

A Life of Victory in the Midst of Troubles

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a practical Christianity, not just abstract doctrine, and finding ways to overcome hatred, affliction, and pain in our lives.

Duration: 33:43

Scripture: Job 8:8, Psalm 6:4-25, James 5:13

Topics: "Victorious Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of staying true to one's faith and not compromising with the world. He warns against trying to win people over by conforming to their sinful ways, as it will only lead to one's own downfall. The preacher also highlights the practicality and relevance of the Bible, stating that it can guide and support believers in their everyday lives. He uses the example of David, who faced numerous enemies, afflictions, and troubles, to illustrate the challenges that Christians may encounter. Ultimately, the sermon encourages believers to let their faith impact every aspect of their lives and to remain steadfast in the face of adversity.

Transcript

The 25th Psalm is the text for the morning. I do not intend to make careful exposition, but simply let our minds play over the psalm previously. If I were to pick a text out, maybe it might be the 21st.

Let integrity, uprightness preserve me, for I wait on thee. We have a little section of a great spiritual biography where the man David is writing himself into this. He is telling us about himself and his relation to God and the world.

We see and hear in this 25th Psalm a living man engaged in the business of living. We see here a good man living in a bad world, a right man living in a wrong world, and naturally there is not a smooth song. My brethren, nothing is smooth if it is a realistic, fair reflection of life.

The Lord Jesus Christ was not a smooth life. He had great inward humility, for he knew he was in the bosom of the Father, and he knew that not even his incarnation took him out of the bosom of the Father. For he knew that the persons of the Godhead are indivisible.

You cannot divide the Son from the Father by incarnation or by crucifixion or by death. He knew that he could never be separated from the Father's heart, though as a man among men he lived his turbulent life,

his life surrounded by enemies. So that I think it fair to say that if you're living too smooth a life, you may well be in the will of God or not.

David served his generation by the will of God before he fell on sleep. He was a man after God's own heart. So I think it fair to take him for an example.

And David did not live a tranquil life. He had periods of tranquility. He had times when he ran away like a lark and sang at heaven's gate.

But he soon found himself down on the earth again, back in a turbulent and disturbed world where he had to live. Now, we do not find here in much modern religion a man in a classroom learning and analyzing. We have taken on the classroom psychology too much in Christian religion in these days.

Classrooms are not intended to be any reflection upon the classroom. It is only to say that the classroom is an actual situation. It is something apart from the stream of life, hoping that it will teach those who are in that classroom to look into the stream of life to live better, more wisely.

But it is for the moment not a part of life, really. The ivory tower of life. When Christianity is never to be understood, the faith of our fathers thought of from the classroom.

It is not someone looking over heavy glasses telling them the facts of Christianity or using a chart to illustrate. But the faith of our fathers is the faith of the plain people, the faith of men living in the world. The faith of our fathers is the marketplace where men argue and debate and cheat.

The man of God won't cheat, cheat. The faith of our fathers is geared to the kitchen and the home where the wife answers the phone and the doorbell a dozen times of a morning and the baby suddenly runs a temperature out of town and she's in distress. And then the doorbell rings again and then the phone and it's a wrong number.

That's her life. She's got to have something that'll go down there. Your classroom can't help her there.

Nothing abstract can do her any good there. The faith of our fathers has to get into the kitchen, into the home, into the nursery, into the basement where people are engaged in the downright tough business of living right in a wrong world. The faith of our fathers has to get in to the cab of the truck as it bowls down the highway, around the curbs till the arms ache, out on the long straightaway stretches until the monotony puts us to sleep, and trouble every horn honking from the rear, and blowouts and difficulties.

No classroom theory there, no ivory tower there. Christianity has to get into that cab and behind that wheel and into the heart so that he can do that like a Christian and drive his big truck like a Christian. The faith of our fathers has to get into the machine, the smell of hot oil and dirty gloves and dirty overalls and cursing men and hard to get customers.

And it's got to be there and it's got to prove itself there and live right there and be right there. The fifth psalm is an illustration of all this. A man in the midst of life, a good man living in a bad world and living in a wrong world, God's man living in the devil's world, and he has to come through that and has to suffer it out and come out all right.

And that's why I like the Bible. It's a book of a high philosophy and lofty theology and brilliant metaphysics, but it's as practical as your shoes. You wear bedroom slippers right down where you live.

You can get into it and it doesn't fail you. And you don't have to know a million things and you don't have to know the scale of culture nor study from Emily Post where to put your spoon. Plain people that don't know what to do with a spoon.

