

The Enabling Power of the Holy Spirit in our Lives

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

April 1, 1956

Summary

A.W. Tozer's sermon, "The Enabling Power of the Holy Spirit in Our Lives," emphasizes the essential role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers and the church to live effective, spiritually vibrant lives. Mr. Tozer outlines three distinct periods in the lives of Jesus's disciples: before the cross, after the resurrection but before Pentecost, and after Pentecost. He parallels these periods with the current state of the church, arguing that many are stuck in a phase of instruction without power, characterized by aimless activity, intermittent fellowship with Christ, and a lack of spiritual vitality. He urges believers to seek personal and collective repentance, purity, and the fullness of the Spirit to move beyond mere religious activity and into a life of true spiritual power and purpose.

Message

After these things, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. And on this wise showed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana and Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

And Simon Peter saith unto them, I go fishing. They say unto him, well, we'll go with you. So they went forth and entered into a ship immediately, and that night they caught nothing.

But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, Children, have you any meat? And they answered him, no, no, we haven't. So, He said, cast your net over on the other side, and they did, and they got fish.

Now, I want to talk tonight about these opening verses here, and with this we'll bring the talks on John to an end. The seventeenth chapter of John was considered some two years ago, quite at length in a series of sermons, so naturally we'll not repeat that. And the story found in John 18, 19, 20, and 21 have occupied our thoughts over the last weeks, the arrest of Jesus and the death and the resurrection, so that there scarcely it would not be proper to continue through these chapters, having been dealt with quite extensively. So, with this tonight, we will leave this blessed book of John, often, often to come back to it, but not to preach any longer in this series.

Now, this has to do tonight with the forty days in Tyrium, which is covered in Acts 1:1-8. The former treatise, said Luke, the former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up after He had, through the Holy Ghost, given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and being assembled together with them, commanded them they should not depart

from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me.

For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And He said to them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

That is Luke's story that parallels John's story here in the twenty-first chapter of his book, the closing chapter of his book. Now, this forty-day interim period after Jesus had been raised from the dead, but before He had sent the Holy Ghost, it was a time of instruction without power.

Now, there was power in the Instructor, but there was not power in the one instructed. And it is an axiom, I think, of theology that it takes the same degree of power to understand truth as it does to preach truth. So that Jesus was instructing the minds of His disciples, but they had not the power to grasp it fully. And it was a time of intermittent fellowship with Jesus our Lord. He had risen from the grave, but they were with Him only part of the time. At one place, Thomas was not present at all. And at another time, there would only be one. At another time, there would be two or three. In another case, five hundred. And James at one time saw Him, and Peter saw Him. And the fellowship with Jesus was real, but it was intermittent. And it was a period of considerable uncertainty for these disciples.

They were uncertain about exactly what they should do. They reached a period that was something of a vacuum. It was quite empty, because it was between the death and resurrection of Jesus and the coming down of the Holy Spirit. And it was a time of fruitless activity. You will notice in 21:2 that they were together aimlessly. It says here almost nonchalantly, aimlessly.

They were together, Simon Peter and Thomas called Didymus, Nathaniel of Canaan in Galilee and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Now, they were not together by the Lord's appointment. They were just together. They were there rather aimlessly. And being aimlessly together, naturally they had to do something, so the strongest one of them suggested they do something. He said, I'm going fishing.

He had forgotten that he had left his fishing boat to follow his Lord three years before. But now his Lord was coming and going. He was there, and then He was gone. He was present, and then He was absent. He was visible, and then He disappeared. And Peter, being an active, strong, aggressive type of man, couldn't take this inactivity and particularly this uncertainty.

So, he said, I'm going fishing. And naturally what he suggested doing was patterned after the old life. And the strongest one, having suggested something for them to do, the ones not so strong followed their leader. So, they went along with him. And of course, it was a

waste of effort and time. Verse 3, they caught nothing. And when He asked them if they had anything, they said no.

