

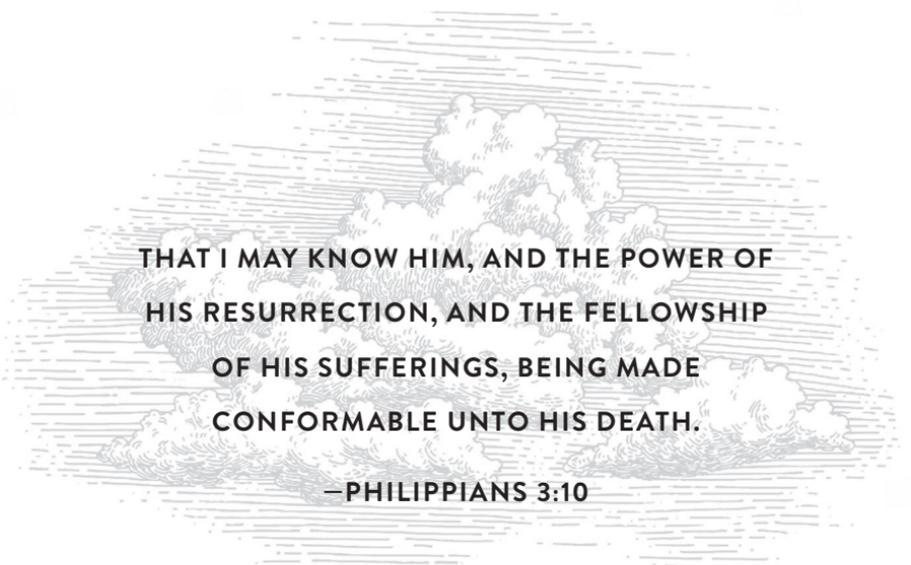
Tozer called these sermons the most important he ever preached. Looking closely at Philippians 3, he describes the Christian as a modern-day Lazarus who hears the call to arise—but can't escape the grave clothes. These sermons usher you into a deeper life of love and maturity in Jesus Christ.

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**THAT I MAY KNOW HIM, AND THE POWER OF
HIS RESURRECTION, AND THE FELLOWSHIP
OF HIS SUFFERINGS, BEING MADE
CONFORMABLE UNTO HIS DEATH.**

—PHILIPPIANS 3:10

“ONED” WITH GOD

In Philippians 3:7–15 we find one of the most oft-quoted scriptural testimonies of a man who is desperately seeking after God. Yet, while reading this passage, you will find what seems to be a number of sharp contradictions in the writings of this man, the apostle Paul. That is, they only seem to be contradictory. Indeed, there is much in the teaching of Jesus that sounds contradictory. This can be said as well in the writings of the old saints and in their songs and in their hymns. They’re not contradictory, though—they only seem to be.

In the Philippians 3 passage, the man Paul tells us we are not yet perfect, but then says, “as many as be perfect, be thus minded” (v. 15). This panting for perfection is the mood and temperature of the Law and the Psalms and the Prophets and the New Testament. It is also the temper of all the superior souls that have lived. It is these superior souls who have written our great books of devotion and have composed our loftiest hymns. We, the unworthy spiritual descendants of these great fathers, often sing these hymns and yet hardly know what we’re singing.

I would like for one of these great souls to speak to us at times in this study ahead. Not to add to or take away anything from the Scriptures, but to illustrate and teach and devotionally expound. I am referring to the book *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which was anonymously written by an English author six hundred years ago. The writer states the purpose of his book is to help God's children grow spiritually and so go on to be what he calls "oned" with God. The book was written in pre-Elizabethan English and is older than Shakespeare by two hundred years, giving us some rather quaint language. There are more recent translations with modernized language, but I prefer the original text. The old writer who says he wants Christians to begin to be "oned" with God made a little prayer I would like to explain.

In the beginning of his little book of devotion, the old saint prays, "O God, unto whom all hearts be open, and unto whom all will speaketh." Let us notice that in his prayer he says that before God, all hearts be opened. That is, God can see in, even if you close your heart or lock it and have thrown away the key. Still, God can see in your heart as though it were standing wide open. And he continues, "unto whom all will speaketh." This is one of the doctrines of the Bible not heard of much today but very strongly emphasized in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, that the will of a man's heart is prayer.

