

*A.W Tozer*



Living Sermons

**AS STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS,  
ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS**

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**Preacher: A.W Tozer**

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**Author: A.W Tozer**

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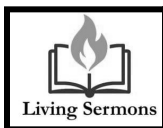
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[info.livingsermons@gmail.com](mailto:info.livingsermons@gmail.com)

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# Foreword

*There are messages that inform the mind, and there are messages that awaken the conscience. This sermon by A.W. Tozer belongs to the latter category.*

*In an age when many believers are tempted to find comfort in the spirit of the world, Tozer calls the Church back to a forgotten identity: strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. Drawing from 1 Peter 2:11, he reminds us that Christianity is not merely a set of doctrines to be believed, but a heavenly calling to be lived.*

*With characteristic clarity and spiritual insight, Tozer presents the Christian life as a journey toward a greater homeland. The believer is not a permanent resident of this present world but a traveller passing through it. While others may settle comfortably into the values, ambitions, and pursuits of their surroundings, the follower of Christ is called to maintain a holy separation, remembering that his citizenship is in heaven.*

*One of the enduring strengths of this message is its balance between doctrine and practical application. Tozer does not merely define what it means to be a stranger and pilgrim; he demonstrates why such a life is necessary. Through biblical examples, historical illustrations, and heartfelt exhortation, he reveals the danger of becoming entangled with a world that is not our home. He also exposes the subtle battle that takes place within every believer—the conflict between the spirit and the flesh—and points us to the path of spiritual victory.*

*Perhaps the most striking feature of this sermon is its pastoral tone. Peter's words, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you," form the foundation of Tozer's appeal. The Christian life cannot be sustained by outward commands alone. It requires a willing heart surrendered to God, a heart that understands its heavenly calling and gladly embraces it.*

*As you read these pages, you will encounter more than a theological discussion. You will hear a summons to renewed consecration. You will be challenged to examine where your affections lie, where your loyalties rest, and whether your life reflects the character of one who is journeying toward the Father's house.*

*It is our prayer that this message will strengthen your faith, deepen your devotion to Christ, and renew your determination to walk through this world as a true pilgrim of heaven.*

*May the Holy Spirit use these timeless truths to fix your eyes once again upon the eternal city whose builder and maker is God.*

**— Wisdom Epsi**  
**Chief Editor, LivingSermons.com**

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# Publisher's Note

This book is a faithful transcript of a live sermon delivered by the preacher under the inspiration and unction of the Holy Spirit. Every effort has been made to preserve the preacher's exact words, tone, flow, and spiritual authority, while carefully proofreading and formatting the message into a clear and readable ebook format.

The message you are about to read was originally ministered in a live congregational setting. As such, it carries the weight, urgency, and atmosphere of that sacred gathering. Minor grammatical and structural adjustments have been made solely to enhance readability, without altering the substance, intent, or power of the original delivery.

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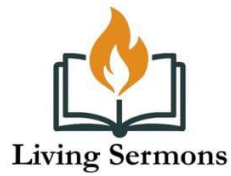
It is our prayer that as you read, the same grace, conviction, clarity, and impartation present in the live service will minister to you afresh.

— *Livingsermons.com*

*A Spirit-led Publishing Stewardship*

## ***Main Message***

*Begins Here*



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## Scripture Reading

*"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from  
fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."*

*– 1 Peter 2:11 (KJV)*

# The Appeal of an Apostle

The second chapter of First Peter, verse eleven:

*"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."*

— 1 Peter 2:11 (KJV)

That is rather a complete sentence in itself. A period could be placed there, and you would have a very strong and full statement.

There is only a semicolon in our King James Version, and we go on from there, though we will not have time for it this morning. So we will put a period there:

*"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."*

Peter was an apostle and, according to some, the first pope. He therefore had every authority that God ever gave, I suppose, to any man on earth—greater authority than that enjoyed by Moses, in that it was broader.

And yet he did not command these Christians scattered abroad, but besought them and called them by a tender term of affection.

"Dearly beloved," he said, "I beseech you."

The reason is that there are certain moral acts which cannot be secured by commandments.

Certain other ones can.

It is altogether possible to command, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" Because the act of murder can be restrained, and if we do not kill another, then we have fulfilled a commandment and the human life has been saved.

But there are certain other acts which must be voluntary if they are to be real, because willingness is a part of their moral content. Threats and force cannot work to secure these acts.

If Peter had said, "I command you that you walk as pilgrims and strangers and avoid fleshly lusts," he would have been commanding an impossibility.

To know the character of a pilgrim and a stranger, and to live before God in meek humility and purity which overrides the desires of the flesh, is something that can only be achieved by a spiritual willingness. Therefore, it cannot be commanded.

## **Love Cannot Be Commanded**

Let me illustrate it like this.

A man can come home from his work—a brutal, coarse man—and walk up to his wife and, with an angry face, threaten her and say, "What is the reason dinner is not on the table?" He can command her to get his dinner.

She is afraid of him, and she knows he does have some kind of legal hold on her, so she hurries off and hurries up dinner.

He gets his dinner by commandment.