Now, I want to talk to you a little about three periods in the lives of these disciples, and three corresponding periods in churches and in individuals. There was the period before the cross and the resurrection, after they had become disciples, but before Jesus had died. That was a period of our Lord's flesh. They went about with Him. They heard Him teach, and He was preparing them, mentally at least, for His passion, as they call it, His death and resurrection, and for the coming of the Spirit. But He was the Lord after the flesh to them. That period, after they had become disciples, but before Christ had died and risen again, we call the first period.

Then there was a second period after the cross and the resurrection, but before Pentecost. That's the period we're dealing with tonight, Acts 1:1-8, and John 21:1-8, or for that matter, to the end of the chapter. Then there was a third period after Pentecost, when there came to them a power and a radiance and an enthusiasm and a success that they had never known before. Now those three periods, any church or individual may be in any one of these three periods.

The first one, knowing Christ after the flesh as those disciples did. They never quite understood Jesus. They knew Him after the flesh, but they never quite understood Him. He was telling them things always that they couldn't grasp, and He said they couldn't grasp it. He said these things that I'm telling you, you don't understand now, but you'll understand when the Holy Spirit has come. We can have this same kind of situation today as individuals and as churches. Know Christ after the flesh. Know about the rest, historically, of course. But put the emphasis on the manger and on good deeds and on moral teaching, but not experiencing the cross, not experiencing the resurrection or the triumph of our Savior.

Now there are churches that are in that condition. They know Christ after the flesh. I wish I never had to rebuke or protest. I wish that always that I could avoid that, but how can you avoid it? How can you possibly avoid it, when it's perfectly obvious that churches know Christ after the flesh, but never seem to be able to grasp the Christ, the risen Christ, the Christ who had risen and been glorified and who had sent the Holy Ghost down, never grasp that Savior at all, never experience his cross, talk about it, put it on top of the steeple, wear it around the neck, but never experience that cross in their lives at all, and never experience the power of the resurrection, then smell the Easter lily, and go through all that we do to celebrate the resurrection, but still the only Christ we know is the Christ after the flesh.

Now that can be true of a church, I say. It can also be true of an individual. Then there's that second period, which the disciples went through back there, and which we may go through now as churches or as individuals, to know Christ and know the cross and the resurrection, and believe in the finished atonement, and know the peace of sins forgiven, and believe in the bodily resurrection, and believe His promise to return, but never experience Pentecost.

Then there's the third period that any church can go through, or any individual can go through, when they pass on through to the other period, when the promise of the Father

is fulfilled in the hearts of individuals, and they are filled with the Spirit of God. A congregation of Christian believers can also know this.

Now I want to ask the question, where are we? Which period do we find ourselves in as individuals and as a church? I would first eliminate one period and say that the situation that the average fundamentalist church finds itself in does not accord with what we call that period between Christ's death and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Ghost.

It accords not with that first period before Christ died, but with that second period after the resurrection. Let me explain it like this now. I said that that period, that interim period, before the Holy Spirit came, but after our Lord had risen from the dead, was a time of instruction without a power.

And we have that almost everywhere these days, theological instruction without power. In the case of Jesus, there was power in the Instructor, but no power in the listener. But in the case of many churches today, and I would say the majority of them, there's neither power in the instructor nor in the hearer, but there is an effort to rationalize the gospel of Christ and to teach it.

I hear it sometimes on the radio, and I listen here and there where I go, instructing, but no power in the instruction. Nobody's angry, nobody's glad, nobody's mad, nobody's helped, nobody's transformed, but it's simply instruction without power and of intermittent fellowship with Christ.

Now I want to ask you if that does not describe the present situation--intermittent fellowship with Christ. The average Christian in our time does not have an unbroken fellowship with the Savior, but an intermittent fellowship. They're with Him today and tomorrow they're not, and tonight it's very sweet and wonderful, tomorrow morning it's gone, and two days later there is some sort of an experience, and then three days later that has evaporated. So, the experience, the fellowship, is intermittent. And then in the church of Christ today there's considerable personal uncertainty.

