

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ACCEPT CHRIST?

Part 2

by A. W. Tozer

PLEASE NOTE: This sermon has been edited as little as possible so as to fully retain the flavor and spirit of the spoken word.

... and denies me I'll deny him before my Father which art in Heaven and let him take up his cross and follow me and where I am there my servant will be and my Father will love him, said Jesus.

Well, now to accept Christ then, is to accept his friends as your friends, and when I come to that part I get happy about it because the friends of Jesus Christ are the loveliest people in all the wide world. I am not

ashamed of the friends of my Savior. Now, I know that there are some Christians who are a little tiny wee bit cracked on top - I know that. I know there are odd-balls -- some of them -- and I know they do odd things; I know there are some of them that put badges on, you know, as big as a milk-cup "Jesus Only" on their lapels and go down the street and they do odd things. But dear, bless them! they mean alright! And sometimes they'll win people to the Lord when some of us dignified people can't win them.

You've heard of that fellow: he was a great preacher and a lawyer friend of his who - he tried to get him to church, often, but he wouldn't come. And one time he did come. Now there was in that same church a man who hadn't too much 'up here' but he had an awful lot 'down here.' And when he saw this great lawyer come in, this preacher was worried to death because this poor fellow with a whole lot in his heart but not too much in his head, he was in the habit of going around and asking people if they were saved. So he just prayed silently that the Lord would help him to preach a great sermon and He would keep that fellow away from that lawyer because he knew the lawyer was a cultured, dignified gentleman who would probably walk out in a huff if anyone approached him. So when he gave the invitation after the sermon, sure enough, to his horror and dismay, this poor half-witted fellow went around to the lawyer, took a hold of his lapel and the lawyer went out. Well, he said, I knew it would happen.

So, about midnight that night the phone rang and the lawyer was on the other end of the phone and he said, "Reverend, come over here, I want to see you." "Oh, I want to apologize to you," he said, "I feel so bad about that." He said, "About what?" He said, "About that poor fellow who went and bothered you there in the service, you know." He said, "Come over, please, I want to see you."

So he went over. And he said, "I'm in distress; my soul is ready to perish! I've got to be saved; tell me how to be saved!" It didn't take very long for the preacher to lead the lawyer to Jesus Christ. So when he had come into the light of the new birth and was forgiven and regenerated, the preacher ventured to ask him, "Now, just what was it in my sermon tonight that led you to the Lord?"

He said, "Reverend, nothing in your sermon." He said, "You remember that odd fellow who came around and button-holed me?"

He said, "Yes, I want to apologize."

"Don't apologize," he said, "that's why I got saved! You know what he said to me? He said to me, 'Do you want to go to Heaven?' I said, 'No!' He said, 'Well; go to hell, then!' and walked away!"

He said, "I was mad, and I walked out of the church but as I went down the street it came to me Heaven or Hell, Heaven or Hell, Heaven or Hell," and he said, "if it isn't Heaven, it's Hell! And that's why I sent for you!"

So, I tell you brethren, I love God's people and I accept His friends as my friends! I don't care what color they are; if they're holy people and His friends, they're my friends and I'm not ashamed of them! And I'm not ashamed of my camp-meeting friends. I preach in colleges and seminaries and among the big-shots and I've preached to bishops and all the rest but I love God's simple, plain people; people without much education and maybe they don't have all the culture and they think Beethoven played right-guard for Yale, and all that kind of thing but they are God's sheep and if they're God's sheep, they're mine and if they're the Lord's children, they're my brethren! Accept His friends as my friends.

Then, to believe on Jesus Christ savingly is to accept His enemies as my enemies. Now that's another thing. The enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ will never get an apology from me, brother! I have prayed, "Oh, Lord, don't let anybody love me that doesn't love Thee! Don't let me be popular at Your expense! Don't let churches that wouldn't have You, invite me. Don't let people come to me that wouldn't come to Thee. I want Thy enemies to be my enemies and Thine friends to be my friends!" I love the friends and I'm not afraid of the enemies.

What was it that Godridge wrote? "Has Thou a foe before whose face I fear Thy cause to plead? Has Thou a lamb in all Thy flock I would distain to feed?" And the answer is, No! Not an enemy before whose face I wouldn't plead the cause of Christ! Not a lamb that I wouldn't feed no

matter how poor he might be! So, I accept Christ's enemies as my enemies and I accept His ways as my ways; I take His ways. I don't come to Him and get a badge or a ticket telling me that I'm saved and then go my way. I come to Him and then I go His way! "Follow me," he said. That means you go His way; the way of obedience, the way of prayer, the way of service, the way of consecration, the way of love, the way of mercy, the way of holiness - that's His way.

