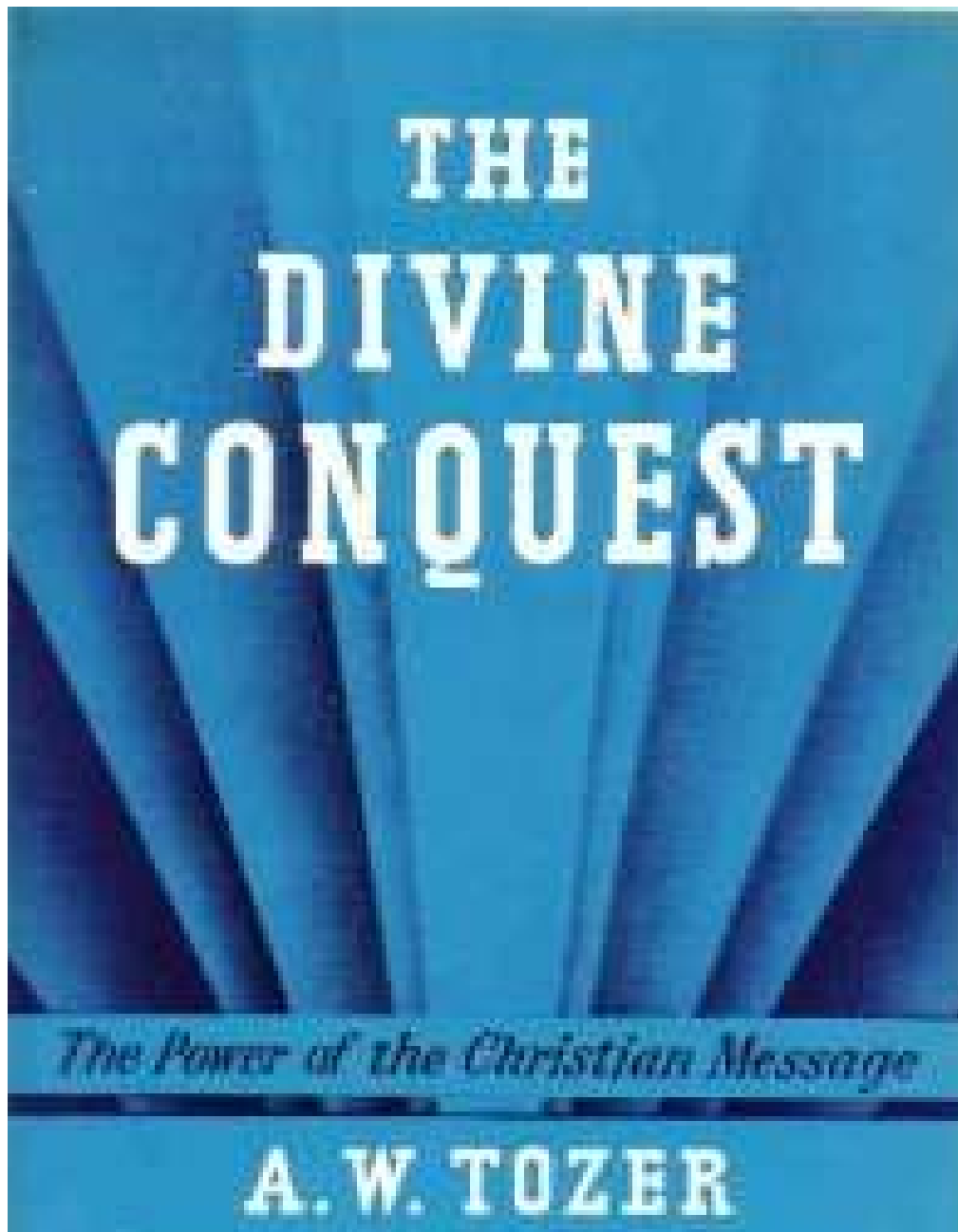


April 2020
Congregational Devotions



Introduction

We enter into a glorious season of celebration for the Church of the living God with the commemoration of the high holy days of Easter (April 12), Ascension Sunday (May 24) and Pentecost Sunday (May 31). To salute the joyful substance of these days, our devotions for April-May will spotlight the third Person of the Trinity.

Our resources come from the pen of A.W. Tozer, a man whose writings have been a great source of blessing, inspiration and conviction for me. Using excerpts from *The Counselor*, and *How To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit* to mingle with one of my all time favorites, *God's Pursuit of Man* (formerly *Divine Conquest*), I hope to set before our church a most balanced and powerful study of the precious Holy Spirit.

The point of these devotions is the *essential interiority* (Tozer's phrase, not mine) of authentic Christianity. If we are to know the power of the Christian message our nature must be invaded by an Object from beyond it; the objective Reality which is God must cross the threshold of our personality and take residence in the core of our being.

If I am mistaken in our church's need to explore at this dimension, than as Blake once said, "If I am wrong, I am wrong in good company". The requisite of a right interior life was and is the burden of Christ's teaching and without question was the cause of His rejection by those notorious externalists, the Pharisees. Our church will gain or lose power exactly as we move toward or away from the inwardness of our faith.

A word here about our author. Pastor Valentine travelled with Tozer in Canada and I am recipient of some incredible Tozer stories. The man is a prophet, his own denomination, The Christian Missionary Alliance almost disowned him because of his bold, jagged stroke of lightning speech. In the writings used in these devotions, don't be afraid as Tozer thunders the message of God. Because here is God's answer to our need – Himself.

Pastor Bill

April 1 – Wednesday

“The Eternal Continuum”

"No man will *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

Joshua 1:5 (NASB)

The unconditioned priority of God in His universe is a truth celebrated both in the Old Testament and in the New. The prophet Habakkuk sang it in ecstatic language, "Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One?" (1:12). The Apostle John set it forth in careful words deep with meaning, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (1:1-3).

This truth is so necessary to right thoughts about God and ourselves that it can hardly be too strongly emphasized. It is a truth known to everyone, a kind of common property of all religious persons, but for the very reason that it is so common it now has but little meaning for any of us. It has suffered the fate of which Coleridge writes:

Truths, of all others the most awful and interesting, are too often considered as so true that they lose all the power of truth and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors.

The divine priority is one of those bed-ridden truths. I desire to do what I can to rescue it "from the neglect caused by the very circumstance of its universal admission." Neglected Christian truths can be revitalized only when by prayer and long meditation we isolate them from the mass of hazy ideas with which our minds are filled and hold them steadily and determinedly in the focus of the mind's attention.

For all things God is the great Antecedent. Because He is, we are and everything else is. He is that "dread, unbeginning One," self-caused, self-contained and self-sufficient.

We cannot think rightly of God until we begin to think of Him as always being *there*, and *there first*. Joshua had this to learn. He had been so long the servant of God's servant Moses, and had with such assurance received God's word at his mouth, that Moses and the God of Moses had become blended in his thinking, so blended that he could hardly separate the two thoughts; by association they always appeared together in his mind. Now Moses is dead, and lest the young Joshua be struck down with despair God spoke to assure him, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee" (Joshua 1:5; 3:7). Nothing had changed and nothing had been lost. Nothing of God dies when a man of God dies.

"As I was—so I will be." Only God could say this. Only the Eternal One could stand in the timeless I AM and say, "I was" and "I will be."

A.W. Tozer

April 2 – Thursday

“The Eternal Continuum” (Cont’d)

Here we acknowledge (and there is fear and wonder in the thought) the essential unity of God's nature, the timeless persistence of His changeless being throughout eternity and time. Here we begin to see and feel the eternal continuum. Begin where we will, God is there first. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which was, and which is and which is to come, the Almighty. If we grope back to the farthest limits of thought where imagination touches the pre-creation void, we shall find God there. In one unified present glance He comprehends all things from everlasting, and the flutter of a seraph's wing a thousand ages hence is seen by Him now without moving His eyes.

In my creature impatience I am often caused to wish that there were some way to bring modern Christians into a deeper spiritual life painlessly by short, easy lessons; but such wishes are vain. No shortcut exists. God has not bowed to our nervous haste nor embraced the methods of our machine age. It is well that we accept the hard truth now: *The man who would know God must give time to Him.* He must count no time wasted which is spent in the cultivation of His acquaintance. He must give himself to meditation and prayer hours on end. So did the saints of old, the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets and the believing members of the holy Church in all generations. And so must we if we would follow in their train.

We would think of God, then, as maintaining the unity of His uncreated being throughout all His works and His years, as ever saying not only, "I did," and "I will do," but also "I do" and "I am doing."