I find this astonishing thing, that there are hundreds of people, hundreds, I suppose it runs into the hundreds of thousands if the truth were known, but my experience doesn't cover that many, of persons who have had theological training but don't know what to do. They don't know what to do with themselves. They have gone to this or that Bible school, they hold a diploma from this or that theological institution, but they don't know what to do with themselves. They're in a state of personal uncertainty. They're where the disciples were after Christ had risen from the dead, but before the Holy Ghost had come at Pentecost, and therefore they are running with other Christians, and much of their meeting together is aimless.

Now there were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples. There was a little meeting going on. I suppose strong Peter called that meeting together, and there they were anyway. I hear the announcements, let's come and have a good time in the Lord.

We're all going to meet at such and such a time, and such and such a place, and a good deal of our religious activity today consists of gathering all the sheep in one place, and then later, next week or next month, gathering all the sheep somewhere else. But never anybody quite knowing what it's all about, personal uncertainty and fruitless activity.

Coming together aimlessly is the weakness of a lot of us Protestant Christians. We don't know why we come together. We're here, and we like it in a way, but just what's it all about? And so the strongest one suggested they do something, but he hadn't any orders from the Lord about what to do, so he scratched his fisherman's head and said, now let me see.

The Lord's here today and gone tomorrow. He appears now, and then He's gone, and we're not certain of anything, and we're in this vacuum. We ought to be active, Christians ought to be active. We're followers of the Lord. Let's do something. But what was there to do? Well, naturally, he drew upon his experience of the time before he knew the Lord and said, let's go fishing. And these weaker ones gathered around him.

Brethren, I'm describing fundamentalism today. I'm describing evangelicalism. It is where we're unsure of ourselves. We have no afflatus. No voice has spoken. Nobody's hearing anything. And so, the strong-willed ones are saying, let's do so-and-so.

So, we gather over here, and we do that. And then a strong-willed one over here will say, well, I think we ought to do this. But the whole thing is uncertain. There's no prophet to say this is the way we should go. This is what we should be doing. This is why we come together. This is the meaning of it all.

But we subscribe to magazines. We read books, and we go about here and there to conventions and Bible conferences. And usually some strong-willed fellow has said, let's start this, or let's do that. What do you say that we begin this?

And so, fundamentalism is a world of wheels within wheels within wheels within wheels. Ezekiel saw a wheel in the middle of a wheel. But Protestantism has not only one wheel in the middle of a big wheel, but has wheels within wheels within wheels, world without end.

But there seems to be a lack of specific direction in the thing. We turn out students from our schools, give them their diploma. They don't know. Most of them don't know what they went there for. A lot of them go to escape. Some parents send them there because they want to have them somewhere where they're safe. And some of them go because their friends have gone. And some go because it's romantic to do it. And some go to get out of the army. And some go because they're lazy.

I heard Dr. Mosley say one time to a group of the students, if we learn, if we learn of one man who has come to this school to get out of the army, we'll throw him out on his ear. But nevertheless, that does happen, and it's because of the period we're in spiritually.

We're in a period after Christ has risen from the dead, but before the Holy Ghost has come. And we know He's alive. We know He's risen. We talk about Him on His throne. We expound Romans and Colossians and Ephesians. We know the truth all right.

Historically, we know He's at the right hand of God the Father Almighty and we repeat the creed and believe it, but our fellowship is uncertain. And today we see Him and tomorrow He's gone. And we are not sure what we're to do.

And so, we're looking around, waiting for some strong-voiced fisherman who doesn't know either, but who has a strong personality to say, I think we ought to do this. So, we form an organization and get a letterhead and a magazine and an office and a secretary, and we do this. I go fishing, said Peter, I go fishing.