And then I accept His rejection as my rejection; that is to accept Christ: if they reject Him, then I'll reject them. I've already covered that, I think, in that on the enemies, so I'll skip it, and point out that I accept His cross as my cross, or at least, I accept a cross as my cross. Jesus Christ says, "Take up your cross."

What is the cross of Christ? Well, somebody gets a toothache and says, "I'll bear my cross." No you won't, brother! That's just a toothache; the devil might get a toothache, if he had teeth - I don't know whether he does, he has a tail, I suppose - but I don't know if he has teeth. But those things that come to you; your baby dies or your cow gets sick or your corn crop doesn't work, it doesn't come up, or the drought hits your field. You say, "That's my cross." No!

A cross is something you take up voluntarily and you didn't take up that voluntarily! That's just one of those things that happens to the good and

the bad alike. If it gets to be 104 degrees as it did here this week, that isn't a cross! Every sinner down the highway was rubbing his forehead along with you, so that is no cross! You're not going to get a reward for wiping perspiration in 104 temperature! That's no cross, that's simply - that happened that way. Every robin is drooping his wings here! So a cross is something you take up deliberately. It is obedience to Christ. It is doing what the Lord commands you to do and then taking the consequences and if the consequences mean a cross, then take your cross. Jesus Christ didn't choose the cross, that is, He didn't choose it in the sense that He wanted to die on a cross. But he wanted to save you and He wanted to obey God and the cross was the only way out so He went to the cross because He was obedient to His Father and because He loved you. And so a cross is obedience to God and love for mankind and whatever results that's painful and harsh and hard and bitter - even death itself, that's the cross! So I take the cross as He took His cross.

And then, I accept His life as my life. Oh, thank God for that! You don't stay on a cross forever. He took six hours to die but He's alive - how long? -- forevermore! He came back from the dead and that was to the consternation of the devil and to the confusion of the Pharisees and to the distress of the Roman Empire. He was dead but He liveth again! And the Christian that is truly a Christian will die with Him but will come back from the dead also; I mean, die right now in this life, die to your ambitions and die to your pride and die to all of those things that the

world glories in; you die to them! The world glories and you die to them. Brother Brown said the other night no man has a right to claim anything until he dies to it and he's perfectly right - I agree with him a hundred percent.

And then it's to accept His future as your future. Oh, wonder of wonders! he came back from the dead and He went to the right hand of the Father; one of these days He'll be crowned with all the crowns there are: the crown that God will put on His head and then the crown that His own people will put on His head. They'll come from the north and the south and the east and the west and they'll cast their crowns before Him. He is Lord of lords and King of kings and they'll cry, "Oh, Christ of God, take unto Thee Thy power and reign!" And you and I are a part of that, if we're followers of Christ. We can afford to put up with a little inconvenience now because all the glory lies ahead!

Let me say to you that that man who tries to take the inconvenience out of your life and smooth over the cross and paint it up and make it acceptable socially - that man is your enemy! I don't care if he's a reverend or a D.D. -- he's your enemy! That teacher, whoever he is, that tells you that Christianity is a whooping good time and great fun, he's lying in your teeth and you ought not to accept it! Christianity has its glory - joy unspeakable and full of glory. But it also has its cross and Jesus Christ bore the cross for the joy that was set before Him.

But we carnal children, we lamblings, we saintlets, we little pocket editions of a Christian, we don't want to bear any cross or have any inconvenience. We don't want to be kept home from the lake. I don't know what you do here but my dear friends up in Canada - I've said nice things about them and I'll say this about them now and if this gets up to Vancouver or somewhere, amen! It's alright: I love Canadians - but I don't excuse the fact that when summertime comes they leave and go to the lake and desert the church. I don't know whether you do it here but any Christian listening to me that habitually takes his family away from the church of God over the weekend is no true Christian at all! He is a make-believe and he is a hypocrite and I don't care if he's on your board and chairman of your board of elders and a deacon, he's still not serving God nor carrying a cross!

Now a vacation is one thing and I suppose everybody ought to have a vacation. Sometimes I wonder what they take a vacation from - they loaf all the time anyhow and then take a vacation from it. But you probably need some for health; some of you men love to go out and play golf or something, do it; it's alright. But as soon as golf becomes your lord and boss and you talk about it all the time instead of talking about the Lord and foreign missions, it's got you, brother! You're a golfaholic anonymous! I've never heard of that before and I hope I never hear of it again! But if your boat with a putt-putt on the back takes you away from the house of the God on Sunday, it's a putt-putt on your way to loss and

chagrin in the day of Christ! No, no. He calls you to take His hard way that He may lay His crown gently upon your brow in the day of His triumph.

Now that's what it means to receive Christ, to accept Christ, to believe on Christ and it means all that and it doesn't mean any less! And any fiddling around or any effort anybody makes to pat your back and smooth you down and get you in; it's just too bad!