A robust faith requires that we grasp this truth firmly, yet we know how seldom such a thought enters our minds. We habitually stand in our *now* and look back by faith to see the past filled with God. We look forward and see Him inhabiting our future; but our *now* is uninhabited except for ourselves. Thus we are guilty of a kind of temporary atheism which leaves us alone in the universe while, for the time, God is not. We talk of Him much and loudly, but we secretly think of Him as being absent, and we think of ourselves as inhabiting a parenthetical interval between the God who was and the God who will be. And we are lonely with an ancient and cosmic loneliness. We are each like a little child lost in a crowded market, who has strayed but a few feet from its mother, yet because she cannot be seen the child is inconsolable. So we try by every method devised by religion to relieve our fears and heal our hidden sadness; but with all our efforts we remain unhappy still, with the settled despair of men alone in a vast and deserted universe.

But for all our fears we are not alone. Our trouble is that we *think* of ourselves as being alone. Let us correct the error by thinking of ourselves as standing by the bank of a full flowing river; then let us think of that river as being none else but God Himself. We glance to our left and see the river coming full out of our past; we look to the right and see it flowing on into our future. *But we see also that it is flowing through our present.* And in our today it is the same as it was in our yesterday, not less than, nor different from, but the very same river, one unbroken continuum, undiminished, active and strong as it moves sovereignly on into our tomorrow.

A.W. Tozer

April 3 – Friday

“The Eternal Continuum” (Cont’d)

Wherever faith has been original, wherever it has proved itself to be real, it has invariably had upon it a sense of the *present God*. The holy Scriptures possess in marked degree this feeling of actual encounter with a real Person. The men and women of the Bible talked with God. They spoke to Him and heard Him speak in words they could understand. With Him they held person-to-person interaction, and a sense of shining reality is upon their words and deeds.

The world's own prophets, the unbelieving psychologists (those eyeless seekers who seek for a light which is not God's light) have been forced to recognize at the bottom of religious experience this sense of *something there*. But better far is the sense of *Someone there*. It was this that filled with abiding wonder the first members of the Church of Christ. The solemn delight which those early disciples knew sprang straight from the conviction that there was One in the midst of them. They knew that the Majesty in the heavens was confronting them on earth: They were in the very Presence of God. And the power of that conviction to arrest attention and hold it for a lifetime, to elevate, to transform, to fill with uncontrollable moral happiness, to send men singing to prison and to death, has been one of the wonders of history and a marvel of the world.

Nothing can take the place of the *touch* of God in the soul and the sense of Someone there. Real faith, indeed, brings such realization, for real faith is never the operation of reason upon texts. Where true faith is, the knowledge of God will be given as a fact of consciousness altogether apart from the conclusions of logic.

Were a man to awaken in the pitch dark at midnight and hear someone moving about in his room and know that the unseen presence was a loved member of his family who had every right to be there, his heart might be filled with a sense of quiet pleasure; but should he have reason to believe that an intruder had entered, perhaps to rob or to kill, he would lie in terror and stare at the darkness not knowing from which direction the expected blow might come. But *the difference between experience and no experience would be that acute sense of someone there*. Is it not true that for most of us who call ourselves Christians there is no real experience? We have substituted theological ideas for an arresting encounter; we are full of religious notions, but our great weakness is that for our hearts there is no one there.

Whatever else it embraces, true Christian experience must always include a genuine encounter with God. Without this, religion is but a shadow, a reflection of reality, a cheap copy of an original once enjoyed by someone else of whom we have heard. It cannot but be a major tragedy in the life of any man to live in a church from childhood to old age and know nothing more real than some synthetic god compounded of theology and logic, but having no eyes to see, no ears to hear and no heart to love.

The spiritual giants of old were men who at some time became acutely conscious of the real Presence of God and maintained that consciousness for the rest of their lives. The first encounter may have been one of terror, as when a "horror of great darkness" fell upon Abram, or as when Moses at the bush hid his face because he was afraid to look upon God. Usually this fear soon lost its content of terror and changed after a while to delightful awe, to level off finally into a reverent sense of complete nearness to God.

A.W. Tozer

April 4 – Saturday

“The Eternal Continuum” (Cont’d)

The spiritual giants of old were men who at some time became acutely conscious of the real Presence of God and maintained that consciousness for the rest of their lives. The first encounter may have been one of terror, as when a "horror of great darkness" fell upon Abram, or as when Moses at the bush hid his face because he was afraid to look upon God. Usually this fear soon lost its content of terror and changed after a while to delightful awe, to level off finally into a reverent sense of complete nearness to God. The essential point is, *they experienced God*. How otherwise can the saints and prophets be explained? How otherwise can we account for the amazing power for good they have exercised over countless generations? Is it not that they walked in conscious communion with the real Presence and addressed their prayers to God with the artless conviction that they were addressing Someone actually there?

Redemption is not a strange work which God for a moment turned aside to do; rather it is His same work performed in a new field, the field of human catastrophe. The regeneration of a believing soul is but a recapitulation of all His work done from the moment of creation. It is hard to miss the parallel between generation as described in the Old Testament and regeneration as described in the New. How, for instance, could the condition of a lost soul better be described than by the words, "without form, and void" with darkness "upon the face of the deep" ([Genesis 1:2](#))? And how could the strong yearnings of God's heart over that lost soul be more perfectly expressed than by saying that "the Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the waters" (see [1:2](#))? And from what source could light come to that sin-shrouded soul had God not said, "Let there be light" ([1:3](#))? At His word the light breaks and the lost man arises to drink of eternal life and follow the Light of the World. As order and fruitfulness came next to that ancient creation, so moral order and spiritual fruit follow next in human experience. And we know that God is the same and His years fail not. He will always act like Himself wherever He is found at work and whatever work He is doing.

We who experience God in this day may rejoice that we have in Him all that Abraham or David or Paul could have; indeed the very angels before the throne can have no more than we, for they can have no more God and can want nothing apart from Him. And all that He is and all that He has done is for us and for all who share the common salvation. With full consciousness of our own demerit we may yet take our place in the love of God, and the poorest and weakest of us may without offense claim for ourselves all the riches of the Godhead in mercy given. I have every right to claim all for myself, knowing that an infinite God can give all of Himself to each of His children. He does not distribute Himself that each may have a part, but to each one He gives all of Himself as fully as if there were no others.

A.W. Tozer

April 5 – Sunday

“In Word Or In Power”

for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 (NASB)

By observing the ways of men at play I have been able to understand better the ways of men at prayer. Most men, indeed, play at religion as they play at games, religion itself being of all games the one most universally played. The various sports have their rules and their balls and their players; the game excites interest, gives pleasure and consumes time, and when it is over the competing teams laugh and leave the field. It is common to see a player leave one team and join another and a few days later play against his old mates with as great zest as he formerly displayed when playing *for* them. The whole thing is arbitrary. It consists in solving artificial problems and attacking difficulties which have been deliberately created for the sake of the game. It has no moral roots and is not supposed to have. No one is the better for his self-imposed toil. It is all but a pleasant activity which changes nothing and settles nothing at last.

If the condition we describe were confined to the ballpark we might pass it over without further thought, but what are we to say when this same spirit enters the sanctuary and decides the attitude of men toward God and religion? For the Church has also its fields and its rules and its equipment for playing the game of pious words. It has its devotees, both laymen and professionals, who support the game with their money and encourage it with their presence, but who are no different in life or character from many who take in religion no interest at all.

I have not said that religion without power makes no changes in a man's life, only that it makes no fundamental difference. Water may change from liquid to vapor and still be fundamentally the same. So powerless religion may put a man through many surface changes and leave him exactly what he was before. Right there is where the snare lies. *The changes are in form only, they are not in kind.* Behind the activities of the non-religious man and the man who has received the gospel without power lie the very same motives. An unblessed ego lies at the bottom of both lives, the difference being that the religious man has learned better to disguise his vice. His sins are refined and less offensive than before he took up religion, but the man himself is not a better man in the sight of God. He may indeed be a worse one, for always God hates artificiality and pretense. Selfishness still throbs like an engine at the center of the man's life. True, he may learn to "redirect" his selfish impulses, but his woe is that self still lives unrebuked and even unsuspected within his deep heart. He is a victim of religion without power.

A.W. Tozer

April 6 – Monday

“In Word Or In Power” (Cont’d)

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature;

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB)

The truth received in power shifts the bases of life from Adam to Christ and a new set of motives goes to work within the soul. A new and different Spirit enters the personality and makes the believing man new in every department of his being. His interests shift from things external to things internal, from things on earth to things in heaven. He loses faith in the soundness of external values, he sees clearly the deceptiveness of outward appearances and his love for and confidence in the unseen and eternal world become stronger as his experience widens.

Wherever the Word comes without power its essential content is missed. For there is in divine truth an imperious note, there is about the gospel an urgency, a finality which will not be heard or felt except by the enabling of the Spirit. We must constantly keep in mind that the gospel is not good news only, but a judgment as well upon everyone that hears it. The message of the cross is good news indeed for the penitent, but to those who "obey not the gospel" it carries an overtone of warning. The Spirit's ministry to the impenitent world is to tell of sin and righteousness and judgment. For sinners who want to cease being willful sinners and become obedient children of God the gospel message is one of unqualified peace, but it is by its very nature also an arbiter of the future destinies of men.

