

A Portrait of Jesus Christ

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Please turn to Revelation 1 and we'll begin at the 9th verse, and read responsibly to the end of the chapter. You will help me in this. Reading, after I read verse 9, you read verse 10, and so on to the end of the chapter.

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Verse 9, I, John. I, John, says John. I wonder who wrote the book of Revelation, says the critic, I, John, says John. The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him, shall unto his servants the things which must surely come to pass. And he says, and signified by his angel unto his servant John. I wonder, says the learned man, who that could have been that wrote the book of Revelation. I, John, says John.

The conclusion I have come to, brothers and sisters, is this, that there are two ways to be ignorant. One is not to go to school at all, and the other is to go too long. If you don't go to school at all, you are likely to be ignorant, because there hasn't been any breakfast food invented yet that would instruct a man without some little intellectual quiver of his mental muscles. So, if you do not go to school at all, you are likely to be ignorant. But if you go to school too long, you are likely to get educated beyond your intelligence.

I am saying this because I have been reading about these men who say, I wonder who wrote the book of Revelation. I, John, says John. So I'm going to accept that John wrote the book of Revelation. He says, the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, and the Word of God, and the testimony of Christ.

Now, what does this add up to? Here we have it, the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, and the Word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Do you know what that adds up to now? They tell us that adds up to a lot of prosperity here below. Kingdom and patience of God.

I'm a Christian, I'm born again, and I carry my Bible, and I make God my partner, and I witness wherever I go. And therefore, I get big contracts, and I have been patient in the kingdom, and therefore I get promotions. I was only once a stock boy, and now I'm vice president.

The kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, and the Word of God, and the testimony of the gospel. What does it add up to? It means that once I was a bat boy, but now I'm in the big leagues. I'm prospering. Why, it pays to serve Jesus. It pays, doesn't it, brother? Slap. So we go about that kind of Christianity has taken over the day in which we live. We slap each other's back and say, you to be a Christian, boy it pays. I used to not give, and now I give.

Now I have more than I had before I didn't give, or before I started giving. And that's the modern Christianity, and of course that's heresy. That's just as much heresy as to teach that Mary was a virgin born, or that she had an assumption into heaven, or that there's virtue in bones, or something. It's just the same, only it's Protestant. And it isn't even old Protestant, it's modern Protestant. It's the gospel that's in the hands of the vice presidents and the chairman of the board.

And so we have the adding up of all the witness and faithfulness and prayer and all the rest. We have a long car and a big home and prosperity, and we win at sports, and we get promoted, and we get along well in school, and we get all our blessing now. But what did this add up to back there? The kingdom and patience of God and the Word of the Lord and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Why, it says, I was in the Isle of Patmos on the Lord's day. What was he doing in the Isle of Patmos? He'd gone over there on vacation? Had he decided that he was working a little too hard as Bishop of Ephesus and needed to bathe himself a little in the waters of the sea over there in Patmos.

No, he was over there because he was too hot to handle. They didn't know what to do with him back in Ephesus. He was a Christian, you know, and his testimony was too hot, and his patience was too long. They tried to wear him out and found he was made out of vulcanized rubber. They couldn't wear him out. He lived to be over a hundred, we're told.

And so, they said, well, we won't have him around here. Some of these Christians don't harm us any. They just walk around quiet and half-scared and look down their nose and say little. But this man's vocal. He's got the testimony, the testimony of Jesus Christ. He's

always going around saying, God is love, and He sent his Son. We can't stand it. So they put him on the Isle of Patmos. That's what it added up to there.

But if John had had our Christian philosophy, John would have had his reward back home. He would have had peace of mind, prosperity, and the friendship of the great. But there never would have been any book of Revelation. There never would have been any visions. John no doubt would have played golf with Caesar, but he never would have seen the door opened in heaven and the One that sat on the throne. He never would have seen the vision of One standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. He never would have seen the woman clothed with the sun and with the moon under her feet and her crown with stars around her head. He never would have seen the new Jerusalem, pure and white, coming down out of heaven from God. He never would have seen that.

