man is, he can't jar me at all. It's just like throwing cooked peas at a ten-story building.

So throw at me any belief or any doctrines or any objections to this faith. I believe that God made man in his own image, and so let's make man after our likeness. And he made man so that man likes to see things made in his image, too.

Man, little babies born into the world, the father searches the little red face immediately to see if he's like his father. Now, he's too tough to say that to men. I don't know where we got that idea, but the women are supposed to be soft and sweet and full of tears, and we're supposed to be tough and full of sand.

And that's the way we live. But I never knew a father yet that didn't look earnestly into that little wrinkled face to know whether it looked like him. We want things to look like us.

And if they're not born to us, we go out and make them. We paint pictures, we write hymns or anthems, we do something because we want to create. So God has made man to be like him, and God made man so he could give more pleasure to God than all other creatures.

I believe that, that man can give God more pure pleasure than all other creatures. And God can admire himself in man. Man is the mirror into which God looks and sees himself.

Man is the reflection of the glory of God, and this was the purpose and intention of God, that he might reflect God's high glories, and that God might look into the mirror called man and see his own glory shining there. So that is the who you are. You are a mirror of the Almighty as originally created.

That is the what you are. You are a mirror of the Almighty, and that is why you ever were created in the first place. You were not created only that you might take something over here and put it over here.

That's work. You were not created only that you might develop your brain so that you could speak with a cultured accent, although neither one of those things will hurt your work. It's good for you, and a cultured accent, if you have one, is all right, too.

I suppose I never knew myself. And we're not only here to enjoy ourselves, even the pure pleasures of life, nor are we here for the thrill that life brings. Though life does bring a thrill, I tell you that.

There are lots of thrills in life. I remember that Commander Berg, when he came back from the South Pole, he had gone over the Great Ice Thump and brought his crowd back safe, and they said to him, Commander, what was the biggest thrill you got on your trip? He said, It's a word I never used. He had been in the midst of dangers, and still he said, I never used the word thrill, but yet it's quite a thrill now.

Quite a word now they're using, the word thrill. But that's not why we're here, to eat, drink and be merry and enjoy ourselves, for the rest is nothing. As the old philosopher said, we're here to be a mirror to the Almighty, that we might, because we're more like him than the angels above, and because we're more in his image than the very seraphim, God could look in man as he originally created him and see reflected more of his own glory than he could see reflected in the starry skies above.

But you know, the Bible also teaches that man fell. The Bible teaches that, and all the holy prophets and apostles also do teach that we fell from our first estate and forfeited the glory of God, and the mirror was broken, or at least it was smoked over so that God could look at sinful man and see no more his glory. But man failed to fulfill the creative purpose to worship his Creator and the beauty of holiness.

He forgot this and forfeited it, and by sin he's busy now finding other things to occupy his attention. And it's terrible what people look to if they lose God. If there is no God in their eyes, then they get something else in their eyes.

And if they do not enjoy worshiping the great God Almighty that made them, then they find something else. And if you had a list of all the things that people have fought out to do to satisfy themselves, to get some pleasure out of living, it would fill a good-sized book, and then it wouldn't be all. Why do people, for instance, smoke opium? Why do they chew the bagel nut? Why do they drink alcohol? Why do they take dope? Why do they do those things? It's because there is something in them that's diseased.

And God said, You're the mirror, now I look in you and see myself. But man in his fall broke the mirror, and now he's not satisfied, so he has to have something to do. That's why I don't go around yelling my head off against this sin or that sin or the other sin.

My brethren, I know some preachers do. They get up and spend a whole evening lecturing against this particular sin, but usually it's a sin that the church people are assumed not to have. Somebody out there in the world has it, and so there's nobody in the world there, and yet they shoot their little pop gun at the people that aren't present, assuming nobody present is guilty of all this.

I don't do those things. Some preachers spend their time preaching against the vagueness and vagueness and shortness of women's clothes, or smallness of it. I don't do that.

I don't make clothes line my theme, and I care very little what anybody wears, as long as they are decent about it all. But I don't feel this is what God wants me to do. All sin is sin.

All sin is sin. And if you don't have God, you'll have something. If you don't have God, you'll have dope.

If you don't have God, you'll have the love of money that amounts to idolatry. If you don't have God, you'll be out somewhere at some party drinking and smoking and raising the devil, and that makes Christians awfully mad. They say, Why do these evil people do that? Because they are big inside and they are vast and they are sensitive and they are powerful, but they have lost God and they don't know what to do, so they find something to do.

And that's why all of the great pleasures, so-called, of life have been invented to give us something to do. Everything else fulfills its design except man. God made man to reflect his glory, but everything else does and man does not.