A man said he went to a banquet that was so ritzy that it was one o'clock in the morning, for it was through, and he found one o'clock in the morning, a tablespoon. He'd evidently used up the wrong one at the wrong place and the snooty waiter wouldn't take it away. So there he was at one o'clock and they were through eating and he had just a tablespoon lying by his plate.

Well, that would chagrin some people and drive them to suicide. But the poor man in this bad world, trying to live right with God, isn't so much worried because he knows that Christianity meets all situations, political situations, industrial situations. So here was the man, David, engaged in living and living in a bad world.

Because H. G. Weld, you know, said that Buddhism was the best, but that it wouldn't thrive except in a warm climate. Christianity will thrive in any climate at all, just let the Christ get in. And whether he is living in an igloo hut somewhere in the far Arctic, or whether he's living with a g-string on somewhere in Africa, if he's a true sincere man, whether it's his grass or snow igloo, Christianity will work.

It'll work in the mountains and it'll work on the plain and it'll work in the midst of the great. You'll never see real sunshine for the smoke and the fumes. The faith of our fathers will work anywhere.

H. G. Weld didn't mean to be funny, but it was a humorous thing to say, that God Almighty should give the world a religion that will only climate. If that was true, and that might be true of Buddhism, then what would we do in cold weather? Our spirituality would rise. Every morning you'd have to go out on the porch and say to your wife, I wonder how spiritual I can be today.

And if it was a little too cold, you're a sinner this day. I can't live for God today because it's too cold. Christianity is found everywhere, and it's found in, you know, we've had some errors in the church, and one of them has been of course to make Christianity consist of my own.

And now I'm a theological dogmatist, and I believe in theology. I believe in the faith of our fathers, and I can put it down, and I could write a book of discipline if I ever forced to do it, telling what I believe, and what people ought to believe. And I believe in doctrine.

But what good is it going to do you to know that the Trinity is comparisons, or that there are three persons in the Trinity, is a better way of expressing it, if you don't live pleasing to the Trinity? I borrowed that from an old sago. What is it profit thee to be able to discourse learnedly about the Trinity if thou live as such a like pleasing to the Trinity? What difference does it make that you know that God made the heaven and the earth if you live an ungodly life? It doesn't mean anything till it gets inside you, until it seeps by osmosis into the bloodstream of your life, leaves your soul, and gets into your bloodstream, and gets out into the cells of your spirit, and changes you. Any doctrine of man has never reached that man.

Too often we have a Christianity that consists merely of a lot of creedons that are believed. That's not Christianity. That is only the raw material of Christianity, until the fire of the Holy Spirit burns upon that raw material, or changing the figure until that's but the food, that is but the meat of Christianity.

That meat enters the soul of a man by faith and repentance. It can't do the man any good. Objective Christianity is not the Christian soul.

The faith of our fathers is objective truth, having become subjective reality within the soul by pen and prayer. As old John Ruskin, the famous critic, art critic, and philosopher, who a century ago or so, wrote very eloquently about the error of calling this a church service, because I know what I mean by the word. But he says, watch that we don't get, that we're not mistaken about it.

He said, we, we meet together and listen to moral or spiritual truth being expounded, and go home and say we have been to a service. And that's not necessarily true, for service is more than singing hymns and going home again. Service is living, serving your generation, and living like a Christian after the church doors are locked and the janitor's asleep.

And for Christ, between Sunday night and Sunday morning, all the week long, as well as on Sunday. He was right, though I do not follow him in throwing out the word church service. As a result, it can be a service.

We can be giving our money to a service. We can, by expounding the scriptures, do a service. We can, by singing hymns, do a service.

But the danger is that it's a possible kind of service, aloof and in a vacuum, altogether unrelated to the rest of our lives. That's where the danger lies. I agree with Ruskin there.

So let's watch. If your Christianity, your Christian faith does not affect every being, you have a reason to wonder whether you have the faith of our fathers really in your heart or not. Now look at David.

David here was a man in the midst of life. Here he was, surrounded by, look at them, verse 2 to 19, enemies, verse 9, verse 18, affliction, verse 17, troubles, verse 18, pain, verse 17, distress, verse 16, and perplexities all the way through, and sin mentioned three or four times. Now there was a man, no every time, no monk sitting on top of a high pole, letting somebody else feed him, no hermit hidden away in a cave going for a walk at sundown when the birds were singing, no impractical dreamer, but a man who lived in the midst of all these were surrounding him.

Verses 2 and 19 talk about his enemies. Now I might say that a man is known by his friends, generally understood, but the opposite is also true. A man is known by his enemies.