The Lord had delivered Peter from the fisherman's boat three years before, but there wasn't anything to do. So, Peter normally did what there was to do. He did what he knew how to do. He went back to fishing. When the Lord God Almighty had called him to catch men, but there was a pocket there. They had reached a vacuum, and nothing was happening, and that kills some people. If they're not busy at something, they're not spiritual.

Brother Maxey told me about a dear woman down here somewhere. He preached about their tarrying and waiting and being filled with the Spirit. And a woman said afterward, Mr. Maxey, I have never heard this before. She said, I thought that the more active you are, the more spiritual you are. She said, honestly, that was my belief, that the more active you are, the more spiritual you are. She was perfectly willing to accept a change of viewpoint, but she was honest enough to say, that's what I believed up to now.

Well, that seems to be the general belief, that inactivity, it's unspeakable, it's awful, it's like those ten seconds with nothing going on the radio that Peter Joshua told us about, that awful dead ten seconds with nobody yelling and nobody running and nobody selling. And Peter, being a fisherman, couldn't stand that. Well, he said, I go fishing.

Now, there wasn't any sin in that. It was simply uninspired, undirected, and it turned out to be fruitless activity. Now, does that describe us or not, brethren? Does that describe us or not? Do we know why we're saved? Do we know why we're here? Do we know what it's all about? Why is it necessary to hold all these discussions? Why is it necessary to put five ignorant people around a table and each pump the other one?

Why is it necessary for ten people to gather around a board, none of which knows anything about the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and then pool their ignorance in order to find out what to do? And of course, naturally, when they pool their ignorance, not having any divine gleam, not any divine call or upward tug or direction of the Spirit, they will pattern what they do religiously after what they have done out in the secular world.

And so we have a multitude of wheels within wheels, all patterned after the secular world, because Christ has risen, but the Holy Ghost has not come, because they know He's alive, but they're not able to keep contact with Him, and they're afraid not to be active.

So, we have the religious jitters, and this is where we seem to be today, I'm afraid. We certainly don't fit into that first period, when they knew Christ after the flesh and knew Him no other way. Certainly, we know Him in some other way. Surely, we don't make

the mistake in this church of putting the emphasis upon the manger. Surely, we don't make the mistake in this church of laying the emphasis upon the moral teachings of Jesus or the good deeds of Jesus or the example of Jesus. Certainly, our Jesus is more than a human being, more than a man in the flesh. We're not there. And surely, we are over into the Book of Acts, where they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and got up and went out to speak the word of God with power.

But we're in an interim, and there's a pocket in there, and there's where most of the people are today. And brethren, much of the evangelism today does not lead people out of that uncertainty in a period of activity without leadership. It only creates more activity but doesn't lead people into the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

And that's why I can't get all steamed up about making more converts to an effete Christianity. That's why I can't get all steamed up about going all around the world making converts to something that is only halfway in, and not all the way in. Jaffray and Glover and others went to South China, established their work in Wuzhou. They had this strange experience. They made converts, but they couldn't get anybody to go on beyond that first initial conversion. And they multiplied their converts. Many people believed in Christ and accepted the Lord, as we say. And they became converts. They were baptized, and they joined the little churches there in China.

But Dr. Jaffray was not satisfied. He said, this won't do. This won't do. There's something wrong here. Our Christians are carnal. They're fleshly. They live after the flesh. Their fellowship with Christ is intermittent and spotty. They live aimlessly. They need something more from God.

And so those men of God got on their knees and prayed. And in those little churches, one church after the other, there came a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost upon those Chinese Christians, and took them from this period, this interim period, this halfway-in period, took them on into the mighty fullness of the Spirit of God.

And I'm perfectly prepared to say, and base my conclusions upon the Scriptures, and believe that there is historic proof of it, that there would not be one shred nor trace of Christianity left in China today if they had not done that thing. There would not be one trace of Christianity left in China if Dr. Sung and the rest of them had not preached the word of God and had gone on to teach them that they ought to be filled with the mighty Spirit of God. But here we are.