I want to be fair to everyone and to find all the good I can in every man's religious beliefs, but the harmful effects of this faith-as-magic creed are greater than could be imagined by anyone who has not come face to face with them. Large assemblies today are being told fervently that the one essential qualification for heaven is to be an evil man, and the one sure bar to God's favor is to be a good one. The very word *righteousness* is spoken only in cold scorn, and the moral man is looked upon with pity. "A Christian," says these teachers, "is not morally better than a sinner, the only difference is that he has taken Jesus, and so he has a Savior." I trust it may not sound flippant to inquire, "A savior from what?" If not from sin and evil conduct and the old fallen life, then from what? And if the answer is, "From the consequences of past sins and from judgment to come," still we are not satisfied. Is justification from past offenses all that distinguishes a Christian from a sinner? Can a man become a believer in Christ and be no better than he was before? Does the gospel offer no more than a skillful advocate to get the guilty sinners off free at the day of judgment?

I think the truth of the matter is not too deep nor too difficult to discover. Self-righteousness is an effective bar to God's favor because it throws the sinner back upon his own merits and shuts him out from the imputed righteousness of Christ. And to be a sinner confessed and consciously lost is necessary to the act of receiving salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. This we joyously admit and constantly assert, but here is the truth which has been overlooked in our day, *A sinner cannot enter the kingdom of God*. The Bible passages which declare this are too many and too familiar to need repeating here, but the skeptical might look at Galatians 5:19-21 and Revelation 21:8.

A.W. Tozer

April 7 – Tuesday

“In Word Or In Power” (Cont’d)

How then can a man be saved? The penitent sinner meets Christ and after that saving encounter he is a sinner no more. The power of the gospel changes him, shifts the basis of his life from self to Christ, faces him about in a new direction and makes him a new creation. The moral state of the penitent when he comes to Christ does not affect the result, for the work of Christ sweeps away both his good and evil and turns him into another man. The returning sinner is not saved by some judicial transaction apart from a corresponding moral change. Salvation must include a judicial change of status, but what is overlooked by most teachers is that *it also includes an actual change in the life of the individual*. And by this we mean more than a surface change—we mean a transformation as deep as the roots of his human life. If it does not go that deep it does not go deep enough.

If we had not first suffered a serious decline in our expectations we should not have accepted this same technical view of faith. The churches (even the gospel churches) are worldly in spirit, morally anemic, on the defensive, imitating instead of initiating and in a wretched state generally because for two full generations they have been told that justification is no more than a "not guilty" verdict pronounced by the heavenly Father upon a sinner who can present the magic coin *faith* with the wondrous "open-ses-ame" engraved upon it. If it is not stated as bluntly as that, at least the message is so presented as to create such an impression. The whole business is the result of hearing the Word preached without power and receiving it in the same way.

For sin's human captives God never intends anything less than full deliverance. The Christian message rightly understood means this: The God who by the *word* of the gospel *proclaims* men free, by the *power* of the gospel *actually makes them free*. To accept less than this is to know the gospel in word only, without its power.

They to whom the Word comes in power know this deliverance, this inward migration of the soul from slavery to freedom, this release from moral position, a real crossing over, and they stand consciously on another soil under another sky and breathe another air. Their life motives are changed and their inward drives made new.

The way it works in experience is something like this: The believing man is overwhelmed suddenly by a powerful feeling that *only God matters*; soon this works itself out into his mental life and conditions all his judgments and all his values. Now he finds himself free from slavery to man's opinions. Soon he learns to love above all else the assurance that he is well pleasing to the Father in heaven.

The message of the gospel, then, is the message of a new creation in the midst of an old, the message of the invasion of our human nature by the eternal life of God and the displacing of the old by the new. The new life seizes upon the believing man's nature and sets about its benign conquest, a conquest which is not complete until the invading life has taken full possession and a new creation has emerged. And this is an act of God without human aid, for it is a moral miracle and a spiritual resurrection.

A.W. Tozer

April 8 – Wednesday

“The Mystery Of The Call”

“Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God... saints by calling...”

1 Corinthians 1:1-2 (NASB)

The little word *called* as used here by the apostle is like a door opening into another world, and when we enter we shall find ourselves in another world indeed. For the new world into which we pass is the world of God's sovereign will where the will of man cannot come, or if it comes, it is as a dependent and a servant, never as a lord.

Paul here explains his apostleship: It is by an effectual call, not by his own wish or will or determination, and this call is a divine thing, free, uninfluenced and altogether out of the hands of man. The *response* is from man, but the call, never. That is from God alone.

Yet in their pride men assert their will and claim ownership of the earth. Well, for a time it is true that this is man's world. God is admitted only by man's sufferance. He is treated as visiting royalty in a democratic country. Everyone takes His name upon his lips and (especially at certain seasons) He is feted and celebrated and hymned. But behind all this flattery men hold firmly to their right of self-determination. As long as man is allowed to play host he will honor God with his attention, but always He must remain a guest and never seek to be Lord. Man will have it understood that this is his world; he will make its laws and decide how it shall be run. God is permitted to decide nothing. Man bows to Him and as he bows, manages with difficulty to conceal the crown upon his own head.

How delightful are God's ways and the goings forth of His will! Not by might nor by power, neither by native ability nor by training are men made apostles, but by God's effectual calling. So it is with every office within the Church. Men are permitted to recognize the call and make public acknowledgment before the congregation, but never are they permitted themselves to make the choice. But where divine ways and the ways of men mix and mingle there is confusion and failure continually. Good men who are yet not called of God may, and often do, take upon them the sacred work of the ministry. Worse still is it when men who belong yet to the old world and have not been renewed by the miracle of regeneration try to carry on God's holy work. How sad is the sight and how tragic the consequences, for the ways of man and the ways of God are forever contrary one to the other.

Is this one of the reasons behind our present state of spiritual weakness? How can the flesh serve the Spirit? How can men from another tribe than Levi's minister before the altar? How vain to try to serve the new after the ways of the old. From this stems the rank growth of evil methods which characterizes the churches of our day. The bold and self-assertive push forward and the weak ones follow without asking for a proof of their right to lead. The divine call is ignored, and sterility and confusion result.

It is time for us to seek again the leadership of the Holy Ghost. Man's lordship has cost us too much. Man's intrusive will has introduced such a multiplicity of unscriptural ways and unscriptural activities as positively to threaten the life of the Church. These divert annually millions of dollars from the true work of God and waste Christian man-hours in such vast numbers as to be heartbreaking.

April 9 – Thursday

“The Mystery Of The Call” (Cont’d)

There is another and worse evil which springs from this basic failure to grasp the radical difference between the natures of two worlds. It is the habit of languidly "accepting" salvation as if it were a small matter and one wholly in our hands. Men are exhorted to think things over and "decide" for Christ, and in some places one day each year is set aside as "Decision Day," at which time people are expected to condescend to grant Christ the right to save them, a right which they have obviously refused Him up to that time. Christ is thus made to stand again before men's judgment seat; He is made to wait upon the pleasure of the individual, and after long and humble waiting is either turned away or patronizingly admitted. By a complete misunderstanding of the noble and true doctrine of the freedom of the human will, salvation is made to depend perilously upon the will of man instead of upon the will of God.

However deep the mystery, however many the paradoxes involved, it is still true that men become saints not at their own whim but by sovereign calling. Has not God by such words as these taken out of our hands the ultimate choice?

It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profiteth nothing.... No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.... No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.... Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.... It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me. (John 6:63, 44, 65; 17:2; Galatians 1:15-16)

God has made us in His likeness, and one mark of that likeness is our free will. We hear God say, "Whosoever will, let him come." We know by bitter experience the woe of an unsundered will and the blessedness or terror which may hang upon our human choice. But back of all this and preceding it is the sovereign right of God to call saints and determine human destinies. The master choice is His, the secondary choice is ours. Salvation is from our side a choice, from the divine side it is a seizing upon, an apprehending, a conquest of the Most High God. *Our "accepting" and "willing" are reactions rather than actions.* The right of determination must always remain with God.

A.W. Tozer

April 10 – Friday

(Good Friday)

“The Mystery Of The Call” (Cont’d)

While few would dare thus to voice their secret feelings, there are millions who have imbibed the notion that they hold in their hands the keys of heaven and hell. The whole content of modern evangelistic preaching contributes to this attitude. Man is made large and God small; Christ is placed in a position to excite pity rather than respect as He stands meekly, lantern in hand, outside a vine-covered door.

