

# Dangers in the Way #1 'Sources of Danger'

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer discusses the various sources of danger in the Christian life, emphasizing the need for spiritual vigilance and reliance on God for protection.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 18:2, Psalm 34:17-19, Isaiah 41:10, John 10:10, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Ephesians 6:11-12, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-9, 1 John 2:15-17

**Topics:** "Vigilance in Faith", "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

A.W. Tozer addresses the sources of danger in the Christian life, emphasizing that dangers arise from the world, the devil, and our own unmodified flesh. He explains that the world represents society organized outside of God's will, which poses a threat to the soul. Tozer warns against the subtlety of the devil, who operates as a tempter and accuser, and stresses the importance of being vigilant against the dangers that come from within ourselves. He encourages believers to seek refuge in God, who is our Rock and Fortress, and to remain alert to the spiritual dangers that can lead us astray. Ultimately, Tozer reassures that deliverance is possible through faith in God.

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## Transcript

" Dangers in the Way and How to Avoid Them Introduction "

"Sources of Danger"

March 20, 1955

Now, over the next few Sundays, I want to talk to you about dangers in the way and how we can avoid them. I read the other day these words, I will love Thee O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my Rock and my Fortress, my Deliverer, my God, my Strength, my Buckler, the Horn of my Salvation and my High Tower. And I said, How is this? What does a man want and what does he need of a rock or a fortress or deliverer? A rock is a place for a man of course to hide from his enemies. A fortress is a place for a soldier to go in. And a deliverer is somebody that delivers another from his troubles and dangers. A buckler is something you wear on as armor. The horn of salvation was, It was a figure drawn from the animals who won with their horns and he said God was his Horn, and my High Tower, a place where a man got up and looked out over the terrain, watched for approaching enemies and warned the fortress below.

Now, I said why are these words necessary here in a psalm and the answer came, because the Psalms are a reflected image of the Christian life. All life's experiences are found in the Psalms. You will find here, life's dangers, life's joy, life's sadness, life's victories, life's work and labor and defeat; you will find life's night and life's day, or shadows under sunshine, and life and even death itself, you will find here in the Psalms.

The Psalms are a mirror of this spiritual life. And in this Psalm we find words which indicate, that obviously, there are dangers in the Christian way, dangers from which we must escape, or know how to meet and conquer. And this is not my personal conclusion, but the whole Bible says the same thing. I conclude therefore, that since real dangers to the spiritual life do exist, it is proper that God's people should be alerted to them, and that any Shepherd desiring to be a faithful Shepherd should point them out to the people. And then, not only point them out, but point a way of escape from them. It's no good examining the patient if you don't have a cure. It's no good warning of the danger of attack if you don't have a bomb shelter. It's no good knowing that your enemy is coming if you don't know how to meet your enemy.

So, over the next weeks, I'm going to speak in the mornings on "Dangers in the Way" and how we can avoid them. Now this morning, I'm not going to talk about any dangers, that is, I am not going to mention them specifically, but I want to mention the directions from which they come. There are only three directions from which danger comes to the Christian life. These are not in themselves dangers, but they are the cardinal directions from whence the dangers come. They are, the world through which we journey, and the god of this world, and our own unmortified flesh. Now, those are the three directions from whence dangers come that make it necessary that we have a rock, a fortress, deliverer, a buckler and a high tower and so on.

Now, I want to mention these briefly and explain them so that as we go on we will have them as a background against which we can do our religious and spiritual thinking. There's first of all the world. Now when I say that the world is a source of danger to the Christian. I don't mean the wind and the storm and the lightning and the sea and the desert, all of which are very beautiful and very wonderful. I do not mean these dangers. Now, I know that there is danger. How long ago was it that the storm came through Southern Illinois and I think there were 800 killed and a couple of thousand injured and a hundred million dollars worth of damage done, if my figures are correct.

Now, I know that the wind is a source of danger, but it's not a source of danger to the soul. It's only a source of danger to the body and I have not that before me. And then the lightning, I know. I saw a man helped carry a man in who was struck down by lightning. He was standing in a new building that was being put up. And the porch was put up and the bricklayers had laid the chimney. And he was standing by that chimney when a storm came up. And the lightning struck the old gentlemen and killed him instantly. Now, there is danger from the lightning, but it's not a real danger. David was thinking, as David was a spiritual man. And David might have been thinking as the external shell of proof of his physical enemies. But always David saw the spiritual side of things. And the Holy Ghost didn't put this Psalm here to remind us that there was danger from lightning and storm and soldiers. Neither is the sea a source of danger, neither is the desert. There are certainly many bones lying in the desert, and how many bodies are floating around in the deep tomb that we call the oceans of the world. All that I well know, but you can destroy a human body and not injure a man at all.