And we'd have closed the book with Jude, and we'd never have had Revelation. He'd have had his reward all right, and he'd have written a tract, and we'd have left the tract behind, and he'd have written a testimony, and we'd have published it in the Alliance of Witnesses, saying this Christian businessman gave a faithful testimony, and he immediately started up the ladder.

Now look, he has two long cars, and he's in who's who. But we never would have had a vision, we never would have had a revelation, we never would have had this word portrait of Jesus Christ the Lord. I don't know, I sort of want to string along with John.

I sort of want to go along with John. I don't know whether I'd have his courage or not, you know, but I do know that I like his Christian philosophy better than I do this modern Christian philosophy. Well, going on, he says, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and now I want to tell you right now that here are two nails I'm not going to get hung up on.

You know, when you're walking down the corridor through the Kingdom of God, there are nails in the wall, and sometimes you can tear your clothing on the nails, and some fellows get hung up there, and that's as far as they ever get. Now the two nails are, what does it mean in the Spirit, and what does it mean the Lord's day? They argue about what does it mean I was in the Spirit, and they argue about what does it mean the Lord's day. Some say the Lord's day means Sunday, and some say the Lord's day means the day of the Lord, the prophetic future.

Well, now, you're not going to get me in a corner on this, brother. All I know is that there was a man named John, or if it wasn't John, it was somebody named John. You know, they have a literary argument on about who wrote Shakespeare's plays, and some say that Lord Bacon wrote them, and some say Sheridan wrote them, and others say somebody else, and Mark Twain said that he had the answer. He said it wasn't Shakespeare that wrote the plays at all. It was a fellow named Shakespeare.

And so I'm going to accept it that John, the critics and the scholars and the learned brethren whose heads are filled with learned lumber, they say he didn't write it. But we'll say John didn't write it, but a man named John wrote it, and he said he was in the

Spirit on the Lord's day. Now, that's all I want to know. And he heard behind him the great voices as of a trumpet.

And I'd like to inquire why it is that so many of the Lord's people, when they hear the voice of the Lord, they hear it behind them. You know why? Because they're going the wrong direction. John was facing the wrong way. Even John must have been facing the wrong way because he wasn't facing toward the owner of that voice. Even John was turned a little round. And I believe that this is a very significant and important thing throughout the Scripture, if not here, certainly other places in the Bible, that we're faced the wrong way and the Lord speaks. And when we hear the voice, we turn and then we see it.

I told Brother McAfee upstairs that I'm not going to preach on it tonight, but I'm willing to give any young preacher here a sermon outline. And I'm not going to deal with it, but I'd like to hear somebody preach on it, somebody who really knows how to preach the word. It says that I heard a voice behind me, and when I turned, I saw. Now, I believe that this is the whole history of mankind, brothers and sisters. I believe that you and I are going in the wrong direction and the arresting voice of God speaks. And if we're wise enough to stop and turn around, we'll see. I heard, and I turned around, and I saw. I heard a voice, and I turned around, and I saw a vision.

And that's exactly what happened to John. John had been as stubborn as some of my friends. He'd have set his jaw and said, I don't know who that man is behind me, but I am not turning around. Let him come around to me. But John turned around, and when he turned around, he saw. He saw a vision. I just recommend that, my friend.

Maybe the reason you've never seen anything is because you've never turned around. You will hear the voice and turn around, and I'm sure that there will be some kind of a spiritual vision there for you, some sort of deliverance or some sort of glory that God has for you.

Well, I heard behind me the voices of a trumpet, and when I turned around, I saw seven golden candlesticks. Now, of course, that means lampstands, but even I know that, and I don't have to have new translation of the New Testament to find that out, because a lampstand was a receptacle in which a candle was placed, that's all. It was made out of wood or metal or gold or silver or just whatever they happened to have around. The rich had some precious metals, and the poor had wood or clay, but its purpose was to hold up a candle, put a candle in, that's all, and the churches here are called candlesticks or lampstands.

Now, you can remove a candlestick, and you haven't hurt the light any, because the light and the candlestick are two different things. And so the church and the truth of the church gives forth two different things. The light is the truth, and the truth is the light, and the church in any given location, at 70th and Union in Chicago, say, is a candlestick. It's a lampstand. It's a receptacle, a human thing in which the light is.

