



Beginning with *Why the Creeds are Still Important Today* and ending with *Connecting Our Creeds to Our Deeds*, Tozer brings us into a rich experience of the Christian life. Study classic truths of biblical doctrine and connect them to a vibrant spiritual life as you journey through *The Apostles' Creed*.

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GOD THE FATHER

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth

There could be no more central or important theme than the character of God. If you trace effect back to cause and that cause back to another cause and so on, back through the long dim corridors of the past until you come to the primordial atom out of which all things were made, you will find the One who made them—you'll find God.

Behind all previous matter, all life, all law, all space, and all time, there is God. God gives to human life its only significance; there isn't any other apart from Him. If you take the concept of God out of the human mind, there is no other reason for being among the living. We are, as Tennyson said, like "sheep or goats / That nourish a blind life within the brain." And we might as well die as sheep unless we have God in our thoughts.

God is the source of all law and morality and goodness, the One that you must believe in before you can deny Him, the One who is

the Word and the One that enables us to speak. I'm sure you will see immediately that in attempting a series of messages about the attributes of God we run into that which is difficult above all things.

The famous preacher Sam Jones (who was a Billy Sunday before Billy Sunday's time) said that when the average preacher takes a text it reminds him of an insect trying to carry a bale of cotton. And when I take my text and try to talk about God I feel like that insect; only God can help me.

John Milton started to write a book on the fall of man and his restoration through Jesus Christ our Lord. He was to call his book *Paradise Lost*. But before he dared to write it, he prayed a prayer that I want to pray as well. He prayed to the Spirit and said,

*And chiefly thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me.*

I'd like to say, with no attempt at morbid humility, that without a pure heart and a surrendered mind, no man can preach worthily about God and no man can hear worthily. No man can hear these things unless God touches him and illuminates him. And so Milton said,

*Instruct me, for Thou know'st; . . .
What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great argument
I may assert eternal providence,
And justifie the wayes of God to men.*

Who can speak about the attributes of God—His self-existence, His omniscience, His omnipotence, His transcendence, and so on—who can do that and do it worthily? Who is capable of anything like that? I'm not. So I only have this one hope: As the poor little donkey rebuked the madness of the prophet and as the rooster crowed one night to arouse the apostle and bring him to repentance, so God may take me and use me. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of the little donkey, so I pray that He may be willing to ride out before the people on such an unworthy instrument as I.

It is utterly necessary that we know this God, this One that John wrote about, this One that the poet speaks about, this One that theology talks about and this One that we're sent to preach and teach about. It is absolutely, utterly, and critically necessary that we know this One, for you see, man fell when he lost his right concept of God.

As long as man trusted God everything was all right; human beings were healthy and holy (or at least innocent), and pure and good. But then the devil came along and threw a question mark into the mind of the woman: "And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said . . . ?" (Gen. 3:1). This was equivalent to sneaking around behind God's back and casting doubt on the goodness of God. And then began the progressive degeneration downward.

When the knowledge of God began to go out of the minds of men, we got into the fix that we're in now:

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing

themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. (Rom. 1:21–28)

That first chapter of Romans ends with a terrible charge of unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, and all the long, black list of crimes and sins that man has been guilty of.

All that came about because man lost his confidence in God. He didn't know God's character. He didn't know what kind of God God was. He got all mixed up about what God was like. Now the only way back is to have restored confidence in God. And the only way to have restored confidence in God is to have restored knowledge of God.

We see this in the text, “And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee” (Ps. 9:10). The word *name* means character, plus reputation. “And they that know *what kind of God thou art* will put their trust in thee.” We wonder why we don’t have faith; the answer is, faith is confidence in the character of God, and if we don’t know what kind of God God is, we can’t have faith.

We read books about George Müller and others and try to have faith. But we forget that faith is confidence in God’s character. And because we are not aware of what kind of God God is, or what God is like, we cannot have faith. And so we struggle and wait and hope against hope. But faith doesn’t come, because we do not know the character of God. “They that know what Thou art like will put their trust in Thee.” It’s automatic—it comes naturally when we know what kind of God God is.