No man is known by his enemies. If he does not have enemies, then he's not doing anything. If he does have enemies, if he does anything, he will have a hundred kibitzers telling him that he could have done it better if he had a way.

And then we say, what have you done? And he answers, well, nothing, but I've been observing. He hasn't done a thing. Watching somebody else, you'll have kibitzers, fault finders, critics, and enemies, and opposers, and ill-wishers.

What you do if you do something? The way to have no enemies is to have no convictions and do nothing at all. Without a conviction, there's only one enemy and that's God. The conviction is bound to have enemies and you will now be known by your enemies.

You should never worry if you get an enemy. You should be very concerned with what kind of an enemy that is. If I knew that a Communist lived down on Longwood Drive, too, don't think there are any down that Republican territory.

But if I knew there was a Communist living down there, it could turn out to be my enemy, I'd thank God to have a Communist for my enemy. But if he's a good man and Putin is my enemy, I ought to be distressed about that. If you have the wrong kind of enemies, woe be to you.

But if you have enemies, blessed art thou, for so the prophets fared before thee. And I might digress, as the preachers call it, from my sermon to the young people. Watch out who your pals are.

You may never have done anything wrong, and nobody could be able to charge you with having done anything wrong. But if you fall in with and make pals of those who are borderline delinquents, you'll be blamed for being a delinquent, too, and you'll have a hard time proving you're not. Now, if I don't know who you are, your name is John Doe, Jr. I said, Pastor, do you know young John Doe, Jr., sixteen years old? And I said, I don't think I know John Doe.

Well, he comes to our church sometimes, tends Sunday school classes, plays baseball Tuesday nights during the summer. Well, what about John Doe, Jr.? What kind of fella is he? Well, I can't tell you. I don't want to commit myself, but I'll tell you who his friends are.

And then he names some cigarette suckers, dirty-tongued, borderline hoodlums, and says he runs around with them. I've got my opinion of John Doe, and I haven't had anybody tell me anything. Somebody says that's guilt by association.

Sure, it's guilt by association. Headed egghead, whoever said we shouldn't be able to attribute guilt by association, ought to go somewhere and have his head examined. Birds of a feather flock together, and the bird that flocks with buzzards is bound to be a buzzard.

And then I see a ryanek creature flocking with buzzards, and I go along on that creature. What's he done? You can't prove anything on him. You haven't got a bit of proof he's done anything wrong.

No, I have never seen him, but I know his crowd. So watch it, dear young people. You say, how can I win where they are? Did you ever hear of a fella going to hell to win a man who wouldn't go to heaven? No, there's a place to start.

You can win them, but you don't have to win them by running with them. And if you run with them, then you will not win them, they'll win you. We had all the young people in this church now that have come to me, some kind of Christian, or at least been interested over the last 25 years, and then who've been lost to us through bad friendships.

We couldn't come. They'd fill every room in the building. They're gone, as they do from all churches, because they get into wrong friendship, but that really is not part of the sermon.

This man was surrounded by enemies, and he was surrounded by a hatredly thing. I don't like the word hatred. There it is, verse 19, bitter hatred.

And always remember sin, hate, always remember that. And the better you are, the more sin will hate you. And then affliction.

Now that's verse 8 to verse 18. Job's experience interprets the word affliction here. In James we have it.

If any man's afflicted, let him pray. That doesn't mean sick. That means trouble like Job was.

He may be sick, but that's only part of his affliction. You can get afflicted without being sick, and you can be sick without really being sick. Because affliction means loss or bereavement or having no one to comfort you.

That was a kind of trouble Job had. He had a sickness too, temporarily, but that was affliction. Job had it, and here it was.

You say, will faith operate? Is the faith of our Father good? At a time when there's hatred, at a time when there's affliction, the answer is yes. Here was a man living in the middle of it and triumphant. And there's troubles.

Verse 17, I don't know all the troubles. And a man that isn't significant enough, if God to let him have troubles, is too insignificant for God to find. If you're significant, if you signify, if you mean anything in the world, you'll have troubles all right.

Paul's experience shows that. Read 2 Corinthians and see what a time of it Paul had. Poor old Paul, his brethren and his enemies and the Jews and the Gentiles and everybody was after it.

In verse 18, you know what I'd like to be able to do? I wish I could stand here and say, believe on Jesus Christ, Christians should, and thou shalt be free from pain. I wish I could do that, but I can't do that, as so are we in this world. And as my Father has sent me, so send I you.

In one sense, Jesus is living over again his life in each one of us. And he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with pain. And he knew it.