Now, the candlestick can cease to bear the light and thus be useless, just a piece of material there, or it can continue to have the light. But always remember that the candlestick and the light are two different things. That's why I don't walk out and start

another denomination. And that's why I don't believe that denominationalism is as evil as some people say it is, because you see a local church or group of Christians anywhere, they are the human candlestick. But the testimony they give is the light, and they are shining with their testimony, and the testimony is never theirs. It belongs to God. It is called the testimony of Jesus Christ. They give it, but it isn't their testimony.

As soon as a church starts giving its testimony, that church is already halfway on the wrong track, and if they listened, they'll hear a voice behind them because they've turned their face the wrong way. I know how we say, I gave my testimony, and what we mean by it, and I'm not criticizing that. I'm only pointing out that the only truth I have any right to preach is what's given to me and shown unto the servant by His servant John or His servant Paul or His servant Isaiah or His servant Luke or some other servant.

I haven't any right to manufacture a light, and I haven't any right whatsoever to stand up here and to give out some kind of intellectual or moral or soulish light. I'm merely a candlestick, you're merely a candlestick, a lampstand, a place where the divine light is put. There it is, that's the church as we read later on.

And in the midst of the candlestick, seven of them, and I suppose the seven means perfection, I don't know. That's what they tell me must be true because it's in the Schofield Bible, and I have no reason whatsoever to doubt it. So, we'll accept it as being the number of perfection, and what the Lord meant simply was the churches, the churches you know.

And they were lampstands, and in the midst of these churches, and in the midst of all the churches, in the midst of His great church, there was seen someone standing. And that one that stood there looked like a son of man. Some say the Son of Man, and that's exactly where He said He would be.

Do you remember that? Exactly where He said he would be. He said, if either two or three gathered together, I'm there in the midst. And He said, go into all the world and preach the gospel, and lo, I am in the midst of you, and I'm with you. And Paul said, while you're taking communion at Corinth, and you've all forgotten that the Lord's in the midst of you. Why, he said, no wonder you get sick and some of you die under the disciplinary judgment of God. Why, recognize the Lord. The Lord's in the midst. Don't you know that? Even the heathens said the Lord's in the midst, and they got to fooling around and forgot about it. So the Lord was right where He said he would be.

And do you know that He is here in this church tonight? He is where he said he would be. I almost stopped preaching when I think of this. That is, it almost shuts me up. How can a man stand in the presence of the Lord Jesus and talk? Well, he's told to do it. And Augustine said, how can we speak? And then he said, well, if we don't, there'll be universal silence, and so somebody's got to speak.

Well, it might as well be I tonight, I suppose. So in the midst of the candlesticks, there stood one. Then we have a picture of Him here, and it says He was clothed with a garment down to the foot. And now here we have the brethren at it again. Some say that

robe was a royal robe, and it's His kingly robe. And others say it's a priestly robe, and it's the robe of His priesthood.

Well, since He's a kingly Priest and a priestly King, why can't we say it both? Why do we have to say either or? Why can't we say both and, and get together and put our arms around each other? And instead of writing an angry book to show that this is not a priestly robe, this is a kingly robe, and another man writing a bitter attack to show that it's not a kingly robe, it's a priestly robe, why can't we say He being priest and king wears the royal robe of both the king and the priest? Because He's both priest and king, and there He is in the midst of His church. His job in the midst of His church, His function now is a priestly function. And He is the High Priest.

When He appears in the midst of His church, He's the High Priest. And do you know when we see Him here, now this incidentally is the only real picture we have of the present Jesus. Artists have tried to paint Him and they've done their best. And they've tried to paint His humanity, but nobody knows what He looks like except as He has been given, we've been given this word picture. Here He stands in His majesty, clothed down to the foot. And as the king He rules and as a priest He's there to represent God to us and represent us to God. That's the business of the priest and the prophet, and He's all three.