I’m going to give you a report on the character of God, to tell you what God is like. And if you’re listening with a worthy mind, you’ll find faith will spring up. Ignorance and unbelief drag faith down, but a restored knowledge of God will bring faith up. I don’t suppose there is ever a time in the history of the world when we needed a restored knowledge of God more than we need it now. Bible-believing Christians have made great gains in the last forty years or so. We have more Bibles now than we’ve ever had—the Bible is a bestseller. We have more Bible schools than we’ve ever had, ever in the history of the world. Millions of tons of gospel literature are being poured out all the time. There are more missions now than we know what to do with. And evangelism is riding very, very high at the present time. And more people go to church now, believe it or not, than ever went to church before.

Now all that has something in its favor, there's no doubt about it. But you know, a man can learn at the end of the year how his business stands by balancing off his losses with his gains. And while he may have some gains, if he has too many losses he'll be out of business the next year.

Many of the gospel churches have made some gains over the last years, but we've also suffered one great central loss: our lofty concept of God. Christianity rises like an eagle and flies over the top of all the mountain peaks of all the religions of the world, chiefly because of her lofty concept of God, given to us in divine revelation and by the coming of the Son of God to take human flesh and dwell among us. Christianity, the great church, has for centuries lived on the character of God. She's preached God, she's prayed to God, she's declared God, she's honored God, she's elevated God, she's witnessed to God—the triune God.

But in recent times there has been a loss suffered. We've suffered the loss of that high concept of God, and the concept of God handled by the average gospel church now is so low as to be unworthy of God and a disgrace to the church. It is by neglect, degenerate error, and spiritual blindness that some are saying God is their "partner" or "the man upstairs." One Christian college put out a booklet called "Christ Is My Quarterback"—He always calls the right play. And a certain businessman was quoted as saying, "God's a good fellow and I like Him."

There isn't a Muslim alive in the world who would stoop to calling God a "good fellow." There isn't a Jew, at least no Jew who believes in his religion, that would ever dare to refer that way to the great Yahweh, the One with the incommunicable name. They

talk about God respectfully and reverently. But in the gospel churches, God is a “quarterback” and a “good fellow.”

I sometimes feel like walking out on a lot that passes for Christianity. They talk about prayer as “going into a huddle with God,” as if God is the coach or the quarterback or something; they all gather around, God gives the signal, and away they go. What preposterous abomination! When the Romans sacrificed a sow on the altar in Jerusalem, they didn’t commit anything more frightful than when we drag the holy, holy, holy God down and turn Him into a cheap Santa Claus that we can use to get what we want.

Christianity has lost its dignity. And we’ll never get it back unless we know the dignified Holy God, who rides on the wings of the wind and makes the clouds His chariots. We have lost the concept of majesty and the art of worship. I got a letter from my good friend Stacy Woods, who was until recently head of InterVarsity. And he said this in the closing lines of his letter: “The church is getting away from worship. I wonder if it is because we are getting away from God.” I think he’s right and I believe that is the answer.

And then our religion has lost its inwardness. For Christianity, if it’s anything, is an inward religion. Jesus said that we are to worship in spirit and in truth. And yet we’ve lost it because we have lost the concept of deity that makes it possible. Even though we’ve hung on to our Scofield Bible and still believe in the seven main doctrines of the fundamental faith, we’ve lost the awe, the wonder, the fear, and the delight. Why? Because we’ve lost God, or at least we’ve lost our high and lofty concept of God—the only concept of God that He honors.

And so the gains we have made have all been external: Bibles and Bible schools; books and magazines and radio messages; missions and evangelism; numbers and new churches. And the losses we've suffered have all been internal: the loss of dignity and worship and majesty, of inwardness, of God's presence, of fear and spiritual delight.

If we have lost only that which is inward and gained only that which is outward, I wonder if we've gained anything at all. I wonder if we are not now in a bad state. I believe we are. I believe our gospel churches, our Christianity, are thin and anemic, without thoughtful content, frivolous in tone, and worldly in spirit.

And I believe that we are desperately in need of a reformation that will bring the church back. I quit using the word *revival* because we need more than a revival. When the great Welsh revival came to the little country of Wales around the turn of the century, the Holy Ghost had something to work with. The people believed in God and their concept of God was lofty. But because the church has lost her lofty concept of God and no longer knows what God is like, her religion is thin and anemic, frivolous and worldly and cheap.

Compare the preaching of the church today with that of the Hebrew prophets, or even of men like Charles Finney—if you dare to do it. How serious these men of God were! They were men of heaven come to earth to speak to men. As Moses came down from the mount with his face shining to speak to men, so the prophets and preachers down through the years went out. Serious-minded men they were, solemn men, lofty in tone and full of substance of thought and theology.