What about you? What about your personal relation to the Lord? Now, I don't think you'd be in this church if you only believed in Christ after the flesh. The newspapers only know Christ after the flesh. They publish the story of Jesus on the front page around Easter or Christmas, and they're very sympathetic, and we're glad they are, and it does help a little, but it's Jesus after the flesh.

And Paul scornfully said, once I knew Christ after the flesh, but hence I know Him no more. Jesus that walked in Galilee is not the Christ that we have to do with now. That Jesus died on a cross. That Christ died and rose, and He's the same Jesus, of course, but He's a Jesus now in an altogether different position. That in Him which could die, died,

And God raised Him from the dead, and He sits now at the right hand of the Father. And from there He sends down the blessed Holy Ghost.

I'm glad there are some people listening—not too many in this church, I suppose, but there are those listening—and we're disturbed, greatly disturbed.

Somebody handed me this morning a magazine, a tear sheet from a magazine. I think the magazine's a liberal magazine. But in it there was an article. What's the matter with religion in our time? What's the matter with this thing? And this young man, whose name happened to be Stanley Lowell—two of my boys' names—Stanley Lowell, pastor of the Methodist Church. And this fellow with trenching analysis, says the trouble with religion now, the trouble with all this wave of religion that we've got is that there is no protest, that God sent the churches to stand as a fiery protest against wickedness and iniquity. But the churches have lost their power to protest. There's no protest anymore.

But the great leaders are busy trying to be as smooth and suave as they can and stand against nobody and try to get along with everybody. And have friends among the big and the great and the very important persons.

This Methodist preacher, God bless the memory of John and Charles and Fletcher and Taylor and the rest of them. He's got enough fire left in him, this young preacher, to cry and say, when is our prophet coming and from whence is he coming to teach the church not to get along with the world but to contest with the world and protest against the world; and to stand as followers of Jesus Christ the Lord and take the consequences.

The Methodist church would wake up and listen to this young man. They won't. But if they'd listen to this young man, brothers and sisters, how wonderful it would be to go out not to try to find a common ground of agreement, not to prove that we're just like the world, only a little bit better because we believe in Jesus, but to go boldly out declaring what we've seen and heard and take the consequences. And if they didn't like it, let them persecute us.

The best thing that could happen to the church would be fiery persecution. If there had been a penalty attached to going to church, the churches in Chicago would not have been crowded to the doors this Easter morning with people with new hats. If there had been a penalty attached to going to church, they'd have stayed away in vast numbers.

I am not praying for persecution, but I'm not going for one second to pray that there shall not be persecution. For whenever the church dares to take the cross of Jesus, always remember this, brethren, that the cross is an instrument of death and negation. The cross is a denunciatory, accusative thing. And when we follow Christ and take up His cross, we can't possibly go along with the rest. They can't possibly ride along on the popularity of presidents and kings and the great of the world.

Not one of the world's great would walk down the street with Jesus while he lived. And as soon as Paul was converted to Jesus, not one of the world's great would dare to line up with him. And when Luther nailed his theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, scarcely one of the great would dare to line up with him at first. They did later, but scarcely at first.

But because we're afraid to protest, we're afraid to be different, we're busy trying to—I go fishing, we say. We don't know what to do because the Holy Ghost has not come to our hearts, and all we have is the text of the Scripture and tradition. And so, there's fruitless activity, personal uncertainty, intermittent fellowship, a gathering together without knowing why. And the strong leader says, well, let's do it this way. And then the weak ones all say, all right, let's do it that way.

And so, they go fishing. Children, have you any meat? No, we have numbers and names and offices and literature and printing presses and mimeograph machines and talk, but we don't have any meat. Well, he said, they haven't had any leadership, that's why. You're gathering together aimlessly. And this is the condition that we're in today. I tell you this now, this is the situation that we're in, and we're waiting.