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed," wrote James Montgomery centuries later, though I suppose not borrowed from these writings we're looking at, considering he probably never heard of it. But "all will speaketh." In other words, what you will in your heart is eloquent, and God hears what you are willing, what you're determining to do, what you

plan in your heart. *Unknowing* adds, “unto whom no privy thing is hid.” That is, no secret thing is hid from God.

The anonymous writer then says, “I beseech Thee so for to cleanse the intent of my heart with the unspeakable gift of thy grace, that I may perfectly love Thee and worthily praise Thee.” Some will worry about him using the word *perfect* as though he’s pushing toward spiritual perfection. I would like to quickly counter that question with another. Is there anything wrong with the old saint’s prayer? Can you find any theological fault with this prayer: “O God, fix my heart so I may perfectly love Thee and worthily praise Thee?” If this sounds extreme and fanatical to you, I would question your understanding of God’s total salvation offered to you through Jesus Christ, for the true child of God will say an “amen” to this desire to perfectly love God and worthily to praise Him.

He goes on to say there are four stages in the Christian life. “I find four degrees and forms of Christian men’s living,” and names them: *common*, *special*, *singular*, and *perfect*. Those are the four stages. What an evangelist he would have made! Had he come around six hundred years later he would state, “Here’s the way Christians are as I see them.”

The first stage or form is the *common* Christian—God knows what a mob we are. Then there’s the *special* Christian, one who has moved on a little, and then followed thirdly by the *singular* Christian. The final stage he lists is the *perfect* Christian. He then explains very carefully that the first three stages—common, special, and singular—may be commenced and ended in this life. The fourth stage, though, “may by grace be begun here, but it shall ever last without end in the bliss of heaven.”

I would like to make it clear that neither I nor the writer of *The Cloud of Unknowing* are perfectionists to the point where we walk about with a benign St. Francis smile saying we're perfect. You will always find, though, there's a place to go on into deeper spiritual maturity, yet we both hold to the belief that you can at least enter into the beginning of spiritual perfection or completeness.

Along with this opening explanation I would like to offer a postulate, that is, something that is taken for granted that provides a basis upon which we may proceed. My postulate is the belief that most present-day Christians live beneath themselves and live sub-Christian lives. Most modern Christians are not joyful persons because they are not holy persons. They are not holy persons because they are not filled with the Holy Spirit. They're not filled with the Holy Spirit because they are not separated persons. The Spirit cannot fill whom He cannot separate. Whom He cannot fill, He cannot make holy; and whom He cannot make holy, He cannot make happy.

Stated differently, even though the modern Christian has been born again, having accepted Christ, often he's not a joyful person because he is not a holy person. And he's not a holy person because he's not filled with the Holy Spirit, the only Holy Spirit there is. He's not filled with the Holy Spirit because he's not separated from the world. God cannot fill what He cannot separate and He cannot make holy what He cannot fill. He cannot make joyful what He cannot make holy.

Furthermore, my postulate includes this: the modern Christian is not Christlike; that is, he has not been "oned" with Christ. The proof of this lies in the bad dispositional flaws found today

among the children of God. If I didn't have prophetic vision to see down the years like the prophets in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews who fell asleep not having seen the fulfillment of the promise, I would be deeply despondent. The reality is, I have preached for years to some people who still have bad dispositional flaws. In addition to that, they have moral weaknesses, frequent defeats, and dulled understanding. They live outside the will of God and live beneath the Scriptures to a great degree, and thus outside the will of God. That is my postulate and the reason for this study.

This substandard condition is not too unfamiliar in the Bible. Remember what was written about Israel, God's people, in the Old Testament and often repeated in the New. Though the children of Israel should be as numerous as the sands by the seashore, yet but a remnant should be saved. Look at the fifth chapter of Hebrews where the writer says,

Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Heb. 5:11–14)

That is only the beginnings of it, for he goes on:

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. (Heb. 6:1–3)

Our Lord also said the love of many would wax cold, for in the book of Revelation, in the seven letters to the churches found in chapters two and three, we have certain conditions laid out before us. These are churches that are functioning as churches but have lost their first love and are cold, and have very much wrong with them spiritually. Therefore, I have based the necessity for this study with the understanding most present-day Christians live sub-Christian lives. Unless you agree with my postulate, this may just be a waste of each other's time and a wasted effort on my part.