How deeply do men err who conceive of God as subject to our human will or as standing respectfully to wait upon our human pleasure. Though He in condescending love may seem to place Himself at our disposal, yet never for the least division of a moment does He abdicate His throne or void His right as Lord of man and nature. He is that Majesty on high. To Him all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all power therein: to Him cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory." He is the Fear of Isaac and the Dread of Jacob, and before Him prophet and patriarch and saint have knelt in breathless awe and adoration.

The gradual disappearance of the idea and feeling of majesty from the Church is a sign and a portent. The revolt of the modern mind has had a heavy price, how heavy is becoming more apparent as the years go by. Our God has now become our servant to wait on our will. "The Lord is my *shepherd*," we say, instead of "*The Lord* is my shepherd," and the difference is as wide as the world.

We need to have restored again the lost idea of sovereignty, not as a doctrine only but as the source of a solemn religious emotion. We need to have taken from our dying hand the shadow scepter with which we fancy we rule the world. We need to feel and know that we are but dust and ashes and that God is the disposer of the destinies of men. How ashamed we Christians should be that a pagan king should teach us to fear the Majesty on high. For it was the chastened Nebuchadnezzar who said:

I...lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What have you done? (Daniel 4:34-35)

"At the same time," added the humbled king, "my reason returned unto me" (4:36). This whole passage is apt to be overlooked, occurring as it does in one of the less popular books of the Bible, but is it not of great significance that *humility* and *reason* returned together? "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (4:37). The king's pride was to him a kind of insanity which drove him at last into the fields to dwell with the beasts. While he saw himself large and God small he was insane; sanity returned only as he began to see God as all and himself as nothing.

God grant that we may soon know again how small and how sinful we are.

April 11 – Saturday

“Victory Through Defeat”

He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."

Genesis 32:28 (NASB)

The experiences of men who walked with God in olden times agree to teach that the Lord cannot fully bless a man until He has first conquered him. The degree of blessing enjoyed by any man will correspond exactly with the completeness of God's victory over him. This is a badly neglected tenet of the Christian's creed, not understood by many in this self-assured age, but it is nevertheless of living importance to us all. This spiritual principle is well illustrated in the book of Genesis.

Jacob was the wily old heel-catcher whose very strength was to him a near-fatal weakness. For two-thirds of his total life he had carried in his nature something hard and unconquered. Not his glorious vision in the wilderness nor his long bitter discipline in Haran had broken his harmful strength. He stood at the ford of Jabbok at the time of the going down of the sun, a shrewd, intelligent old master of applied psychology learned the hard way. The picture he presented was not a pretty one. He was a vessel marred in the making. His hope lay in his own defeat. This he did not know at the setting of the day, but had learned before the rising of the sun. All night he resisted God until in kindness God touched the hollow of his thigh and won the victory over him. It was only after he had gone down to humiliating defeat that he began to feel the joy of release from his own evil strength, the delight of God's conquest over him. Then he cried aloud for the blessing and refused to let go till it came. It had been a long fight, but for God (and for reasons known only to Him) Jacob had been worth the effort. Now he became another man, the stubborn and self-willed rebel was turned into a meek and dignified friend of God. He had prevailed indeed, but through weakness, not through strength.

Only the conquered can know true blessedness. This is sound philosophy, based upon life, and necessary by the constitution of things. We need not accept this truth blindly; the reasons are discoverable, among them being these: We are created beings, and as such are derived, not self-existent. Not to us has it been given to have life in ourselves. For life we are wholly and continually dependent upon God, the Source and Fountain of life. Only by full dependence upon Him are the hidden potentialities of our natures realized. Apart from this we are but half-men, malformed and unbeautiful members of a noble race once made to wear the image of its Creator.

From the sixteenth century these words have come to us, and in our moments of quiet wisdom we feel and know them to be true. Why then do we put our trust in things that perish and so become the dupes of time and the fools of change? Who has poisoned our cup and turned us into rebels? That old serpent, the devil, he it was who first beguiled us into that rash declaration of independence, a declaration which, in view of the circumstances, is both deeply comic and profoundly tragic. For our enemy must laugh at the incredible vanity that would lead us to match strength with the Almighty. That is the cynical comedy of it all; the tragedy drops with every tear and sorrows beside every grave.

April 12 – Sunday

(Easter Sunday)

“Victory Through Defeat” (Cont’d)

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 6:14 (NASB)

A little acquaintance with our own hearts will force us to acknowledge that there is no hope within us, and the briefest glance around should show us that we need expect no help from without. Nature itself will teach us that (apart from God) we are but orphans of the creation, waifs of the wide spaces, caught helpless amid the whirl of forces too great to comprehend. Onward through this world roars an immense and sightless power leaving in its wake generations, cities, civilizations. The earth, our brief home, offers us at last only a grave. For us there is nothing safe, nothing kind. In the Lord there is mercy, but in the world there is none, for nature and life move on as if unaware of good or evil, of human sorrow or human pain.

We might well pray for God to invade and conquer us, for until He does, we remain in peril from a thousand foes. We bear within us the seeds of our own disintegration. Our moral imprudence puts us always in danger of accidental or reckless self-destruction. The strength of our flesh is an ever present danger to our souls. Deliverance can come to us only by the defeat of our old life. Safety and peace come only after we have been forced to our knees. God rescues us by breaking us, by shattering our strength and wiping out our resistance. Then He invades our natures with that ancient and eternal life which is from the beginning. So He conquers us and by that benign conquest saves us for Himself.

With this open secret awaiting easy discovery, why do we in almost all our busy activities work in another direction from this? Why do we build our churches upon human flesh? Why do we set such store by that which the Lord has long ago repudiated and despise those things which God holds in such high esteem? For we teach men not to die with Christ but to live in the strength of their dying manhood. We boast not in our weakness but in our strength. Values which Christ has declared to be false are brought back into evangelical favor and promoted as the very life and substance of the Christian way. How eagerly do we seek the approval of this or that man of worldly reputation. How shamefully do we exploit the converted celebrity. Anyone will do to take away the reproach of obscurity from our publicity-hungry leaders: famous athletes, congressmen, world travelers, rich industrialists; before such we bow with obsequious smiles and honor them in our public meetings and in the religious press. Thus we glorify men to enhance the standing of the Church of God, and the glory of the Prince of Life is made to hang upon the transient fame of a man who shall die.

A.W. Tozer

April 13 – Monday

“Victory Through Defeat” (Cont’d)

Paul saw these things in this light "By the cross," he said, "I am crucified unto the world" (see Galatians 6:14). The cross where Jesus died became also the cross where His apostle died. The loss, the rejection, the shame, belong both to Christ and to all who in very truth are His. The cross that saves them also slays them, and anything short of this is a pseudo-faith and not true faith at all. But what are we to say when the great majority of our evangelical leaders walk not as crucified men but as those who accept the world at its own value—rejecting only its grosser elements? How can we face Him who was crucified and slain when we see His followers accepted and praised? Yet they preach the cross and protest loudly that they are true believers. Are there then two crosses? And did Paul mean one thing and they another? I fear that it is so, that there are two crosses, the old cross and the new.

Remembering my own deep imperfections I would think and speak with charity of all who take upon them the worthy Name by which we Christians are called. But if I see aright, the cross of popular evangelicalism is not the cross of the New Testament. It is, rather, a new bright ornament upon the bosom of self-assured and carnal Christianity whose hands are indeed the hands of Abel, but whose voice is the voice of Cain. The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it. The old cross brought tears and blood; the new cross brings laughter. The flesh, smiling and confident, preaches and sings about the cross; before the cross it bows and toward the cross it points with carefully staged histrionics—but upon that cross it will not die, and the reproach of that cross it stubbornly refuses to bear.

I well know how many smooth arguments can be marshalled in support of the new cross. Does not the new cross win converts and make many followers and so carry the advantage of numerical success? Should we not adjust ourselves to the changing times? Have we not heard the new slogan "New days, new ways"? And who but someone very old and very conservative would insist upon death as the appointed way to life? And who today is interested in a gloomy mysticism that would sentence its flesh to a cross and recommend self-effacing humility as a virtue actually to be practiced by modern Christians? These are the arguments, along with many more flippant still, which are brought forward to give an appearance of wisdom to the hollow and meaningless cross of popular Christianity.