Now, He's girded about with a golden girdle. Now this is the insignia of royalty without any doubt. This girdle around His belt here, which was always in the Bible, the sign that He was a traveler. They gathered their great robe up and bound themselves around and away they went. They girded themselves for the fight.

But what incidentally, this doesn't belong to this sermon, but just struck me. What would a modern soldier do with a bunch of fellows in Mother Hubbards, back there in that day with ropes around their belts to keep them falling over the front end of their dress? They did it, they fought in those days like that, you know, done up in robes. And that's outside, but I can imagine what a young soldier dressed, stripped, streamlined down and with his bayonet would do with a bunch of those soldiers then.

That's the way they lived then, but not this Savior. We don't see Him here with His loins girded. We see Him here staying. He's not going anyplace. He's in the midst of it. He's here. It's His place to be. He has a work to do. And He's in the midst of His church, not girded with the intention of leaving, but round His breast with the intention of staying. The high priest had a royal girdle, you know, about him, but it was made of, I think, a number of things, and gold enwoven. But this was pure gold. This is royalty.

We have here Jesus Christ the King, girt about the breast with a gold girdle. And His head and His hair were white as wool, as white as snow. We were talking about snow blindness coming down, that up in the Northland or anywhere where there's a great new fallen snow and men get on their snowshoes or even in cars, the whiteness of the snow with the sun shining down upon it slowly, slowly into the eye until men go blind. And some have been found wandering about in blindness because their eyes couldn't take the whiteness of the snow with the sun shining on it. And here was one whose head and the hairs were white as snow, white as wool.

Now there are two views of this again. Some say that this pure whiteness is the whiteness and holiness of heaven, and others say that it is the stamp of age, that it means pure knowledge and solid judgment. And we have here a picture of the ancient of days. I do know that Christ never was gray and that He isn't gray.

Christ died when He was 33 at the peak of His wonderful manhood, and I know that there is no death in Him there and no decay. But I also could see how that God could present Him as wiser than Solomon, wiser than the seven sages of antiquity, wiser than the wisest angel before the throne, standing in the purity of His white head and His white hair, there standing in the midst of the church.

Oh, my friends, listen. You need to go to Him. He's called the Counselor. The Counselor. Oh, I don't know. I get weary. I listen sometimes on the radio when I'm lying down and resting, and I listen to these programs where young people are asked questions and asked to discuss them.

Dear God, what do they know about them? There is a Man who is called a Wonderful Counselor, who has upon Him the Spirit of Jehovah and the Spirit of Wisdom and of might and the Spirit of Counsel and the fear of the Lord. He's the One we go to. He's in the midst of His church, and if you don't know a thing, go to Him.

You know, we ask each other too many questions. We want to know. Somebody wrote me the other day and said, Dear Brother Tozer, we'd like to have you. My husband and I are Christians and we live out here on a farm, and we'd like to know, could Jesus sin or couldn't Jesus sin? I wrote them an answer back, and then I got an answer from them saying, Thank you. We thought we believed too. They wanted me to answer them, but why didn't they go to the Counselor? He would have told them.

I went one time and got all tied up. When you give the commentators enough rope, they'll not only hang themselves, but they'll have you dangling there too in some lonesome valley.

So the commentator got me dangling on who the Prodigal Son was. He couldn't have been a Christian because it says, This my son was lost, and the Christian couldn't be lost, so he couldn't be unsaved because he said, This my son. So I got tired of the commentators and all other kinds, and I went to God about it. I spent a few hours in prayer about it, and I got my answer.

I have my answer, and that was many, many long years ago when this head was as black as a raven's wing, and I have never needed to change my mind. I have never found any teachings any place. I know who the Prodigal Son was.

I'm not telling you tonight, though sometime I might preach on it. I went to the Lord about other matters like that. I remember down in Urbana some years ago, the InterVarsity Missions Fellowship and a lot of other people were met.

{See end of this document for the Mr. Tozer's understanding of the Prodigal Son he gave in his message "The Grace of God" from October 26, 1958}

There were a bunch of preachers around there, and Al Redpath of Moody Church and I were, well, you'd say the main speakers in that we'd jostle back and forth and preach. He and I had some others, and somebody among that learned crowd called attention to this. They said, did you stop to think that the two main speakers here never went to any theological school in their lives? Al Redpath never did, and I never did.