This study has cost me a tremendous amount of brainpower, nervous energy, and considerable spiritual preparation. It is one of the heaviest things that I know, to realize this teaching as well as the apostle Paul's text in Philippians 3 can mean nothing to some readers. In Matthew 13:10 and following, we read about the disciples who came and said unto Jesus,

Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know

the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.”
(Matt. 13:10–13)

That very plainly states there were people who could not accept the teaching of Jesus. And so, in order that He might speak to the ones who could hear, He disguised His teaching a little bit. I don't mean He was deceiving, but He was fixing it with a kind of spiritual code so the ones who could get it, got it, and the others didn't get it. It was as though He was actually keeping it back from certain ones. We read the same thing by the man Paul in the third chapter of 1 Corinthians. He said, “I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas, there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?” (1 Cor. 3:1–5). He had to hold back certain truths because they couldn't receive it.

The anonymous writer of *The Cloud of Unknowing* admonishes everyone into whose hands his little book fell. He said,

I charge thee, and I beseech thee, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, that thou neither read this book, nor write it, nor speak it, nor suffer it to be read, written or spoken of, or to any, excepteth it be such and one as have by true will, and by and of a whole intent, purposed him to be a perfect follower of Christ, not only in active living, but in the farthest point of contemplative living possible by grace, to become in this present life of a perfect soul yet in a mortal body.

What he is saying is, I don't want anybody bothering around with this unless you have made up your mind and have a true will and a whole intent and purpose in your heart to be a perfect follower of Christ.

Oh, believing friend, what has happened to us when we judge the intent of a man like this over against our nibbling in this modern time, when we must pull the preaching of the Word down to the level of the dumbest and most spiritually obtuse. Why is it we don't preach to the one who's really thirsting after God, but rather to the most *commonest* of Christians who barely hangs on. I hear *The Cloud of Unknowing* say to me, Tozer, by the grace of God and in the power of the Trinity, I beseech you, don't you preach this unless people are determined in their hearts to be perfect, or complete followers of Christ in the sovereign-est point of living possible by grace in this life.

When I hear the lyrics of a song that states, "His blood made us worthy," something leaps up in my heart causing me to say, "God, that's my hope; not me, but His blood has made us worthy." I hope by the blood of Jesus that we may be worthy

to listen and, by the intent of our heart, perfectly to love God and worthily to praise Him. May we by grace follow Him in the most sovereign-est point possible in this life and get something out of this study.

The ancient writer goes on to mention he rejects certain people. He clearly states there are people he would consider rejects, those who disqualify themselves as potential readers. He states that among those he doesn't want to hear or read his book are the fleshly janglers, that is, idle-talkers or people that just chatter all the time. Nor does he want open-praisers and blamers of themselves and others to read his words. He also calls out the tellers of trifles and rowners. A *rowner* is a gossip. God knows them.

“O God, to whom no privy thing is hid and all will speaketh and all hearts are open . . . Thou knowest where the rowners are, the gossipers and the tattlers of tales,” he said. You leave my book alone, you tale-tattlers and all manner of pinchers, he says. A pincher is the fellow who tithes, but whose hand holds on to his money as long as he can and pinches his money. The old writer says, “For mine intent was never to write such things unto them. Therefore, I would that they meddle not therewith; neither they, nor any of these curious, lettered, or unlearned men.” If you're just a curious person in this deeper spiritual life teaching, whether you're ignorant or a scholar, it doesn't make any difference, he says. I don't want any of those people hearing what I have to say.

I have to contradict *The Cloud of Unknowing* on this point. I am not willing to withhold the open secret of spiritual power from those who can take it just because there are those who cannot. I am not going to withhold the open secret of the

victorious life from those who can understand it because there are some present who cannot understand it. Jesus Christ told parables and disguised His teaching in order that the spiritual eyes might see it and so others will not see nor hear or understand. And so, through the course of this book, I have no doubt there will be a sorting out. There will be a sorting out with some willing to choose to go on in their devotion to Jesus Christ. Some will go on from stage to stage. Others will be content to remain as common Christians as we have in such great numbers in our day. Fundamentalism has unfortunately produced a whole herd or flock of common Christians in our day.