The flowers are still beautiful as God meant them to be, and the sun still shines yonder, and the spacious firmament on high and all the blue-tailed sky that shines, spangled heavens, a shining frame, their great original proclaim, and Edward's son from day to day doth his eternal power display. And when the evening shadows fall, the moon takes up the wonder's tale and tells wherever it goes the hand that made us is divine. The bees still, I say, gather their honey and soil for a bloom from flower to flower, and the birds sing a thousand-voiced choir.

And the seraphim still chant, Holy, holy, holy, before the throne of God, that his man alone sulks in his cave. Man that was made more like God than any creature has become less like God than any creature. Man that was made to be a mirror to reflect the Deity reflects only his own sinfulness now.

Man sulks in his cave, I say, and man is silent. The stars tell the story, but man is silent except for swearing and boasting and threatening and cursing, and all the nervous and ill-considered laughter and songs without joy. Change the figure now from the mirror to the harp.

Let me say that God has put in you a harp, and he has put a bigger harp in you than in anyone else. He has ended any other order of being, I mean. He's put a bigger harp in us, and he meant that harp to be tuned to Almighty God, he meant that to be so.

But when man sinned and fell in this tragic and terrible thing we call the fall of man, then man threw that harp down into the mud, and it's full of silt and sand, and its strings are broken. You know the old Irish song, the harp that once through towers fall, the soul of beauty shed, and now hangs its root in tarry's wall as if that soul had fled. And that harp which God has created and which one time was meant to be played by the Lord himself, now hangs its root on the walls of the world, mud covered and the strings broken and rusted out.

What is redemption for then, my brother? Redemption is to restore us back to God again, to restring that harp, to purge it and cleanse it and refurbish it by the grace of God and the blood of the Lamb. But I say that the mightiest disaster that ever has been known in the world was when the soul of man, more like God than anything, more fitted to draw sweet music than all other creatures, man with the light gone from his mind and the love gone from his heart, should stumble through a dark world to find himself aggrieved. I say, this is the tragedy of the world.

There's nothing like it, nothing like it. This is a tragic world, ladies and gentlemen, a tragic world. Whether it be five kids on an automobile that fail to make a turn and crash through a fence and into a river and drown like rats in a rat trap, as they did out here somewhere only the day before yesterday.

I talked about it at breakfast this morning, I talked about it and it bothers me to think of it. Five kids from 14 to 24 drown like rats, a terrible, terrible thing. But how much more terrible in that it is increased in number are those several hundred or several thousand, I think, four thousand, is it, that died down in South America under that landslide.

Now the seas and waters are churning up the bodies of those who died on an instant notice. I say that the world full of disasters, there's no question about it. Somewhere I saw, I think just in yesterday's paper, of a little ship out somewhere that radioed that it was being buffeted by heavy seas and then the radio went dead.

I'm afraid 15 sailors have gone down. It is a world full of tragedy. But it's a world full of tragedy because of the one great overwhelming cosmic tragedy that we call the fall.

I say this tragedy that God said with a smile on his face, I'll make me a man. And God stooped down and God took up the clay from the bed of the river, and God shaped it, and like a mammy bending over her baby, he shaped and formed man and blew into his nostrils a breath of life, and man became a living soul. And God stood him up on his feet and said, Look around, this is all yours, and look at me, I am yours, and I'll look at you and I'll see in your face the reflection of my own glory.

That's your end, that's why you were created, that you might worship me and enjoy me and glorify me and have me as yours forever. That's why God made man. And then God withdrew for a moment, and while he was gone, that old one, the dragon who is called Satan, came and poisoned the mind of the man and his

bride, and they sinned against God.

And God came the next day, though he knew, for God knows all things, but he came as though he did not know. And he looked for his boy, his Adam, and among the trees of the garden where they had been wont to walk, the great God Almighty and the creature that is made and called him man. And when he looked for him there, Adam was not to be found.

And God walked among the trees of the garden and finally cried out, Adam, where art thou? And Adam came, shamefacedly crawling out from behind a tree. And God said, What did you do? And he said, O God, we ate of the fruit whereof thou saidest we should not eat. But it was the woman who said to the woman, What did you do? And she said, It was the serpent that already learned to blame somebody else.

It's one of the great evidences of sin, and we got it straight from that man. We blame somebody else for our iniquity. If you're not a better man than you are, you like to blame your wife or the place where you work, or your ancestors.

If you're not a better young person, you blame your parents. If you're not a better wife and woman, you blame your husband or your children. You blame, blame, blame.

And because we're not a better church, we blame the liberals. Because we're not holier people, we blame the people out there in the world. They're not to blame any more than we are, not as much as we are.

So they blamed and blamed, and that's the tragedy of the world. And that's why we're where we are. That's why disease passes on us and drags us to death.