But that doesn't mean that you have to be dumb or that you have to walk around meekly saying, well, I don't know. There is Somebody here with hair as white as wool, and His name is Counselor, and He's here in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and He has a mouth and a voice and words, and you have a perfect right to go to Him and find out things.

And my brethren, it's not what I've read in books that gives any extra thrust, as they say, to my message, but it's what God has given me. But I know it's here in the book. I even go to the King James Version and get it, you know. I've read so many others that I know where the King James Version mistakes are, but I even go to the King James Version, you know.

Some people say, well, that King James Version is so old-fashioned nobody can understand it anymore. Listen, my brother, I was converted when I was 17 years old, and I merely had intelligence enough to find my way home if the moon was full. And I had no education whatsoever except a little in a white schoolhouse, and I began to read the King James Version and never had any trouble with it at all.

And I had never read anything up to that time except love stories that would lie around the house, you know, how John broke his wife's heart and so on, and I read those goeey love stories. That's all I'd read. And then Wild West stories, I'd read them.

So, my literary knowledge was very nil, and everything else was very nil. I was very modest, and as Churchill said about Attlee, I had an awful lot to be modest about. And I read it and I read it and I've understood it ever since, and I've never had any need to, if it says, cometh and goeth, why in God's world don't you know what cometh and goeth mean, brother? Do you have to have a new translation to know what cometh means? Cometh means come. He comes. And so is everything else.

Well, anyhow, the Lord's the best teacher, He's the best teacher, and I'd suggest to everybody in the theological school, going to school anywhere, listen to your teacher and then smile and ask God what it means. Because He'll tell you what it means and the teachers may not know unless they've gone to Him first.

Well, then He had eyes as a flame of fire. Ah, those eyes, those eyes as a flame of fire. How can we face those eyes? Looking through you, looking through you, and seeing everything. You know, Shakespeare said we can smile and smile and be a villain still, and I've met people who smile and smile, but they're villains inside. But there are eyes in the midst of the church, and they see you. They see all through you. They see all directions. They know all about you. They see through your motives. They see through your purposes and tensions, those fiery flaming eyes of Jesus. And He has feet like fine brass, as though it burned in a furnace.

And all through the Old Testament that was judgment. So here we have somebody in the midst. Now he isn't the tender, bearded weakling that the artists have painted, nor is He the mild, weak, and lowly lamb that some of the old made poets have painted, or have written about, painted with words.

But He's got two things here, fiery eyes and feet like brass, and He's here in the midst of the church. For you see, the church is a lot of things. The church is a group of candlesticks shining its light out to the world. The church is a fold where the sheep are gathered. The church is an armory where soldiers come in to get their weapons and out from which they go to fight the battles. The church is a hospital where weak and sick people are treated. The church is a farm where the great husbandman plows and harrows and sends the rain and the storms. The church is a little of everything, and here we have Him in the midst of us. Not to comfort and console us, there will be lots of time for consolation and comfort in the day to come, but He's here with fiery eyes to judge us.

And you know you'll be glad for that in that day, you'll be glad for that. Because you want to know the worst about yourself now, don't you? You want to know the worst about yourself now. What kind of fool would I be to seek consolation at any cost and then go to judgment with my life undisciplined, uncleansed, untreated, without penitence, without restitution, without everything done that I can do that I might obey my Lord and stand before him without shame? So I'm glad He's here like that.

I'm glad that long robe tells me that He's here as a priest, the Healing Surgeon, the priest, here to plead my cause before His God and to plead God's cause before His people, but here also with fiery eyes to see all through me.

Ah, preachers get away with murder, don't think they don't, brother. They get away with murder. They can loaf all week, you know, and play around, and then get a verse and shout around and beat the pulpit and the poor dewy-eyed lambs will bleat on. And when he stands at the door, then they'll say, wonderful, pastor, and the guy hasn't put five cents worth of anything into it. But the Lord knows about that.