Now you might as well brace yourself for it. You're going to suffer some pain in your lifetime. And there isn't a human body yet found that was convenient for pain to lodge.

Wherever you're hurt, you wish it was somewhere else. And you say, that's an inconvenient place. If I could stand it, if it was somewhere else.

And then if it got to the other place, you'd want it somewhere else. There's no place where you can suffer pain conveniently. Pain is always a rude, uncouth, barbarianistic thing.

And it'll come, all right. You can figure on it. It was Shakespeare that said, he's a philosopher when he has a toothache.

It's all right to sit back in our ivory tower and philosophize about the heaven and earth and the things that are going on. But when you get a toothache, you don't have so much success in your ivory tower. But Christianity is good where there is pain.

Oh, the pain of the people of God down the years. Read Foxe's Book of Martyrs. Read any good biography.

If it's not true that the people of God have known pain, and our Lord said, oh, so tenderly to his son, fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. He didn't say, pray to me and I'll deliver you from your suffering. He said, fear things which thou can suffer.

Always remember you can suffer. You can. When the human organism won't take it anymore, but you can suffer.

So brace yourself and thank God for the privilege of feeling a little bit of the sting and the gall and the bitterness that our Lord felt when he was on earth. David had it. Verse 18 talked about pain.

Verse 17 talked about distress. Now distress, of course, is pain, mental and physical, mainly psychological or mental. How distressing mental pain is, it's more distressing than physical pain.

I think it can be proved that rarely does it happen that a man commits suicide because of physical pain. Almost always it's because of mental distress. And then there's desolation, verse 16.

Desolation, the grief of loneliness. I saw a picture in the newspaper here, I think yesterday, of a man being held back by policemen. And I'll never, I think, for many long months, forget that face.

Five of his children were just burning to death in the building, to the point where no living organism could exist second in that awful furnace. And this man was going to rush in there and try to rescue them, and they were holding him in that face. I'll never forget it, I think.

Brother, when the fire was out and they hacked, and that man sat alone, you know what desolation meant. Some of you had a husband in the house and left you. Poor thing.

The worst part about it was, when he went, he took part. He took the part that lives and vibrates. He took your heart with him.

And you scold yourself for it. Like the mother whose son has been nothing but a rascal from the time he was ten years old, a scoundrel. He's in prison.

She can't help it. Her mind doesn't function. It's her, it's her emotions, her nerves, her, she loves that no good boy of hers until she's in prison.

When they walk lockstep, she's walking. The clank of the door, door goes shut, and the great iron key turns, it's turned on her. And when he wears the, she wears the prison dress.

She can't help it. Her heart has been so tied up with that no good. I don't know, I should use the word no good.

Jesus died for him. And so if Jesus died for him, he's worth praying for, and maybe he won't be saved. But anyway, he loves that boy.

So some of you had that happen to you, and you've been desolate. I've had them come to me like that, sick, white, gray face, and tell me in voice that was not a normal voice, that everything was gone, that the one eye, the one only thing to me in the world was forsaken. And I've had men come to me and sit embarrassed, twist their gloves in their hands, and tell me about the wife that walked out.

Poor guy, if he could, he could do something, he'd clip, if he had a pair of scissors, he would clip the umbilical cord and cut himself loose, but he can't. Can't, he sees the voice and remembers the little things, he can't. And so he has a desolation.

Desolation requires loneliness. Then there are perplexities, and the uncertainties, and the confusion, and that we're not pleasing God, all this. And then sin.

David said here four times, I think, that he, about sin. And he prayed to deliver him from his sin. He said, Oh God, don't remember my boyhood, my youth, when I was wild and did these things, sins of my youth, nor my transgressions.

According to thy mercy, remember me, oh God, for thy goodness. His sin bothered him. David knew what every instructed person ought to know, that the only real enemy in the world, that's the only real enemy.

As long as you can lock the door on sin and lock it out, you haven't an enemy. In hell or earth, nothing can separate you from the love of God. It's only sin that's your enemy.

And when sin gives the key to the enemy, and in comes the invader and takes over, then there's distress, and heartache, and grief, and sorrow, and loss of communion, and loss of fruit, and loss of joy. Let's be sure there's no sin any place. Because sin weakened David, and almost is here in this psalm, and gave to his enemies their only real power.

Because, I repeat, the only real danger is within. If you keep anything outside, you're all right. As soon as it gets inside, trouble starts.

And it destroyed the enemy within. The only enemy really that he had, really, was sin. So he prayed, and he confessed, and he trusted God, and he pleaded, and he forced it on God, and he made God listen.