Brother Robertson told about seeing a mess of chickens and he said he saw them peck their way out of the shell and oh! what a terrible time they had! They struggled and fell over and tumbled around and he said he pitied them from the bottom of his heart. He said, "The next eggs that I see hatching; I'm going to help them out." So he said the next time he saw a hen hatching he pushed her off and picked them all out of the shell and said they all died! And that is what's the matter with so many of our Christians: we have picked them out of the shell! In order to get them at all, we have rushed ahead and picked them out of the shell and the result is they die all around us and we say they backslid! They never backslid because they never were regenerated to start with!

To accept Him is to accept Him with a revolutionary acceptance. It's to accept Him completely - all of Him to all of me. It's to accept Him exclusively with not any other hope but Him; He alone is my hope. It's to

accept His friends as my friends, His enemies as my enemies, His ways as my ways, His rejection as my rejection, the cross is my cross, His life is my life, and His glorious future is my glorious future: that's what it means to be a Christian!

And my dear friends it's worth everything, and if we all had to believe on Christ tonight and die tomorrow we'd spend all eternity thanking God with tender affection that He allowed it to happen! Yes, sir! You can't afford to be lost. You can't afford to take for granted you're saved when all that's happened is somebody's picked you out of your shell and tried to make a Christian out of you and you've never known what it is to be born again.

Moral sanity requires that I settle the matter of whether I am in right saving relation to Jesus Christ or not. I don't ask you if you've signed a card, I don't ask if you've been baptised; you can do both of those and be lost. You can be saved and do both of them too, but they don't save you. But moral sanity requires that I settle - will you settle it now? Don't take it for granted.

Remember: you're not gambling, you're guaranteeing you'll be lost. To fail to come into a right relation with Jesus Christ is to committ moral suicide! Young people particularly, in this terrible hour of putrefaction and corruption; in this frightful hour of shallowness of superficiality

when our youth are being led astray by people who ought to know better, and they're romping and kicking up their heels and playing their way into the kingdom, and playing their way off to Heaven; only to find they've played their way to hell!

And you dear young people, I could love you till I'd lie down and let you walk over the length of me from now till morning, if only I could save you from the false teaching that would make acceptance of Christ to be a lark. Acceptance of Christ is a revolutionary act that changes you from the ground up! But you say, "That's true only for older people." That's true for every person!

I knew a boy; Jewish mother and a Gentile father - I married them. Then that boy was born; he grew to be about eighteen. He was in great danger of becoming a juvenile delinquent. One night I gave the altar call and he went into the prayer room - the enquiry room that we used over there in Chicago -- his name was Dave. And everybody knew what kind of a scoundrel Dave was. And when he went into that room I thought, "Well, there goes Dave, probably won't much come of it." So God knows my faith didn't help much! Pretty soon, Dave came bounding out. He came out like a race-horse out of the ... whatever they are, and he hunted me up, his face was aglow; he'd been converted. "Well," I thought, "very good, but he's an emotional boy. We'll see how it works." Well, you know, it wasn't very long till he was one of the leaders in the church! It wasn't

very long after till he came to me with a shining face and said, "I'm going to Bible school!" Off to Bible school he went and when he got there he just shook that school and he's been going right on ever since! That boy's name is Dave Schafer.

My dear friends; he was only a kid, too - just a kid. Don't wait till there are grey in your temples. This message of acceptance; radical, revolutionary, exclusive, final acceptance of Christ with all that you have - that's for everybody! That's for the youngest person that can hear me tonight as well as for the oldest person that hears me. Let's pray a moment.

Our dear Lord Jesus, we're with Thee in this. We're with Thee in this. We attach ourselves to Thee now with deliberation. Thy Word has been given, by invitation and an explanation of what it means. Now Lord, if they follow Thee: well and good. If they do not, then I don't know what I can do. O Christ, this night, we beseech Thee that Thou wilt help every one of these listening to reconsider and rethink and decide whether Heaven is more desirable than Hell and whether the inconvenience of cross-carrying and the persecutions and troubles that it brings to follow the Lamb, whether these things are worthwhile in the light of eternity. We beseech Thee, O Lord! We pray Thou wilt save us from superficiality, save us we pray Thee from this pseudo-

Christianity that's going about. Save us from fool's gold. Save us we pray Thee from alkali water that kills us. Save us, we pray Thee O God, from all this watered-down stuff that leaves us where it finds us, only that we think we're right when we're not. Have mercy upon us, O God! Have mercy upon us! Bless these dear friends and before they go to their place of rest this night may they make sure that all these conditions have been met and that they can sing, "I am my Lord's and He is mine! 'Tis done, the great transaction's done! I am my Lord's and He is mine!" Underscore and emphasize every word knowing it's true. Grant this, we beseech Thee, O Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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