But today the preaching to a large extent is cheap, frivolous, coarse, shallow, and entertaining. We in the gospel churches think that we've got to entertain the people or they won't come back. We have lost the seriousness out of our preaching and have become silly. We've lost the solemnity and have become fearless. We've lost the loftiness and have become coarse and shallow. We've lost the substance and have become entertainers. This is a tragic and terrible thing.

Compare the Christian reading matter and you'll know that we're in pretty much the same situation. The Germans, the Scots, the Irish, the Welsh, the English, the Americans, and the Canadians all have a common Protestant heritage. And what did they read, these Protestant forebearers of yours and mine? Well, they read Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. They read Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*. They read Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Holy War*. They read Milton's *Paradise Lost*. They read the sermons of John Flavel.

I have an old Methodist hymnal that rolled off the press many years ago, and I found forty-nine hymns on the attributes of God in it. I have heard it said that we shouldn't sing hymns with so much theology because people's minds are different now. We think differently now. Did you know that those Methodist hymns were sung mostly by uneducated people? They were farmers and sheep herders and cattle ranchers, coal miners and blacksmiths, carpenters and cotton pickers—plain people all over this continent. They sang those songs. There are over 1,100 hymns in that hymnbook of mine and there isn't a cheap one in the whole bunch.

And nowadays, I won't even talk about some of the terrible junk that we sing. This tragic and frightening decline in the spiritual state of the churches has come about as a result of our forgetting what kind of God God is. We have lost the vision of the Majesty on high. I have been reading in the book of Ezekiel over the last weeks, reading slowly and rereading, and I've just come to that terrible, frightening, awful passage where the *Shekinah*, the shining presence of God, lifts up from between the wings of the cherubim, goes to the altar, lifts up from the altar, goes to the door, and there is the sound of the whirring of wings (Ezek. 10:4–5). And then the presence of God goes from the door to the outer court (vv. 18–19), and from the outer court to the mountain (Ezek. 11:23), and from the mountain into the glory.

And it has never been back, except as it was incarnated in Jesus Christ when He walked among us. But the *Shekinah* glory that had followed Israel about all those years, that shone over the camp, was gone. God couldn't take it any longer, so He pulled out His Majesty, His *Shekinah* glory, and left the temple. And I wonder how many gospel churches—by their frivolousness, shallowness, coarseness, and worldliness—have grieved the Holy Ghost until He's withdrawn in hurt silence. We must see God again; we must feel God again; we must know God again; we must hear God again. Nothing less than this will save us.

I'm hoping that you will be prayerful and that you'll be worthy to hear this, and that I'll be worthy to speak about God—the triune God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—what He's like. If we can restore again knowledge of God to men, we can help in some small way to bring about a reformation that will

restore God again to men. I want to meditate on these words of Frederick Faber:

*Full of glory, full of wonders, Majesty Divine!
Mid thine everlasting thunders How thy lightnings shine.
Shoreless Ocean! who shall sound Thee?
Thine own eternity is round Thee, Majesty Divine!*

One hour with the majesty of God would be worth more to you now and in eternity than all the preachers—including myself—that ever stood up to open their Bible. I want a vision of the majesty of God—not as that song says, “one transient gleam”—no, I don’t want anything transient, I want the gleam of majesty and wonder to be permanent! I want to live where the face of God shines every day. No child says, “Mother, let me see your face transiently.” The child wants to be where any minute of the hour he can look up and see his mother’s face.

*Timeless, spaceless, single, lonely,
Yet sublimely Three,
Thou art grandly, always, only
God in Unity!
Lone in grandeur, lone in glory,
Who shall tell Thy wondrous story,
Awful Trinity?

Splendours upon splendours beaming
Change and intertwine;
Glories over glories streaming
All translucent shine!*

THE APOSTLES' CREED

Blessings, praises, adorations
Greet Thee from the trembling nations
Majesty Divine!

This is the day of the common man—and we have not only all become common, but we've dragged God down to our mediocre level. What we need so desperately is an elevated concept of God. Maybe by faithful preaching and prayer, and by the Holy Ghost, we can see the “splendours upon splendours beaming, Change and intertwine.” Maybe we can see “Glories over glories streaming, All translucent shine!” To God we can give “blessings, praises, adorations” that “Greet thee from the trembling nations, Majesty Divine!”

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