Further into our study I will discuss what it means to become a special Christian and define what kind of a Christian this is and then go on to discuss what it means to be a singular Christian. Please don't think I'm teaching about four works of grace. No one should think, "I've heard of two works of grace, and even some teach three, but Tozer's got four!" No, I'm just talking about four stages on the path toward spiritual perfection or maturity. Alongside our anchor teaching in Philippians 3, I want to also follow this man who says a man can be a common Christian in his life. He can also be a special Christian in his life and can even go on until he becomes singularly spiritual in his life. It is my prayer to also show it is possible for him to finish those three stages at the stage of perfection, and then move into a stage which you can only begin here, but you will never end, as the old writer says, "til the bliss of heaven."

This is the teaching of the victorious Christian life and the focus of my teaching. As I continue, I am convinced there will be a sorting out. I could only wish this sorting out might come

in religious circles. We’ve watered each other down so much until the solution is now so weak that if it contained poison, it wouldn’t kill you, and if it were medicine, it wouldn’t cure you. It is just a weak solution. This book is for those who want to go on unto the fullest measure, the sovereign-est point of living possible by grace to attain to in this present life while still living in this mortal body.

Is it fanatical to want to go on until you can perfectly love God, until you can perfectly praise God and thus live in the will of God so you are living in heaven while you’re living on earth? If that is fanaticism, then it is the fanaticism of the Law. It is the fanaticism of the Psalms. It is the fanaticism of the Prophets and of the New Testament. It’s the fanaticism that gave us Methodism. It’s the fanaticism that gave us the Salvation Army. It’s the fanaticism that caused the Christian and Missionary Alliance missionary society to be born. It’s the fanaticism that gave us the Moravians. It’s the fanaticism that gave us the Friends of God who held close to the truth. It’s the fanaticism that caused the birth of the Reformation.

Let us remember these men who in times past were like worms in the soil, softening it up, getting it ready for the harvest. Unseen, but working in little groups here and there, were holy people that would not surrender themselves to the common ways of the world. Just as the angleworms and the other worms found in the soil, by their going through it and going through it, constantly keep the soil soft and making it so that when it rains the water can moisten it as is necessary.

Let me further illustrate by saying the plain saints, the simple saints, were not heard of much but lived lives of spiritual

perfection, that is, at least the beginnings of spiritual perfection in this life. They salted down the nations like Germany and Holland and even the Latin countries until the Reformation came. They created a soft soil in which to plant the seed. Martin Luther could never have done what he did had there not been those before him. There were others like him who had gone up and down the land preaching such kind of living as this.

Some reading this will go on, and unfortunately some will not. Some will come to their Kadesh Barnea and turn back. When the people of Israel came to Kadesh Barnea, there were some who said, let's go on over, but Israel as a whole said no, we will not go over, and they didn't. So, they went back not knowing they were sentencing themselves to forty years of aimless wandering in the desert sands of the wilderness. They didn't know they were taking a test. God didn't say, "Now, stand up here everybody, take a deep breath, and we are going to be having a test." He simply let them make their own test—and they flunked it!

In this world of sin and flesh and devils, it's a frightening and terrible thing that about 80 to 90 percent of the people that God puts to the test flunk that test, but thankfully not all. Arise, O sleeper, and call upon thy God, if so be it that God will think upon us. I must say for some it will be an unconscious testing when we urge you forward. The question is, what is your response? Will you go this far with me? Will you agree that most Christians today live sub-Christian lives? Do you agree that most Christians are not joyful Christians? They're not joyful Christians because they're not spiritual Christians and, therefore, not holy Christians.

“ONED” WITH GOD

If your concept of Christianity is one of part play, part social fun, and part religion, you won't be able to hear or understand me at all. You may receive these words, but you'll never really understand what I am saying. On the other hand, if your concept of Christianity contains the belief that this life is a battlefield with this world, and this life is a preparation for something greater; if you accept the cross of Jesus Christ as your symbol which you must carry and die on it and rise and live above it, then we'll move along and we will have a good journey together.

I share with you now a little motto from *The Cloud of Unknowing*. It is this: “Look now forwards and let be backwards.” This was the ancient writer's way of repeating what the apostle Paul said. Get rid of that backward path. Don't look back, but look now forward. If you will take that as your motto, “Look now forwards and let be backwards,” and not worry about the past and commit to move forward through the successive stages, you will have a spiritual experience the old brethren called “oneness” with Christ. To be “oned” with Christ is what my own heart longs for, and I trust yours does as well.

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