And he didn't grab at every hope that everything was all right. He insisted on knowing. To deliver him completely, so David began to hope in God.

Verse six, remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses. I read a passage in a version. I forgot what version it was.

I have just rearranged my books up here, and I had translated across a bookcase, and leaked down over the other side, four or five of them, and I don't always remember which translation it was. One of them said, O God, thou art loyal to me. And immediately, I got on my knees and thanked God.

God's loyal to his people. The loyalty of love, and the loyalty of wisdom. David knew it, and so David trusted God and said, Lord, your loyal, and your faithfulness, and your tender mercies have been ever of old.

This is the Lord. Verse nine, the meek he will guide in judgment, the meek he will teach his way. Verse fourteen, the secret of the Lord's with them that fear him.

Fifteen, he shall pluck my feet out of the net. That's one thing we didn't remember. A net, a booby trap.

Booby traps for David. David said, I can't see the booby traps. I don't know where they are.

And you know how David, he escaped them by not looking for them at all. He escaped them by looking to the Lord. And the Lord, the Lord plucked his feet out of the net, and he didn't get into any booby traps.

A lot of you dear people, you're developing a soul. You're always afraid. People are always calling me, or writing me, or coming to see me, and there's always some little old pimple on, and they forget all about the cancer in the soul.

But some little old thing, afraid of some booby trap. Can I do this? May I should do about this? Think I ought to take in a gram? What do you think about the opera, Mr. Tozer? What do you think about television? What do you think Mr. Tozer about? Don't bother me about such things. Those aren't the things that matter, sir.

There's something bigger than that. If they should prove booby traps, the way to escape them is to look straight to the Lord Jesus Christ. Straight at him, straight at him.

And as you see Jesus, you out of the net, and you will escape the net. So here we have a man. You have a man in the middle of life, a living man in a dead world, a good man in a bad world, a right man in a wrong world, a man of God in the soul with men of flesh.

And he was living in the middle of it, and living right in the middle of it, and thanking God in the middle of it, and fruitful in the middle of it, serving his generation by the will of God. So here was a living man, believing and praying. After all, trust and obey, he believed and he prayed.

The devil can silence you so you can't pray anymore. That's one of the first things he has to do. When an enemy comes into a country, one of the first things he wants to do is to destroy communication.

If he comes to your home, if he's a wise burglar, that is, wise in the ways of the devil, he'd cut the telephone wires before he comes in. Communication with help, the source of help, then you're an easy victim. So prayer is the source of communication between you and help.

And if the devil can cut the wires and discourage you so you don't pray, you're an easy victim. In God's name I beseech you, begin to pray. You've had a rough time of it, maybe some of you have, and I suppose I don't even know you.

You've been treated rough this last week. You've gone through hard things. Well, if you've prayed, then I say, thank God, and I wouldn't have had it otherwise.

But if you're discouraged and your prayers are coming to you, then watch out. Better get your communications established, better get to God again. You say, I can't pray, I'm blue, failed, and I can't pray.

Oh, you can say Abba, you can say that much, can't you? We confess our sins, he's faithful and just and forgives us from all unrighteousness. And he gives forth the spirit of his Son, saying, Abba, Father. And Abba, you know, in one Arabic word for father, and various other languages have it, Abba.

And they tell me that Abba is a word you can speak without teeth. You can take your teeth out and still say Abba. But if it was a difficult thing, you'd have to get your teeth out and say Abba before you have any teeth.

A little fella I see back there now, I can see through the glass, somebody holding a little chap. He can't, he can say Abba. And so we can say that.

If you feel so little and hopeless and useless that you can't pray, if you can't pray like a baby, pray like a newborn babe and say Abba. Keep saying that, God will hear your prayer and know what you mean. Smith, that great English writer of several generations ago, he never knew what to do with punctuation, never.

He was a brilliant writer, stylist to perfection, but he never knew how to punctuate. So he wrote a manuscript and then he wrote one page. And on that page of tuation marks there were in the English language and said, no, sprinkle these around where they'll do the most good.

He didn't know where they belong, but he hoped somebody did. And so I say to you this, just tell God, oh God, I don't know how to pray. I don't know what to say, but hear my heart and sprinkle it around where it won't fit where it ought to be.

I'm too dumb. I don't even know how to pray, God. Ah, God loves people like that.

The meek he will, the meek he will teach his way. And if you will simply meekly say, Abba, Father, for Jesus' sake, pretty soon you will get eloquent. And then the communications are established.

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