What is the further step? Well, let me read it to you. He shall receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you. You shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the outermost part of the earth. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as a fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. And they were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven.

And from there a fiery church went forth, filled with fire. She was like a flamethrower. She burst forth in a blaze of light. Nothing could stand before her. She stood in sharp contrast to the world in which she was. She was as separated from the world as Noah's Ark was separated from the floodwaters upon which it rose.

She had two messages. She had a message of denunciation and protest, or protest, and she had a message of salvation and forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb. And for the first, they put her in jail. And for the second, after a while, with tears and sorrow, they turned in numbers and were converted to Jesus, Christ the Lord.

What is the greatest need in this church? That we should have a \$45,000 missionary offering this year? No, I hope we get that. But that isn't the greatest need. The greatest need in this church is that we as individuals and as members of a spiritual, social unit become so right individually and so right harmoniously toward each other that God can, without violating his nature, trust us with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Brethren, that's what we need.

I talked to Brother Parris Reidhead. I don't know any man in the modern day that has a more penetrating, prophetic insight than Parris Reidhead. We sat and talked. I told him about the 102 missionaries the Alliance was going to send out this year. And this man himself, a missionary blazing with missionary fire, said, in a way, Brother Tozer, I'm sorry about that. And I said, why, Brother Paris, why are you sorry? We're going to send out 102 new missionaries. He said, If we succeed in sending out 102 new missionaries and boost our personnel well over 800, it will set back for years any repentance, any

rethinking, any reexamination of our position, and we will travel on our numerical success.

He said, that isn't what we need the most right now. What we need the most right now is a heart-searching repentance and penitence, a revival within the individuals, a getting right and getting straightened out, and opening our hearts to the mighty down coming of the Holy Ghost. And he said, if we succeed in our present state of sending out 102 new missionaries without a corresponding spiritual rise of the tide, he said, I'm afraid that it's going to do us harm and not good.

That was not said by a man who doesn't believe in missions. That was said by a missionary who preaches missions in a way that I scarcely ever heard anybody preach missions. But he's too wise to be taken in by numbers.

And brethren, what we need in this Church is not greater numbers. What we need in this Church is individual house cleanings, the gossiping, the criticizing, the carnality, the flesh, the selfishness, the extravagance, the cruel waste of life and money and time, the hardness toward each other, the flippancy, I'll go fishing, I'll go with you--the aimlessness. What we need is to get that all straightened out.

Don't say, When the Holy Ghost comes, that'll straighten out. No, no. The Holy Ghost will never come until it is straightened out. It's a great mistake to believe that the Spirit of God came to make the people one. They had to be one before He came, being of one accord in one place. Brother McAfee, you know from the Greek that that oneness of accord is a musical term. It comes from music. It means a piano in tune.

Last week the piano was out of tune, and everybody said, What raucous sounds. And then a master came here last Thursday and crawled over the painting things and put it back in tune. Did you notice the difference Friday night? Harmony, harmony, the tune, the things in tune. And it says that they were all together in tune and then suddenly they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Don't pray, oh, send the Holy Ghost to take the gossip out of us. Send the Holy Ghost to take away the bitterness. Send the Holy Ghost to make us one. Never waste your prayers until we get straightened out, the Holy Ghost can never come in any measure upon us.

The greatest evangelist whose feet ever touched the shores of America was Charles Grandison Finney. And Charles G. Finney said bluntly, don't try to love each other. Don't try to love each other. The Bible says love everybody. He said, don't try to love everybody. You can't love that which is unlovable. He said, get people right with God so they can be loved, and then we'll love each other normally and naturally. He said, how can you love carnal men, gossips? How can you love critics and bitter fault finders? How can we love without hypocrisy? This great evangelist said, Let's get straightened out. Come on, confess your sins. Get so people can love you, and you'll be loved.