But he cannot walk up to that same woman and say, "I command you, love me."

He cannot get love by commandment because willingness and inward participation of a voluntary kind are necessary to love, but not necessarily to obedience to a commandment.

So the man of God did not say, “I command you.”

He said, “I beseech you, dearly beloved.”

Paul was the same way. Though Paul, as an apostle of Christ, had every right to command, he knew there were some things you never could get by commanding them.

So he said:

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*

— Romans 12:1 (KJV)

The nature of this consecration was such that they had to do it willingly and without fear of reprisal or sanction, or they could not have done it at all.

## **Christians Are Strangers on Earth**

Now he said:

*"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims..."*

Last week we saw—and I made a good deal out of it—that if we know what we are, then we can trust God to help us live in character with what we are.

He says, “You Christians are strangers on earth.”

The word *stranger* is really *sojourner*. Usually it refers to someone temporarily living in a foreign country—not at home there and not intending to be.

Such a person is separated from the natives by language and dress and customs and conduct, and usually by culture.

This is a stranger: a person from a foreign country who is not at home where he is and is not going to settle down and be at home there. He is temporarily in that country, separated by language, speaking with an accent, separated by dress and customs and conduct and diet and culture.

American society does not know too many strangers because we absorb them too fast. We melt them together so quickly that we hardly remember who they are.

As soon as they get over their first thick accent, they are Americans.

But the Bible recognises sojourners in a land who are only there for a time.

It is something like the men connected with the United Nations who live in or near New York City. They are only there temporarily. They do not intend to stay. They are not taking out naturalisation papers.

They are sojourners.

They are separated by language and customs and conduct and past traditions and memories and all the rest.

Just as soon as a man ceases thus to be separated from those around him, he is a stranger no more.

But Peter never recognised our becoming naturalised.

He never recognised our getting over our character as strangers.

Christians are strangers on earth.

# Abraham the Stranger

Abraham and Lot are outstanding examples of how men can be strangers and then cease to be strangers.

Abraham and Lot came from Ur of the Chaldees and entered into the land of Palestine.

One day their herdsmen quarrelled, and they got together like two relatives should, talked it over, and decided they had better separate. They were too large to continue together, and there was bad blood between their servants.

So Abraham said, "You look it over. Go the way you want to go, and I will take what is left."

Noble old unselfish man that he was.

Lot looked toward the plains of Jordan and moved in that direction.

Abraham stayed on the plains of Mamre where there was some grass, but not too much.

The one man went where the grass was green and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

It was not long until he sat in the gate of Sodom, which is equivalent to saying that if he was not the mayor of the city, he was at least high up in official position, because they had their offices in the gate of the city, much as we have them in city hall today.

One day Chedorlaomer and some other kings came and made an assault upon the city. They captured it.

Humorously enough, they also captured Lot and his whole outfit.

Someone who escaped knew that help had to come from somewhere.

Do you know where they looked?

They said, "We will go tell Abraham the Hebrew."

The word *Hebrew* means *the stranger*.

The only man capable of helping in that crisis was the man who had never committed himself or become involved.

He was separated from them and could help them from the outside.

So they sent for Abraham, not Lot.

Lot was already handcuffed and tied up and hamstrung like a hog taken to market.

Big Lot, who had sat in the gate, was now lying in the back of a wagon and being carried away like so much merchandise.

They had to send for Abraham the stranger.

Abraham, who had kept himself free from Sodom and all its people, gathered his little army together and went out and defeated Chedorlaomer and his crowd and rescued Lot and his people.

There is an example.

Two Christians start out together, and one of them gets involved in the things of this world.

He loses his character as a stranger.

He may rise to a place where he sits in the gate, but he loses something that the other man has.

The other man withdraws and keeps himself separated, as far as possible, from the ways of the world and lives the separated life of a stranger.

Then trouble comes.

Someone down the street gets into a jam.

Which one do they send for?

Lot?

No. He is in as much trouble as the rest.

They always send for Abraham.

They always send for the man who has remained separated.

## **Pilgrims Passing Through**

Peter said not only that Christians are strangers, but that Christians are pilgrims as well as strangers.

A pilgrim is a stranger on his way from one place to another—one passing through en route.

Always remember that.

A Christian is en route.

He is not where he started, and he is not where he is going.

He is only where he has gotten to.

Sometimes men come through this city and telephone me. They introduce themselves, usually preachers or writers or friends of friends.

I say, "Are you visiting Chicago?"

"No," they answer, "just on my way through from Detroit or Cleveland or somewhere else, and on my way to Omaha or Denver or farther west."

They are en route.

They have their ticket in their pocket and have simply stopped to speak to a friend on the journey.

That is the character of a pilgrim.

Somebody passing through.

This is the Christian concept of life.

Heaven is our Fatherland toward which we are journeying, and earth is a wilderness.

I know how people criticise Christians for describing the world as a vale of tears.

They say, “What kind of gloomy people are you, sitting around talking about this vale of tears?”

But that is the Christian concept.

Take it or leave it.

It is a world in which we live because of sin and because of sin's temporary visitation upon mankind.