He knows whether they have or not. I have a conviction growing on me that nothing will ever come to birth without pain. I have a conviction growing on me that no seed will ever grow until the plow's been there, and that there will be no victory until there has been battle, and that the man can get away with anything, fed chicken and given long cars and nice homes and sent to Florida and all the rest of it. It's all right. You don't want to suggest anything, but it's all right. You can do those things.

But brethren, remember one thing. I don't make my last reckoning to my official board. I make my last reckoning to the Man in the midst of us. Annual night, I read a report. The board meeting in New York, 27 saints gathered around there, I made a report. Buffalo next summer, May, I go if I still live, and I make a report.

I tell them what I've been doing to the magazine. But that's not my last report. I've got another one. I've got one I'm not writing down and can't write down, and it isn't finished yet. And I have got to tell the Man in the midst about that. And He's so kind that He died for me, but He is so severe that His eyes are like flames of fire and His feet like

burnished brass. And I love Him for all of it. And I don't want Him to be anything else but that. To have a weak effeminate Jesus with a big lap that every carnal skunk can climb up onto and get consolation, I don't like that conception of Christ at all.

Christ has a broad lap and He has a beautiful shoulder. Many is the saint that's wept on that tender shoulder, for his own name is written. But He has eyes that see through and He has feet that judge. And a voice that is the sound of many waters. I don't know what to say about this. I've been thinking about that voice, strong, majestic and deep.

And then I have been thinking about the piping voices of men and the raucous voices of politicians and the harsh, scolding voices of angry mothers and the bold, commanding voices of soldiers. And then I read of the voice like the sound of many waters, like when you come to the sounding of the ocean, down by the sound of the sea, wrote the poet. And in that little simple line, I think he has put as much of sheer musical poetry, down by the sound of the sea.

Isn't that a beautiful phrase? Down by the sound of the sea. And here I hear it coming to me, the sound of many waters, so gentle, so healing, so restful, so completely poised, so sure of itself. It drowns out all the voices of men. And I'm glad, for I want to hear that, Voice. And in His hand are the seven stars, and they are the messengers of the seven churches.

I know some of you have been very distressed over the death of Melvin Lobston of this church. Our fine young friend, Melvin Lobston, one of our missionaries, got in an airplane, Air Jordan, they said it was, over in Jerusalem. He had just been there and was going away on a missionary trip, and the engine blew up a little way off the ground, and he was seven other Americans, eight others, two of them Americans, he was killed. And some have said, how could it be? Oh, I don't know, but I do know one thing. Melvin Lobston was a messenger of the church. And I know that the crash of the plane didn't take him out of the hand of his Lord. I know that.

And I know that a man who's a true messenger, he's in the hand of the Lord. Finney used to remind the churches they'd better be careful how they treat their preachers. He said, God let the preacher die, let him die, let you kill him, but He'll judge you, and he's right. For He holds them in His hands, seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. And of course, that's the Word we won't talk about that, because everybody knows that, and His face as the sun shining in its full strength.

Somebody ought to preach on the face of Jesus. Somebody ought to. Oh, that face of Jesus. You know, when you look into that Face, you see anything you need to see? If you don't predispose yourself to see something, if you don't go with your mind badly made up about what you'll see, you'll see anything you need to see in that Face. If you're frightened, you'll see assurance. If you're proud, you'll see rebuke. And if you're weak, you'll see strength. And if you're doubting, you'll see courage. You'll see it all in that face, that face of Jesus.

Does it mean anything to you that you're going to look on that face actually sometimes? John turned and saw him. You and I don't see him fully. That is, we don't see him with our eyes, but we see him with our faith and our hearts. Does it mean anything to you? I

don't think it means much to anybody anymore that there's a heaven. We have been so mixed up with eschatology the last 50 years that the old-fashioned idea of dying and going to heaven and seeing Jesus has sort of passed away.

You know, Longfellow's village blacksmith, he wrote back there when people were just plain people. They hadn't got so smart yet. He wrote one of the days when simple old black-bonneted women, you know, would stand up in church and sing with tears in their eyes about looking over Jordan. Do you remember? We used to sing, They stand on Jordan's stormy bank, I stand and cast a wishful eye where my possessions there, but no, not that anymore.