Now, that's exactly backwards from all of this soft, old-maidish palaver that we hear these days. But that man proved that he was right by the fact that he had hundreds of thousands of converts, and the largest percentage of them stood with any man that's preached since that time—more than Moody, more than any other man.

So, brethren, what we need is revival. What we need is a personal housekeeping. What we need is to use Easter as a ramp to take off from, something to bump us a bit, maybe, and get us started, and then go to our rooms with our Bible and with God. I have this to say to you, that I have read for more than forty years with great avidity.

There is hardly any field except higher mathematics in which I have not read and into which I am a stranger. But everything that God has ever used in me to help others, he has given me on my knees with my open Bible. God has been pleased to use the book, *The Pursuit of God*, far beyond the borders of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, selling now at the same rate it sold eight years ago when it came out. It is now translated into Chinese. I've seen it, some of it.

In almost every chapter, I got on my knees with God alone, seeking cleansing and power and purity and righteousness in my own spirit. Then with a notebook, taking down notes from that writing. Brethren, that's what we need, more than we need anything else in the wide world. I hope we get forty-five thousand for missions this year, but if we get it at the cost of repentance and housecleaning and righteousness and the fullness of the Holy Ghost. If we get it only by the techniques of men, pressure methods, we're better off without it.

I want God to give us spiritual ability to sustain anything He does for us, any increase in Sunday school, any increase in giving, anything. I want Him to give us spiritual power and ability to sustain it, stand up under it. Gifts without grace can be deadly, but for every gift I want grace to sustain that gift. That's what I want for this church. That's why I often preach to empty seats, as you know, because I will not fool. One of these times, nobody knows when it'll be, I may fool you.

I talked to some fellow over the radio, and he said, oh, Brother Tozer said, we don't want you to overdo, we want to keep you. Some preachers from the northwest side, oh, I said, I'll probably be pallbearer for some of you fellows that are praying for me so hard. I don't expect to die right away, but I don't know, but I may. And you don't know, but you may. Virus can hit you like that, and you're gone. Brethren, we can't afford to fool around.

Where are we in our spiritual lives? We're not back there with the liberal friends talking about a Jesus after the flesh, or back there with our Catholic friends, talking about a Jesus baby in a manger. But surely, we're not out with our Moravian friends, filled with power and the Holy Ghost, going forth as the greatest missionary impetus since Paul. Remember it, that what gave the impulse to modern missions was not a lot of fellows getting together and saying, I think we ought to go to the heathen, not telling touching stories about the heathen. Not looking at maps or consulting statistics.

What gave the impetus to modern missions and caused such societies like ours to be born were seventy-five Moravians present in a church at once, when they had confessed to each other and gotten right and gotten straightened out, and everybody was expectant, and suddenly there fell upon them a loving nearness of the Savior, instantaneously bestowed.

And they went out of that church hardly knowing whether they were on earth or had already died and gone to heaven. And under the leadership of that great Zinzendorf, they did more in twenty years than the whole church had done in two hundred. And out of it was born the Methodism, Salvation Army, Christian Missionary Alliance, China Inland Mission, you can name all the missionary activities, date their spiritual lineage back to that mighty hour, when only seventy-five people met God.

And they went out from there a happy people. Zinzendorf said, the happiest people in the world are these Moravians. He said, I don't know anybody, there so happy that it's wonderful. And they blazed forth. They didn't do it after the technique of Peter, let's go fishing. They didn't meet together a half a dozen of them, and some fellow looked at a map and said, I think we ought to go over here.

But the mighty Holy Ghost came on them, and they went because they couldn't stay in any place. They went because they had to go. They went led by the fire and the cloud by day and by night. They went all around the world. And they made converts of John Wesley and Charles Wesley. And out of that was born the great movements that have made America Christian.