It is a wilderness through which we journey.

We may rest awhile, but only for a night.

Then we pitch our tent a day's march nearer home.

We are never to settle here.

We are never to become naturalised.

# The Hymns of the Pilgrim Church

If you were to run through the hymnbooks, you would discover how frequently this idea appears.

Joseph of the Studium wrote:

“O happy band of pilgrims,  
If onward ye will tread.”

The famous Monsell hymn says:

“On our way rejoicing,  
Homeward as we move.”

The beloved Welsh hymn declares:

“Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land.”

Seneca wrote:

“We are travelling unto God  
In the way our fathers trod.”

Zinzendorf wrote:

“Jesus, still lead on,  
Till our rest be won.”

And Schmolck wrote:

“Straight to my home above  
I travel calmly on.”

These are only a few examples.

By the dozens, Christian hymns conceive earth as a wilderness through which the pilgrim travels on his way to the Fatherland.

Yet he is not alone.

Always, though often unseen, there walks beside him and within him the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He may have to stop and pitch his tent overnight.

He may have to assume the character of a soldier and fight his way through.

But always he is en route.

## **Fleshly Lusts That War Against the Soul**

While you are doing this, Peter says:

*"Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."*

— 1 Peter 2:11 (KJV)

These fleshly lusts are those natural appetites that have their seat in the body and the mind.

Those natural appetites would be innocent except for sin, but now they have become enemies of the soul.

Nobody needs to be told that this is one of those areas where you cannot command a person; you can only beseech him.

But we may be sure of this:

Anyone who is going to make his journey safely and successfully will have to keep himself free from those fleshly lusts that war against the soul.

If we do not, we will be slowed down or stopped in our progress.

The inner life must overcome them, or they will overcome and destroy the inner life.

It is a strange thing and a deplorable thing, but it is true.

One part of us fights against another part of us.

The lower nature fights against the higher nature.

The flesh fights against the spirit.

And fleshly lusts war against our souls.

Thomas à Kempis said:

“Peace will always be found, not in indulging our lower appetites, but in resisting them.”

And Emerson, though merely a philosopher and not a Christian thinker, observed:

“Every victory we win over the flesh, however slight, will prove to be a strengthening act to our soul.”

# Conclusion: The Real Enemies Are Within

So now that is all for this morning, except to point out this singular truth:

We are pilgrims journeying home.

The only truly dangerous enemies are within us.

God has changed the land on the outside.

God has said to Satan, "This far and no farther."

God has spoken even to the armies of the world and has forbidden them to touch His anointed or do His prophets any harm.

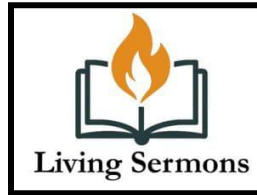
But within us are temptations which would destroy the soul.

Therefore the Holy Ghost says:

*"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."*

— 1 Peter 2:11 (KJV)

Amen.

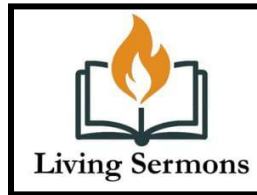


## About the Speaker

**Aiden Wilson Tozer** (21 April 1897 – 12 May 1963) was an American pastor, preacher, editor, devotional writer, and prominent leader within the **Christian and Missionary Alliance**. Widely regarded as one of the most influential voices in twentieth-century evangelical Christianity, Tozer's ministry was marked by a passionate call to deeper fellowship with God, personal holiness, and spiritual renewal.

Associated with evangelicalism, the Holiness movement, and Keswick spirituality, Tozer became best known through his devotional classics, particularly *The Pursuit of God* (1948) and *The Knowledge of the Holy* (1961). These works continue to inspire Christians worldwide, emphasizing the necessity of knowing God personally rather than merely knowing about Him. His writings consistently called believers to holiness, contemplative prayer, reverence for God, self-denial, death to self, and a continual awareness of God's presence.

Tozer believed that the modern Church often suffered from spiritual shallowness and urged believers to pursue a deeper, more intimate relationship with God. His messages challenged Christians to move beyond religious routine and cultivate a genuine life of worship, prayer, and surrender.



## About Living Sermons

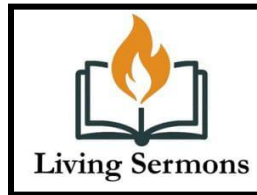
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Our mission is simple: to preserve the wisdom, revelation, and anointing carried in the preached Word and make it accessible in formats that can be studied, shared, and revisited for generations. By turning sermons into high-quality Christian books and eBooks, we extend the life and influence of each message far beyond the pulpit.

At Living Sermons, we believe that the preached Word is living and powerful (Hebrews 4:12). Every sermon carries truth that can instruct, comfort, rebuke, inspire, and transform. Our role is to faithfully capture these words, polish them for clarity and readability, and present them in a way that maintains the preacher’s unique voice and anointing.

Through our work, messages that might otherwise be heard once are preserved as lasting resources for teaching, devotion, discipleship, and evangelism. These books are designed not just for reading but for equipping believers, strengthening families, and advancing the Kingdom of God.

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