Before all who wish to follow Christ the way lies clear. It is the way of death unto life. Always life stands just beyond death and beckons the man who is sick of himself to come and know the life more abundant. But to reach the new life he must pass through the valley of the shadow of death, and I know that at the sound of those words many will turn back and follow Christ no more. But "to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

A.W. Tozer

April 14 – Tuesday

“Victory Through Defeat” (Cont’d)

It may be that there are some well disposed followers who draw back because they cannot accept the morbidity which the idea of the cross seems to connote. They are lovers of the sun and find it too hard to think of living always in the shadows. They do not wish to dwell with death nor to live forever in an atmosphere of dying. And their instinct is sound. The Church has made altogether too much of deathbed scenes and churchyards and funerals. The musty smell of churches, the slow and solemn step of the minister, the subdued quiet of the worshipers and the fact that many enter a church only to pay their last respects to the dead all add up to the notion that religion is something to be dreaded and, like a major operation, suffered only because we are caught in a crisis. All this is not the religion of the cross; it is rather a gross parody on it. Churchyard Christianity, though not ever remotely related to the doctrine of the cross, may yet be partly to blame for the appearance of the new and jolly cross of today. Men crave life, but when they are told that life comes by the cross they cannot understand how it can be, for they have learned to associate with the cross such typical images as memorial plaques, dim-lit aisles and ivy. So they reject the true message of the cross and with that message they reject the only hope of life known to the sons of man.

The truth is that God has never planned that His children should live forever stretched upon a cross. Christ Himself endured His cross for only six hours. When the cross had done its work life entered and took over. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9).

His joyful resurrection followed hard upon His joyless crucifixion. But the first had to come before the second. The life that halts short of the cross is but a fugitive and condemned thing, doomed at last to be lost beyond recovery. That life which goes to the cross and loses itself there to rise again with Christ is a divine and deathless treasure. Over it death hath no more dominion. Whoever refuses to bring his old life to the cross is but trying to cheat death, and no matter how hard we may struggle against it, he is nevertheless fated to lose his life at last. The man who takes his cross and follows Christ will soon find that his direction is *away* from the sepulcher. Death is behind him and a joyous and increasing life before. His days will be marked henceforth not by ecclesiastical gloom, the churchyard, the hollow tone, the black robe (which are all but the ceremonies of a dead church), but by "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

Real faith must always mean more than passive acceptance. It dare mean nothing less than surrender of our doomed Adam-life to a merciful end upon the cross. That is, we won God's just sentence against our evil flesh and admit His right to end its unlively career. We reckon ourselves to have been crucified with Christ and to have risen again to newness of life. Where such faith is, God will always work in line with our reckoning. Then begins the divine conquest of our lives. This God accomplishes by an effective seizing upon, a sharp but love-impelled invasion of our natures. When He has overpowered our resistance He binds us with the cords of love and draws us to Himself. There, "faint with His loveliness" we lie conquered and thank God again and again for the blessed conquest. There, with moral sanity restored, we lift up our eyes and bless the Most High God. Then we go forth in faith to apprehend that for which we were first apprehended of God.

April 15 – Wednesday

“The Forgotten One”

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

John 14:26 (NASB)

In neglecting or denying the deity of Christ the liberals have committed a tragic blunder, for it leaves them nothing but an imperfect Christ whose death was a mere martyrdom and whose resurrection is a myth. They who follow a merely human savior follow no savior at all, but an ideal only, and one furthermore that can do no more than mock their weaknesses and sins. If Mary's Son was not the Son of God in a sense no other man is, then there can be no more hope for the human race. If He who called Himself the Light of the World was only a flickering torch, then the darkness that enshrouds the earth is here to stay. So-called Christian leaders shrug this off, but their responsibility toward the souls of their flocks cannot be dismissed with a shrug. God will yet bring them to account for the injury they have done to the plain people who trusted them as spiritual guides.

But however culpable the act of the liberal in denying the Godhood of Christ, we who pride ourselves on our orthodoxy must not allow our indignation to blind us to our own shortcomings. Certainly this is no time for self-congratulations, for we too have in recent years committed a costly blunder in religion, a blunder paralleling closely that of the liberal. Our blunder (or shall we frankly say our sin?) has been to neglect the doctrine of the Spirit to a point where we virtually deny Him His place in the Godhead. This denial has not been by open doctrinal statement, for we have clung closely enough to the biblical position wherever our credal pronouncements are concerned. Our formal creed is sound; *the breakdown is in our working creed.*

This is not a trifling distinction. A doctrine has practical value only as far as it is prominent in our thoughts and makes a difference in our lives. By this test the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as held by evangelical Christians today has almost no practical value at all. In most Christian churches the Spirit is quite entirely overlooked. Whether He is present or absent makes no real difference to anyone. Brief reference is made to Him in the doxology and the benediction. Further than that He might as well not exist. So completely do we ignore Him that it is only by courtesy that we can be called Trinitarian. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity boldly declares the equality of the Three Persons and the right of the Holy Spirit to be worshiped and glorified. Anything less than this is something less than Trinitarianism.

Our neglect of the doctrine of the blessed Third Person has had and is having serious consequences. For doctrine is dynamite. It must have emphasis sufficiently sharp to detonate it before its power is released. Failing this it may lie quiescent in the back of our minds for the whole of our lives without effect. The doctrine of the Spirit is buried dynamite. Its power awaits discovery and use by the Church. The power of the Spirit will not be given to any mincing asset to pneumatological truth. The Holy Spirit cares not at all whether we write Him into our creeds in the back of our hymnals; He awaits our *emphasis*. When He gets into the thinking of the teachers He will get into the expectation of the hearers. When the Holy Spirit ceases to be incidental and again becomes fundamental, the power of the Spirit will be asserted once more among the people called Christians.

April 16 – Thursday

“The Forgotten One” (Cont’d)

The idea of the Spirit held by the average church member is so vague as to be nearly non-existent. When he thinks of the matter at all he is likely to try to imagine a nebulous substance like a wisp of invisible smoke which is said to be present in churches and to hover over good people when they are dying. Frankly he does not believe in any such thing, but he wants to believe something, and not feeling up to the task of examining the whole truth in the light of Scripture he compromises by holding belief in the Spirit as far out from the center of his life as possible, letting it make no difference in anything that touches him practically. This describes a surprisingly large number of earnest persons who are sincerely trying to be Christians.

Now, how should we think of the Spirit? A full answer might well run to a dozen volumes. We can at best only point to the "gracious unction from above" and hope that the reader's own desire may provide the necessary stimulus to urge him on to know the blessed Third Person for himself.

If I read aright the record of Christian experience through the years, those who most enjoyed the power of the Spirit have had the least to say about Him by way of attempted definition. The Bible saints who walked in the Spirit never tried to explain Him. In post-biblical times many who were filled and possessed by the Spirit were by the limitations of their literary gifts prevented from telling us much about Him. They had no gifts for self-analysis but lived from within in uncritical simplicity. To them the Spirit was One to be loved and fellowshiped the same as the Lord Jesus Himself. They would have been lost completely in any metaphysical discussion of the nature of the Spirit, but they had no trouble in claiming the power of the Spirit for holy living and fruitful service.

For all this we would not underestimate the importance of mere knowing about. Its value lies in its ability to rouse us to desire to know in actual experience. Thus knowledge by description may lead on to knowledge by acquaintance. *May* lead on, I say, but does not necessarily do so. Thus we dare not conclude that because we learn about the Spirit we for that reason actually know Him. Knowing Him comes only by a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit Himself.

How shall we think of the Spirit? A great deal can be learned about the Holy Spirit from the word *spirit* itself. Spirit means existence on a level above and beyond matter; it means life subsisting in another mode. Spirit is substance that has no weight, no dimension, no size nor extension in space. These qualities belong to matter and can have no application to spirit. Yet spirit has true being and is objectively real. If this is hard to visualize, just pass it up, for it is at best but a clumsy attempt of the mind to grasp that which is above the mind's powers. And no harm is done if in our thinking about the Spirit we are forced by the limitations of our intellects to clothe Him in the familiar habiliments of material form.

A.W. Tozer

April 17 – Friday

“The Forgotten One” (Cont’d)

How shall we think of the Spirit? The Bible and Christian theology agree to teach that He is a Person, endowed with every quality of personality, such as emotion, intellect and will. He knows, He wills, He loves; He feels affection, antipathy and compassion. He thinks, sees, hears and speaks and performs any act of which personality is capable.

One quality belonging to the Holy Spirit, of great interest and importance to every seeking heart, is penetrability. He can penetrate mind; He can penetrate another spirit, such as the human spirit. He can achieve complete penetration of and actual intermingling with the human spirit. He can invade the human heart and make room for Himself without expelling anything essentially human. The integrity of the human personality remains unimpaired. Only moral evil is forced to withdraw.

In some such manner does the Holy Spirit penetrate our spirits. In the whole experience we remain our very selves. There is no destruction of substance. Each remains a separate being as before; the difference is that now the Spirit penetrates and fills our personalities and we are *experientially one with God*.

How shall we think of the Holy Spirit? The Bible declares that He is God. Every quality belonging to Almighty God is freely attributed to Him. All that God is, the Spirit is declared to be. The Spirit of God is one with and equal to God just as the spirit of a man is equal to and one with the man. This is so fully taught in the Scriptures that we may without loss to the argument omit the formality of proof texts. The most casual reader will have discovered it for himself.