That's why accidents come. That's why there are jails and insane asylums and hospitals and graveyards. Because of the great tragedy, the great, mighty disaster we call the fall, the man stumbles on his way to the grave.

But, O my brother, I have wonderful news for you. It is the news that that God who had made us like that didn't give us up. God didn't give us up.

He didn't say to the angels, Break them off and block them from my memory. But he said, No, I still want them. I still want that mirror to shine in which I can look and see my glory.

I still want to be admired in my people. I still want the people to enjoy me and to have me forever. So God sent his only begotten Son, and he became incarnated in the form of a man.

And when he walked the earth, he was the reflected glory of God. The Old New Testament says he's the effulgence of God's glory and the brightness of his person. So when God looked at Mary's son, he saw himself reflected.

And Jesus said, When you see me, you see the Father. What did he mean? When you see me, you see the Father's glory reflected. I have glorified thee on the earth, said Jesus.

I have finished the work thou gavest me to do. And there God glorified himself in his Son. And that Son went out to die, and all that glory was marred more than any man in his features, more than the Son of Man.

And he pulled out his beard and bruised his face and tore out his hair and made blue lumps on his forehead. And they nailed him on a cross where for six hours he sweated and twisted and groaned and finally gave up the ghost. And the bells rang in heaven because man had been redeemed now.

And the third day he rose again from the dead. Now he is at God's right hand, and God is busy redeeming a people back to him again, back to the original purpose, to be mirrors of God's glory, back to the original plan to glorify God and worship him. Now, I haven't told you yet what worship is, and I haven't pointed out how tragically low worship is among the churches.

I haven't even defined worship. I haven't told you how we can recapture this worship. But I expect to do that over the nights ahead, and I want you to come and I want you to bring your friends.

I'll preach whether you come or whether you bring your friends. But I'm not on the knees to anybody, never, never am I on the knees to anybody. I remember once I preached over in the Athie camp meeting, and I said, Now, I want you to come to the altar, but if you don't want to come, don't come.

I'm not begging you. My brother was there, a doctor from Miami, and he said, That's the tosering. He said, Oh, just the like.

He said, I never knew one yet ever to beg anybody for anything. He said, All right, come on if you want to, but if you don't want to, don't look at me. So I always go before the Lord completely unafraid.

I tremble before God, but I never tremble before people that I tremble in front of. So I don't know if nobody wants to hear it, all right. But I believe you will and I believe they will, and I believe we have something to say over these nights, because I want to bear down hard on the fact that worship is man's whole reason for existence.

And that's why we're born and why we're born again. That's why we were created and why we're re-created. That's why there was ever a Genesis in the first place, and that's why there's a re-Genesis that we call the regeneration.

That's why there's a church. This church exists here to worship God first of all, not secondarily, not to tag worship on the end, but to worship God primarily and everything else is second or third or fourth or fifth, but worshiping is first. I heard once a poet wrote of a toneless nightingale, quite a figure of speech really, and said there was a toneless nightingale, lost its tone, and it was so full of song that it wanted so desperately to sing like a nightingale, but it had no tone, so it died of suffocation in the valley.

I've often thought that Keats' great figure of speech was a beautiful thing. The toneless nightingale that died of suffocation because it had so much song in it that it couldn't get out. But oh, we're the other way around.

We have such a tremendous tongue and such a very, very little bitterness for it. We have a harp such as no other creature in God's universe has, but we play it so infrequently and so poorly that we might worship God in the beauty of holiness and that we might learn to worship him. When the dear old man, Brother Lawrence, was dying, I've told you this before, but it's worth repeating.

Somebody asked him what he was doing, and I often wonder why. We let a man alone when he's dying. They said, Brother Lawrence, what are you doing? Well, he said, I'm just doing what I've been doing for 40 years and what I expect to be doing for eternity.

And they said, what's that? He said, worshiping God. It was all one thing, he was just dying, that was secondary, just an item. But he was worshiping God, that was the big thing.

He'd been worshiping God 40 years and he was still worshiping God. And when he felt his pulse getting low, what are you doing? I'm worshiping God. And he's still worshiping God, do you know that? He died and buried his body somewhere, but he's still worshiping God.

Worshipping all of these saints that have left this fellowship in the last years are all worshiping God, John. Too bad they didn't learn some of them better down here. No other worshiping God, long after Avenue Road has ceased to exist.

But too bad if you don't learn to worship Him well now, so that you don't even have to cram for the last examination. I, for my part, want to worship God in my own private life so fully and satisfyingly, to me and to God, so that I will not have to cram for the final exams, but can stop breathing with quietness and say, I worshiped him and I'm still worshiping him and I expect to worship him. That's the true friend of man, to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

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