He wrote at that time, and he said about the blacksmith, he says he goes in Sunday to the church and he sits among his boys and he hears the parson pray and preach and he hears his daughter's voice singing in the village choir and it makes him think of her mother's voice singing in paradise and with his hard rough hand he wipes a tear out of his eye. All week long he'd swung the great ten-pound hammer, wham, wham, you could hear the music of the anvil ringing out for a mile in all directions. Rough it was and hard, but not so rough and hard that he couldn't wipe tear out of his eye thinking of Mama yonder in paradise.

People don't think with tears of paradise anymore much. They're all mixed up and what's going to happen in Jordan, what's going to happen in Berlin, what's Daniel's bear mean, what's Daniel's leopard mean, and we're so smart that we're completely stupid. What we need to do is get childlike again and listen and look into the Face that shines like the sun.

You don't have to know Greek to look into it, you don't have to know Hebrew, they'll both help you they tell me, and you don't have to have gone anywhere to school, all that helps us all too. I talk like a fool because actually I've done an awful lot of reading and studying in my time and I recommend it, but I saw the Face before I saw the Book. I wonder if I'd seen a Book before I saw the Face, if I wouldn't have been one of those smart alecks who knew more than was good for me. But I saw the Face first and then I got interested in the Book afterwards, and when the Lord regenerated my heart He woke up my head. But that Face with all that we need.

Well now, there he was standing and the effect of this, he said, I fell at His feet as dead. And I read almost the same thing in Daniel 10 through to 9. You see, Daniel and John and Isaiah and the rest of them, mystical bishops, they heard a Voice and they turned and when they turned, they saw. We don't hear the Voice, and if we do, we don't turn and so we don't see. We depend upon hearsay.

They heard a voice, they turned, they saw. And what they saw knocked them to their faces, knocked them to their faces. Oh how desperately, how desperately we need a crop of young men who've been knocked flat. How we need young people who've looked on a Face and a white hair and head and have seen a man with a sword coming out of His mouth and seen Him moving up and down in tenderness among the churches and have fallen flat and had to be helped to their feet again. You know, that's what we need in our pulpits, brethren. That's what we need.

Now we're trying to get learned. And you get magazines so learned that if you can understand them, they consider they've failed you. That if you can understand what the article meant, why they say, well, we'll have to do something about that, they understood it.

So they make it harder and harder and harder all the time. But we don't need that kind of brain-weary, muscle-bound intellectual. What we need is a whole crop of intelligent young fellows who will study and work hard at it, but who've seen the Face. And because they've seen the Face, they're never sure of themselves afterward, but oh brother, are they are sure of Jesus. They're never sure of themselves. None of that brassy, I did this and I did that, it's all gone. And in its place, there's the tender certainty that God's all right, but O Lord, I don't know about myself. I need help.

There are two pictures of Jesus given in the Bible. This portrait here, this final portrait done in beautiful words by John, but there was another one once back there, maybe I can without too much trouble read it. Listen, behold my servant, said God, Jehovah, as many were astonished at thee, His visage was so marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men, so shall He sprinkle many nations. His visage was so marred, so marred more than the sons of men.

There's one picture of Him, that's no more, that was the old photograph, the old picture. That wasn't a pretty picture at all. Let nobody paint the cross beautiful, let nobody show a pretty Christ on a tree, let nobody by the use of form or color show a pretty sight there on a hillside. Gallows aren't pretty, electric chairs aren't pretty, crosses aren't pretty.

So, God said people were astonished at him and turned their face away, for it was an ugly sight there, blue-lipped, fly-blown flies diving down to the blood, blood dripping off his toes, wasn't a pretty sight. But don't think of Him like that anymore, my brethren, no, no.

John said, I heard a voice, and it was a voice that sounded like a silver trumpet through the universe, and I turned, and when I turned I saw. And he tried to describe what he saw, and I've gone over just weakly tonight, almost casually, what can a man say about perfection? How can you gild a lily or set a candle to the sun? How can you teach the nightingale to sing? And how can I add anything to what John has given us?