The historic Church when she formulated her "rule of faith" boldly wrote into her confession her belief in the Godhood of the Holy Ghost. The Apostles' Creed witnesses to faith in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Ghost and makes no difference between the three. The fathers who composed the Nicene Creed testified in a passage of great beauty to their faith in the deity of the Spirit:

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.

What we have in the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit is Deity present among us. He is not God's messenger only; *He is God*. He is God in contact with His creatures, doing in them and among them a saving and renewing work.

The Persons of the Godhead never work separately. We dare not think of them in such a way as to "divide the substance." Every act of God is done by all three Persons. God is never anywhere present in one Person without the other two. He cannot divide Himself. Where the Spirit is, there also is the Father and the Son. "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). For the accomplishment of some specific work one Person may for the time be more prominent than the others are, but never is He alone. God is altogether present wherever He is present at all.

A.W. Tozer

April 18 – Saturday

“The Forgotten One” (Cont’d)

To the reverent question, "What is God like?" a proper answer will always be, "He is like Christ." For Christ is God, and the Man who walked among men in Palestine was God acting like Himself in the familiar situation where His incarnation placed Him. To the question, "What is the Spirit like?" the answer must always be, "He is like Christ." For the Spirit is the essence of the Father and the Son. As they are, so is He. As we feel toward Christ and toward our Father who art in heaven, so should we feel toward the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life and light and love. In His uncreated nature He is a boundless sea of fire, flowing, moving ever, performing as He moves the eternal purposes of God. Toward nature He performs one sort of work, toward the world another and toward the Church still another. And every act of His accords with the will of the Triune God. Never does He act on impulse nor move after a quick or arbitrary decision. Since He is the Spirit of the Father He feels toward His people exactly as the Father feels, so there need be on our part no sense of strangeness in His presence. He will always act like Jesus, toward sinners in compassion, toward saints in warm affection, toward human suffering in tenderest pity and love.

It is time for us to repent, for our transgressions against the blessed Third Person have been many and much aggravated. We have bitterly mistreated Him in the house of His friends. We have crucified Him in His own temple as they crucified the Eternal Son on the hill above Jerusalem. And the nails we used were not of iron, but of finer and more precious stuff of which human life is made. Out of our hearts we took the refined metals of will and feeling and thought, and from them we fashioned the nails of suspicion and rebellion and neglect. By unworthy thoughts about Him and unfriendly attitudes toward Him we grieved and quenched Him days without end.

The truest and most acceptable repentance is to reverse the acts and attitudes of which we repent. A thousand years of remorse over a wrong act would not please God as much as a change of conduct and a reformed life. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

We can best repent our neglect by neglecting Him no more. Let us begin to think of Him as One to be worshiped and obeyed. Let us throw open every door and invite Him in. Let us surrender to Him every room in the temple of our hearts and insist that He enter and occupy as Lord and Master within His own dwelling. And let us remember that He is drawn to the sweet name of Jesus as bees are drawn to the fragrance of clover. Where Christ is honored the Spirit is sure to feel welcome; where Christ is glorified He will move about freely, pleased and at home.

A.W. Tozer

April 19 – Sunday

“The Illumination Of The Spirit”

John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.

John 3:27 (NASB)

Here in a brief sentence is the hope and despair of mankind. "A man can receive nothing." From the context we know that John is speaking of spiritual truth. He is telling us that there is a kind of truth which can never be grasped by the intellect, for the intellect exists for the apprehension of ideas, and this truth consists not in ideas but in life. Divine truth is of the nature of spirit and for that reason can be received only by spiritual revelation. "Except it be given him from heaven."

This was no new doctrine which John here set forth, but an advance rather upon truth already taught in the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah, for instance, has this passage.

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Perhaps this had meant to its readers no more than that God's thoughts, while similar to ours, were loftier, and His ways as high above ours as would befit the ways of One whose wisdom is infinite and whose power is without bounds. Now John says plainly enough that God's thoughts are not only greater than ours quantitatively by qualitatively wholly different from ours. God's thoughts belong to the world of spirit, man's to the world of intellect, and while spirit can embrace intellect, the human intellect can never comprehend spirit. Man's thoughts cannot cross over into God's. "How unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

God made man in His own image and placed within him an organ by means of which he could know spiritual things. When man sinned that organ died. "Dead in sin" is a description not of the body nor yet of the intellect, but of the organ of God-knowledge within the human soul. Now men are forced to depend upon another and inferior organ and one furthermore which is wholly inadequate to the purpose. I mean, of course, the mind as the seat of his powers of reason and understanding.

Man by reason cannot know God; he can only *know about* God. Through the light of reason certain important facts about God may be discovered.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20)

A.W. Tozer

April 20 – Monday

“The Illumination Of The Spirit” (Cont’d)

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NASB)

Through the light of nature man's moral reason may be enlightened, but the deeper mysteries of God remain hidden to him until he has received illumination from above.

When the Spirit illuminates the heart, then a part of the man sees which never saw before; a part of him knows which never knew before, and that with a kind of knowing which the most acute thinker cannot imitate. He knows now in a deep and authoritative way, and what he knows needs no reasoned proof. His experience of knowing is above reason, immediate, perfectly convincing and inwardly satisfying.

"A man can receive nothing." That is the burden of the Bible. Whatever men may think of human reason God takes a low view of it. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Corinthians 1:20). Man's reason is a fine instrument and useful within its field. It is a gift of God and God does not hesitate to appeal to it, as when He cries to Israel, "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18). The inability of human reason as an organ of divine knowledge arises not from its own weakness but from its unfittedness for the task by its own nature. It was not given as an organ by which to know God.

The doctrine of the inability of the human mind and the need for divine illumination is so fully developed in the New Testament that it is nothing short of astonishing that we should have gone so far astray from the whole thing. Fundamentalism has stood aloof from the liberal in self-conscious superiority and has on its own part fallen into error, the error of textualism, which is simply orthodoxy without the Holy Ghost. Everywhere among conservatives we find persons who are Bible-taught but not Spirit-taught. They conceive truth to be something which they can grasp with the mind. If a man holds to the fundamentals of the Christian faith he is thought to possess divine truth. But it does not follow. There is no truth apart from the Spirit. The most brilliant intellect may be imbecilic when confronted with the mysteries of God. For a man to understand revealed truth requires an act of God equal to the original act which inspired the text.

A.W. Tozer

April 21 – Tuesday

“The Illumination Of The Spirit” (Cont’d)

"Except it be given him from heaven." Here is the other side of the truth; here is hope for all, for these words do certainly mean that there is such a thing as a gift of knowing, a gift that comes from heaven. Christ taught His disciples to expect the coming of the Spirit of Truth who would teach them all things. He explained Peter's knowledge of His Saviorhood as being a direct revelation from the Father in heaven. And in one of His prayers He said:

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. (Matthew 11:25)

By "wise and prudent" our Lord meant not Greek philosophers but Jewish Bible students and teachers of the Law.

This basic idea, the inability of human reason as an instrument of God-knowledge, was fully developed in the epistles of Paul. The apostle frankly rules out every natural faculty as instruments for discovering divine truth and throws us back helpless upon the inworking Spirit.

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (1 Corinthians 2:9-12)

The passage just quoted is taken from Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians and is not lifted out of context nor placed in a setting which would tend to distort its meaning. Indeed it expresses the very essence of Paul's spiritual philosophy and fully accords with the rest of the epistle, and I might add, with the rest of Paul's writings as we have them preserved in the New Testament. That type of theological rationalism which is so popular today would have been wholly foreign to the mind of the great apostle. He had no faith in man's ability to comprehend truth apart from the direct illumination of the Holy Ghost.

I have just now used the word *rationalism* and I must either retract it or justify its use in association with orthodoxy. The latter I think I shall have no trouble doing. For the textualism of our times is based upon the same premise as the old-line rationalism, that is, the belief that the human mind is the supreme authority in the judgment of truth. Or otherwise stated, it is *confidence in the ability of the human mind to do that which the Bible declares it was never created to do and consequently is wholly incapable of doing*. Philosophical rationalism is honest enough to reject the Bible flatly. Theological rationalism rejects it while pretending to accept it and in so doing puts out its own eyes.

A.W. Tozer

April 22 – Wednesday

“The Illumination Of The Spirit” (Cont’d)

The inward kernel of truth has the same configuration as the outward shell. The mind can grasp the shell but only the Spirit of God can lay hold of the internal essence. Our great error has been that we have trusted to the shell and have believed we were sound in faith because we were able to explain the external shape of truth as found in the letter of the Word.