Brethren, where are we? Where are you? Think about it, will you? Don't get mad at me. Don't say he's getting gloomier as he gets older. I'm not. But I'm just wanting to be honest and wanting God to do something for us. Would you bow your heads in prayer?

O Lord, our Lord, thou knowest we are thy sheep in the mountain. We are thy little band of soldiers surrounded by the enemy. And we don't want to waste our lives. We don't want to waste our money. We don't want to waste our time.

We don't want to waste our gifts. Oh, we don't want to be as Peter and Didymus and the rest of them were there, sympathetic, friendly, believing in Thee, believing that Thou art risen, but not knowing what to do, because the Holy Ghost had not yet come. We don't want to simply follow some tall fellow who doesn't know what to do either, but because he's got a strong personality and good leadership, he said, let's go do this.

We don't want to waste our time and money and give up our precious, precious days following a man who's doing something he hasn't been sent to do. Lord, we'd rather join some little band of unheard-of strange people somewhere and live right and follow thee and be filled and be right, to ride in on the crest of popular religion. Bless these friends, Lord, who listen tonight. They're here. They must want something. They wouldn't have come. God bless them. Jesus, take each one by the hand and lead us knee deep, we pray, knee deep into succulent, juicy pastures. Lead us, we pray thee, to the still waters. Lead us, we pray thee, on to the fulfillment of thy promise, the promise of the Father.

Now, Lord, search us, search us. What we were, what we were yesterday or last year, that isn't anything, Lord. We'll start now. We'll start clean now. We'll confess to thee now. We'll ask thee to pardon us now. Lord, thou hast heard today, criticism. Thou hast heard today, whispered things. Thou hast seen today, tight mouths and set jaws as people pass each other. Thou hast heard today and seen and beheld the pride and the carnality. O Lord Jesus, we don't hide behind anything, and we don't deny anything. We confess it. As a people, as a church, we would confess. We would ask thee to forgive.

We would ask thee to wash us whiter than the snow. And oh, that cleansing stream our sister sang about. That, that cleansing, that fountain, that overwhelming flood of cleansing power. Let it come to one after another of us.

Save us, we pray, from the suave, smooth get-along-with-everybody spirit. And help us to stand, we pray, with shiny eyes and with full understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Bless thy people, O Lord, in this great city. Bless every good man of God who stands to declare the truth. Bless him up to the light he has. Bless all the churches up to the light they have. And for everyone, we thank Thee. For every poor sheep, we thank Thee. For every struggling, lame little lamb, we thank Thee. For everybody, Lord, that has looked longingly in Thy direction, we thank Thee, O Lord Jesus. But O Christ, thou knowest the endless rat race, the constant wheel in the middle of a wheel, the buzzing, everlasting squirrel cage of empty activity.

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove. Come with all Thy quickening power. Come, shed abroad a Savior's love, that it may quicken ours.

If we are not lovable, forgive us, help us to become lovable. Help us to become so people can love us without straining. Help us, Lord, so they won't have to be hypocrites to say they love us. Bring us into a place where meekness and humility and tenderness and kindness and long-suffering shall prevail. Bring us into the thirteenth of First Corinthians, Lord. It may cost us a lot. It's hard on the flesh. It's humbling. But there we know the mighty Holy Ghost will come. There we know he'll fall and keep falling and keep flowing down and in and out.

Gracious Lord, send us out of here tonight. Don't let anybody crack a joke at the door. Don't let anybody be so full of levity that they'll forget anything's been said. Send us out, we pray thee, to wonder about our responsibility to this very critical week that lies ahead of us. Mighty Lord, Mighty Lord, the end of the ages are upon us.

The world has grown old, and the judgment draws near, and kingdoms rising against kingdom and nation against nation, and evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, and the love of many waxes cold. And thousands say, Lord, Lord, but do not the things that thou sayest. Save this people, we pray thee, from that quagmire.

Save us, we pray thee, from that hole in the swamp. And float us above it like Noah in the ark, riding above the storm. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.