But there He stands, with a garment down to the foot, and a girth about the breast with a golden girdle, head and hair as white as wool, eyes of the flame of fire, feet like fine brass, voice as of the sound of the sea. In His hands, seven stars, and out of His mouth goeth the sharp sword and a Face of the sun shining in its strength.

There He is in the midst of us, Jesus Christ. They met the conditions, they saw the vision, they fell flat. We meet no conditions, see no visions, and imagine that we're in lineal descent from the apostles.

How far can we go, Brethren? If the Romanists have gone off in that direction, we've gone off in the other. May God bring us all to the middle, so we can behold Jesus Christ as He is, Christ the Son of God.

Well, I recommend Him to you, my friends. I recommend Him to you. You need Him, and you don't have to cross the street to find Him. You don't have to come out to this church to find Him. You don't have to make a long trip. We want you to come, but you don't have to. You don't have to do anything except, in your heart, when you hear the Voice of the gospel, turn. And when you turn, you'll see. And when you see, you'll fall. And when you fall, you'll be lifted up again.

And I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead, and He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of the hell and of the death, keys of hell and of death. Ah, all that walk the globe are but a handful to the myriad that slumber in its bosom. Death has ridden her pale horse around the world since the day that Adam ate the fruit and brought woe into the world.

But I look into the face of One tonight who holds the keys of death and of hell. I recommend Him to you, turn to Him, pick the Word of God, get the Gospel of John, get on your knees, read it. You need not that any man teach you. He'll teach you, if you obey, if you repent, if you hate sin, if you love righteousness, if you have no confidence in yourself or in the flesh, he'll take you over.

I've seen in this Church instances of young men who were converted and young women and blossomed out into the Christian life so fast that you'd think they'd been converted 25 years, and they'd only been converted a year. You follow Him, you look into His face, and all will be well with you.

O Jesus, Jesus, dearest Lord! Forgive me if I say, For very love, Thy sacred name. A thousand times a day Let us sing, Brother McAfee.

A.W. Tozer's understanding of the Prodigal Son from the sermon, "The Grace of God" October 26, 1958 <https://tozertalks.com/tozer-talks-13/>

Oh, a long time ago, I won't say how many, but it's a great many years ago; and I was in my earliest twenties. I had heard the prodigal son was a backslider. But I didn't read it in the fifteenth of Luke. He couldn't be a backslider and fit all the circumstances. I'd heard he was a sinner. But I couldn't hear God say of a sinner, this my son was dead and is alive again. It didn't fit the circumstances. So, I went to God and I said, God, will you show me. Then, I went to a place all by myself. I used to spend days and praying all alone. And I went there, and suddenly there flashed over me the understanding. And I have never had reason to doubt that this was God teaching me His Bible. I never heard anybody else say this, and I haven't made a lot of it, but God said to my heart, the prodigal son is neither a backslider nor a sinner. The prodigal son is the human race. The human race that went out to the pigsty to the far country in Adam, and came back in Christ, my Son. For if you'll notice, there were two other parables there, the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin. The sheep that wandered away was the part of the human race that will be saved. And when he comes back, he's the part of the human race that will be one that's redeemed, and that will accept redemption.

So, these, all these, all these of every race and color around the world that have come back, they've all come back in Christ. And they've all come back in the person of that prodigal. All that's the redeemed human race coming back. And do you know what they found the Father to be like? They found He hadn't been changed at all. Insults, wronged, his neighbors pitted him and they said, oh, isn't that terrible the way that boy treated his poor old Dad. And his father was humiliated and shamed and sorry and grieved and heartbroken. But when the boy came back, he hadn't changed at all. And Jesus was saying to us, you went away in Adam, but you're coming back in Christ. And when you come back, you'll find the Father hasn't changed. He's the same Father that He was when you all went out every man to his own way. And when you come back in Jesus Christ, you'll find Him exactly the same as you left Him, unchanged. That's the story of the prodigal son. He ran and threw his arms around him and welcomed him, put a robe on him and a ring and said, this my son was dead, and he's alive again.