From this mortal error fundamentalism is slowly dying. We have forgotten that the essence of spiritual truth cannot come to the one who knows the external shell of truth unless there is first a miraculous operation of the Spirit within the heart. Those overtones of religious delight which accompany truth when the Spirit illuminates it are all but missing from the Church today. Those transporting glimpses of the celestial country are few and dim; the fragrance of "Sharon's dewy Rose" is hardly discernible. Consequently we have been forced to look elsewhere for our delights and we have found them in the dubious artistry of converted opera singers or the tinkling melodies of odd and curious musical arrangements. We have tried to secure spiritual pleasures by working upon fleshly emotions and whipping up synthetic feeling by means wholly carnal. And the total effect has been evil.

There is an inward sweetness and deliciousness in divine truth, which no sensual mind can taste or relish: this is that "natural" man that savors not the things of God.... Divinity is not so much perceived by a subtle wit as by a purified sense.

Twelve hundred years before these words were uttered Athanasius had written a profound treatise called, "The Incarnation of the Word of God." In this treatise he boldly attacked the difficult problems inherent in the doctrine of the incarnation. The whole thing is a remarkable demonstration of pure reason engaged with divine revelation. He makes a great case for the deity of Christ and, for all who believe the Bible, settles the matter for all time. Yet so little does he trust the human mind to comprehend divine mysteries that he closed his great work with a strong warning against a mere intellectual understanding of spiritual truth. His words should be printed in large type and tacked on the desk of every pastor and theological student in the world:

But for the searching of the Scriptures and true knowledge of them, an honorable life is needed, and a pure soul, and that virtue which is according to Christ; so that the intellect guiding its path by it may be able to attain what it desires, and to comprehend it, in so far as it is accessible to human nature to learn concerning the Word of God. For without a pure mind and a modeling of the life after the saints, a man could not possibly comprehend the words of the saints.... He that would comprehend the mind of those who speak of God needs begin by washing and cleansing his soul.

Conservative Christians in this day are stumbling over this truth. We need to re-examine the whole thing. We need to learn that truth consists not in correct doctrine, but in correct doctrine *plus the inward enlightenment of the Holy Spirit*. We must declare again the mystery of wisdom from above. A re-preachment of this vital truth could result in a fresh breath from God upon a stale and suffocating orthodoxy.

April 23 – Thursday

“The Spirit As Power”

“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;...”

Acts 1:8 (NASB)

Some good Christians have misread this text and have assumed that Christ told His disciples that they were to receive the Holy Spirit *and* power, the power to come after the coming of the Spirit. A superficial reading of the King James text might conceivably lead to the conclusion, but the truth is that Christ taught not the coming of the Holy Spirit as power; the power and the Spirit are the same.

Our mother tongue is a beautiful and facile instrument, but it can also be a tricky and misleading one, and for this reason it must be used with care if we would avoid giving and receiving wrong impressions by its means. Especially is this true when we are speaking of God, for God being wholly unlike anything or anybody in His universe, our very thoughts of Him as well as our words are in constant danger of going astray. One example is found in the words, "The power of God." The danger is that we think of "power" as something belonging to God as muscular energy belongs to a man, as something which He *has* and which might be separated from Him and still have existence in itself. We must remember that the "attributes" of God are not component parts of the blessed Godhead nor elements out of which He is composed. A god who could be *composed* would not be God at all but the work of something or someone greater than he, great enough to compose him. We would then have a synthetic god made out of the pieces we call attributes, and the true God would be another being altogether, One indeed who is above all thought and all conceiving.

The Bible and Christian theology teach that God is an indivisible unity, being what He is in undivided oneness, from whom nothing can be taken and to whom nothing can be added. Mercy, for instance, immutability, eternity—these are but names which we have given to something which God has declared to be true of Himself. All the "of God" expressions in the Bible must be understood to mean not what God has but *what God is* in His undivided and indivisible unity. Even the word "nature" when applied to God should be understood as an accommodation to our human way of looking at things and not as an accurate description of anything true of the mysterious Godhead. God has said, "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14), and we can only repeat in reverence, "O God, You are."

Our Lord before His ascension said to His disciples, "Wait in the city of Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). That word *until* is a time-word; it indicates a point in relation to which everything is either before or after. So the experience of those disciples could be stated like this: Up to that point they *had not* received the power; at that point they *did* receive the power; after that point they *had* received the power. Such is the plain historic fact. Power came upon the Church, such power as had never been released into human nature before (with the lone exception of that mighty anointing which came upon Christ at the waters of Jordan). That power, still active in the Church, has enabled her to exist for nearly twenty centuries, even though for all of that time she has remained a highly unpopular minority group among the nations of mankind and has always been surrounded by enemies who would gladly have ended her existence if they could have done so.

April 24 – Friday

“The Spirit As Power” (Cont’d)

"You shall receive power." By those words our Lord raised the expectation of His disciples and taught them to look forward to the coming of a supernatural potency into their natures from a source outside of themselves. It was to be something previously unknown to them, but suddenly to come upon them from another world. It was to be nothing less than God Himself entering into them with the purpose of ultimately reproducing His own likeness within them.

Here is the dividing line that separates Christianity from all occultism and from every kind of oriental cult, ancient or modern. These all are built around the same ideas, varying only in minor details, each with its own peculiar set of phrases and apparently vying with each other in vagueness and obscurity. They each advise, "Get in tune with the infinite," or "Wake the giant within you," or "Tune in to your hidden potential" or "Learn to think creatively." All this may have some fleeting value as a psychological shot in the arm, but its results are not permanent because at its best it builds its hopes upon the fallen nature of man and knows no invasion from above. And whatever may be said in its favor, *it most certainly is not Christianity.*

Christianity takes for granted the absence of any self-help and offers a power which is nothing less than the power of God. This power is to come upon powerless men as a gentle but resist-less invasion from another world, bringing a moral potency infinitely beyond anything that might be stirred up from within. This power is sufficient; no additional help is needed, no auxiliary source of spiritual energy, for it is the Holy Spirit of God come where the weakness lay to supply power and grace to meet the moral need.

Set over against such a mighty provision as this ethical Christianity (if I may be allowed the term) is seen to be no Christianity at all. An infantile copying of Christ's "ideals," a pitiable effort to carry out the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount! All this is but religious child's play and is not the faith of Christ and the New Testament.

"You shall receive power." This was and is a unique afflatus, an enduement of supernatural energy affecting every department of the believer's life and remaining with him forever. It is not physical power nor even mental power though it may touch everything both mental and physical in its benign outworking. It is, too, another kind of power than that seen in nature, in the lunar attraction that creates the tides or the angry flash that splits the great oak during a storm. This power from God operates on another level and affects another department of His wide creation. It is spiritual power. It is the kind of power that God is. It is the ability to achieve spiritual and moral ends. Its long-range result is to produce Godlike character in men and women who were once wholly evil by nature and by choice.

A.W. Tozer

April 25 – Saturday

“The Spirit As Power” (Cont’d)

Now how does this power operate? At its purest it is an unmediated force directly applied by the Spirit of God to the spirit of man. The wrestler achieves his ends by the pressure of his physical body upon the body of his opponent; the teacher by the pressure of ideas upon the mind of the student; the moralist by the pressure of duty upon the conscience of the disciple. So the Holy Spirit performs His blessed work by direct contact with the human spirit.

It would be less than accurate to say that the power of God is always experienced in a direct and unmediated form, for when He so wills the Spirit may use other means as Christ used spittle to heal a blind man. But always the power is above and beyond the means. While the Spirit may use appropriate means to bless a believing man, He never need do so, for they are at best but temporary concessions made to our ignorance and unbelief. Where adequate power is present almost any means will suffice, but where the power is absent not all the means in the world can secure the desired end. The Spirit of God may use a song, a sermon, a good deed, a text or the mystery and majesty of nature, but always the final work will be done by the pressure of the inliving Spirit upon the human heart.

In the light of this it will be seen how empty and meaningless is the average church service today. All the means are in evidence; the one ominous weakness is the absence of the Spirit's power. The form of godliness is there, and often the form is perfected till it is an aesthetic triumph. Music and poetry, art and oratory, symbolic vesture and solemn tones combine to charm the mind of the worshiper, but too often the supernatural afflatus is not there. The power from on high is neither known nor desired by pastor or people. This is nothing less than tragic, and all the more so because it falls within the field of religion where the eternal destinies of men are involved.

To the absence of the Spirit may be traced that vague sense of unreality which almost everywhere invests religion in our times. In the average church service the most real thing is the shadowy unreality of everything. The worshiper sits in a state of suspended thought; a kind of dreamy numbness creeps upon him; he hears words but they do not register; he cannot relate them to anything on his own life-level. He is conscious of having entered a kind of half-world; his mind surrenders itself to a more or less pleasant mood which passes with the benediction, leaving no trace behind. It does not affect anything in his everyday life. He is aware of no power, no presence, no spiritual reality. There is simply nothing in his experience corresponding to the things which he heard from the pulpit or sang in the hymns.

One meaning of the word "power" is "ability to do." There precisely is the wonder of the Spirit's work in the Church and in the hearts of Christians, His sure ability to make spiritual things real to the soul. This power can go straight to its object with piercing directness; it can diffuse itself through the mind like an infinitely fine volatile essence securing ends above and beyond the limits of the intellect.

A.W. Tozer

April 26 – Sunday

“The Spirit As Power” (Cont’d)

Reality is its subject matter, reality in heaven and upon earth. It does not create objects which are not there but reveals objects already present and hidden from the soul. In actual human experience this is likely to be first felt in a heightened sense of the presence of Christ. He is felt to be a real Person and to be intimately, ravishingly near. Then all other spiritual objects begin to stand out clearly before the mind. Grace, forgiveness, cleansing take on a form of almost bodily clearness. Prayer loses its unmeaning quality and becomes a sweet conversation with Someone actually there. Love for God and for the children of God takes possession of the soul. We feel ourselves near to heaven and it is now the earth and the world that begin to seem un-real. We know them now for what they are, realities indeed, but like stage scenery here for one brief hour and soon to pass away. The world to come takes on a hard outline before our minds and begins to invite our interest and our devotion. Then the whole life changes to suit the new reality and the change is permanent. Slight fluctuations there may be like the rise and dip of the line on a graph, but the established direction is upward and the ground taken is held.

This is not all, but it will give a fair idea of what is meant when the New Testament speaks of *power*, and perhaps by contrast we may learn how little of the power we enjoy.

I think there can be no doubt that the need above all other needs in the Church of God at this moment is the power of the Holy Spirit. More education, better organization, finer equipment, more advanced methods—all are unavailing. It is like bringing a better respirator after the patient is dead. Good as these are they can never give life. "It is the spirit that quickeneth" (John 6:63). Good as they are they can never bring power. "Power belongeth unto God" (Psalm 62:11). Protestantism is on the wrong road when it tries to win merely by means of a "united front." It is not organizational unity we need most; the great need is power. The headstones in the cemetery present a united front, but they stand mute and helpless while the world passes by.

I suppose my suggestion will not receive much serious attention, but I should like to suggest that we Bible-believing Christians announce a moratorium on religious activity and set our house in order preparatory to the coming of an *afflatus* from above. So carnal is the body of Christians which composes the conservative wing of the Church, so shockingly irreverent are our public services in some quarters, so degraded are our religious tastes in still others that the need for power could scarcely have been greater at any time in history. I believe we should profit immensely were we to declare a period of silence and self-examination during which each one of us searched his own heart and sought to meet every condition for a real baptism of power from on high.

We may be sure of one thing, that for our deep trouble there is no cure apart from a visitation, yes, an *invasion* of power from above. Only the Spirit Himself can show us what is wrong with us and only the Spirit can prescribe the cure. Only the Spirit can save us from the numbing unreality of Spiritless Christianity. Only the Spirit can show us the Father and the Son. Only the inworking of the Spirit's power can discover to us the solemn majesty and the heart ravishing mystery of the Triune God.

April 27 – Monday

“The Holy Spirit As Fire”

And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

Acts 2:3 (NASB)

Christian theology teaches that God in His essential nature is both inscrutable and ineffable. This by simple definition means that He is incapable of being searched into or understood and that He cannot tell forth or utter what He is. This inability lies not in God but in the limitations of our creaturehood. "Why do you ask thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" (Judges 13:18). Only God knows God in any final meaning of the word "know." "Even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11).

To the average Christian today this may sound strange, if not downright confusing, for the temper of religious thinking in our times is definitely not theological. We may live out a full lifetime and die without once having our minds challenged by the sweet mystery of the Godhead if we depend upon the churches to do the challenging. They are altogether too busy playing with shadows and getting "adjusted" to one thing and another to spend much time thinking about God. It might be well, therefore, to consider for a moment longer the divine inscrutability.

God in His essential being is unique in the only sense that word will bear. That is, there is nothing conceived by the mind because He is "altogether other" than anything with which we have had experience before. The mind has no material with which to start. No man has ever entertained a thought which can be said to describe God in any but the vaguest and most imperfect sense. Where God is known at all it must be otherwise than by our creature-reason.

Novatian, in a famous treatise on the Trinity written sometime about the middle of the third century, says:

"In all our meditations upon the qualities of the attributes and content of God, we pass beyond our powers of fit conception, nor can human eloquence put forth a power commensurate with His greatness. At the contemplation and utterance of His majesty, all eloquence is rightly dumb, all mental effort is feeble. For God is greater than mind itself. His greatness cannot be conceived. Nay, if we could conceive of His greatness, He would be less than the human mind which could form the conception. He is greater than all language, and no statement can express Him. Indeed, if any statement could express Him, He would be less than human speech, which could by such statement comprehend and gather up all that He is. Up to a certain point, of course, we can have experience of Him, without language, but no man can express in words all that He is in Himself. Suppose, for instance, one speaks of Him as light; this is an account of part of His creation, not of Himself. It does not express what He is. Or suppose one speaks of Him as power. This too sets forth in words His attribute of might, rather than His being. Or suppose one speaks of Him as majesty. Once again, we have a declaration of the honor which is His own, rather than of Him in Himself...."

A.W. Tozer

April 28 – Tuesday

“The Holy Spirit As Fire” (Cont’d)

To sum up the matter in a single sentence, every possible statement that can be made about God expresses some possession or virtue of God, rather than God Himself. What words or thoughts are worthy Him, who is above all language and all thought? The conception of God as He is can only be grasped in one way, and even that is impossible for us, beyond our grasp and understanding; by thinking of Him as a Being whose attributes and greatness are beyond our powers of understanding, or even of thought.

Just because God cannot tell us *what He is* He very often tells us *what He is like*. By these "like" figures He leads our faltering minds as close as they can come to that "light which no man can approach unto" (1 Timothy 6:16). Through the more cumbersome medium of the intellect the soul is prepared for the moment when it can, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, know God as He is in Himself. God has used a number of these similitudes to hint at His incomprehensible being, and judging from the Scriptures one would gather that *His favorite similitude is fire*. In one place the Spirit speaks expressly, "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). This accords with His revelation of Himself as recorded throughout the Bible. As a fire He spoke to Moses from the burning bush; in the fire He dwelt above the camp of Israel through all the wilderness journey; as fire He dwelt between the wings of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies; to Ezekiel He revealed Himself as a strange brightness of "a fire infolding itself" (Ezek. 1:4).

I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the **LORD**. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke. (1:27-28)

With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the same imagery was continued. "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (Acts 2:3). That which came upon the disciples in that upper room was nothing less than God Himself. To their mortal eyes He appeared as fire, and may we not safely conclude that those Scripture-taught believers knew at once what it meant? The God who had appeared to them as fire throughout all their long history was now dwelling in them as fire. He had moved from without to the interior of their lives. The Shekinah that had once blazed over the mercy seat now blazed on their foreheads as an external emblem of the fire that had invaded their natures. This was Deity giving Himself to ransomed men. The flame was the seal of a new union. They were now men and women of the Fire.

A.W. Tozer

April 29 – Wednesday

“The Holy Spirit As Fire” (Cont’d)

Here is the whole final message of the New Testament: Through the atonement in Jesus' blood sinful men may now become one with God. Deity indwelling men! That is Christianity in its fullest effectuation, and even those greater glories of the world to come will be in essence but a greater and more perfect experience of the soul's union with God.

Deity indwelling men! That, I say, is Christianity, and no man has experienced rightly the power of Christian belief until he has known this for himself as a living reality. Everything else is preliminary to this. Incarnation, atonement, justification, regeneration—what are these but acts of God preparatory to the work of invading and the act of indwelling the redeemed human soul? Man, who moved out of the heart of God by sin, now moves back into the heart of God by redemption. God, who moved out of the heart of man because of sin, now enters again His ancient dwelling to drive out His enemies and once more make the place of His feet glorious.

That visible fire on the day of Pentecost had for the Church a deep and tender significance, for it told to all ages that they upon whose heads it sat were men and women apart; they were "creatures out of the fire" (see Ezekiel 1:13) as surely as were they whom Ezekiel in his vision saw by the river Chebar. The mark of the fire was the sign of divinity; they who received it were forever a peculiar people, sons and daughters of the Flame.

One of the most telling blows which the enemy ever struck at the life of the Church was to create in her a fear of the Holy Spirit. No one who mingles with Christians in these times will deny that such a fear exists. Few there are who without restraint will open their whole heart to the blessed Comforter. He has been and is so widely misunderstood that the very mention of His name in some circles is enough to frighten many people into resistance. The source of this unreasoning fear may easily be traced, but it would be fruitless labor to do it here. Sufficient to say that the fear is groundless. Perhaps we may help to destroy its power over us if we examine that fire which is the symbol of the Spirit's Person and presence.

A.W. Tozer