We Christians ought to get hold of that as a basic philosophy of the Christian life, that you can destroy a man's body and not injure the man at all. You can tear down the temple and not hurt the Spirit that dwells within. You can cause a man's bones to lie in the desert and the man's spirit can be unharmed in the presence of its Father and its God, so that the dangers that I say that are in the world are not the ordinary dangers, not even the A-bomb. I think it's time that we Christians call a moratorium on A-bomb and H-bomb scares. I think that we ought to remember that that's not our source of danger. You can polarize a man with an H bomb, but not all the H-bombs in no world can touch his immortal spirit. Real dangers are dangers that get through to the soul and get through to the spirit of a man.

Now, these threats I say are only to the body. There was John the Baptist; soldiers cut his head off, but they didn't hurt John at all. When our Savior died on the cross, His body was destroyed, that is, it was broken for me as He put it, broken for you. But the man Christ Jesus was preserved in the bosom of God. And so with Paul, when they cut off his head. Why, he said, I know that there is prepared for me, and that there's laid up for me a crown of glory. So, he went to that crown, rather than to defeat when they cut his head off. No real harm can come through the physical body to a man, but only through the soul.

What then do we mean by the world when we say that real dangers come to the Christian through the world? Well, it is through human society. A gentleman out in front of this church the other day, gave me a little booklet about the size of the average Gospel of John. He said he was an Episcopalian. He comes here sometimes Sunday night. He lives down the block. A very wonderful, friendly Christian brother. And they they put out, the Episcopal Church puts out a little booklet for Lent, and my wife and I have been looking that over and reading it Sunday mornings, I mean on mornings for prayer. And yesterday, quite to my delight and surprise there was a message on the world, and a warning, a sharp warning that we should avoid the world and escape it and get away from it; that it was dangerous to us. And it said, what do we mean by the world? It said, society organized outside the will of God.

Now, you couldn't find a better definition for the world than that, society outside the will of God. And that's human society. As long as sin remains, human society will be a threat to the Christian soul. Its sin, its unbelief, its diversions, its ambitions, and its spirit. However, skillfully disguised, the world is still the world. And that is why the Bible is so very stern and so very insistent. You will find lots of Christian leaders who will apologize and compromise and smooth things over, but you'll find nothing but stern insistence in the Bible that we are to forsake the world. And that we ought not to in anywise be influenced by its sin, nor its unbelief, nor its diversions, nor its ambitions, nor its spirit. In any sense of the word, the dangers that come to the Christian, come through the world party. That's one of the directions from whence they come.

Now, blessed are you if you know what I'm speaking about. And blessed are you if you know how to put it in practice. Blessed are you if God has opened your eyes to know what I mean. If He has not, I don't know very much that I can do. I sometimes feel as Jesus must have felt when He said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto thee. How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. And verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me until the time come when you shall say, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

I would like to prophesied a little. I would like to stand here to tell you something. I foresee it, that the man that God's eyes, whose eyes God has opened, I see the time coming, I see the time coming when worldly evangelicalism will be deserted one by one, by all the holy men whose eyes are open, and their house will be left desolate, and they'll not have a man of God, nor a man in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, left among

them. We have become so worldly. And I say, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I, but she you would not listen.

Then so, the man who sees it is put on the shelf and written off as being somewhat of a decent chap, but somewhat fanatical. And watch it my brethren, when the day is going to come, I'd like to live a hundred years yet. I don't want to die, but I'm willing to die tonight. But I would like to live a hundred years yet to watch its developments and see how things are going. And I'd like to see that which I foresee come to pass. And I would like to live to see the time when the holy and the separated and the envisioned walk out of worldly fundamentalism and form a group of their own. And get off the sinking ship and let her go down in the brackish cruel waters of worldliness while we form a new ark and ride out the storm. Because the world is upon us and the Bible has no compromise to make with it. The Bible has a message for it. And the Bible calls it back home and the Bible sends us to it, but never to compromise with it. And never to walk its way, and only and rather to save it if possible, or save as many as we can. That's one direction.

So my Christian friend, you're settling back snugly into your foam rubber chair, and resting in your faith and John 3:16 and the fact that you accepted Christ. You had better watch yourself. Take heed to thyself, lest thou also be found wanting. Take heed and search your own heart lest, and all has been said and done, it is found that you have been tied up with the world. A stock illustration which you can't refrain from giving. I don't use many, except the ones I make up myself. But, I heard this and I think it's true. They said when it was still snowing and cold up at Niagara Falls, when there were great blocks and chunks of ice going over the falls and sheep had died; I've seen the same thing happen. I could see how it would be. When sheep had died and had been thrown, or had fallen into the waters. They said that they were floating down, these great bloated sheep, floating down and over the falls, and some great American eagles were swooping down on the sheep and riding along and tearing at their flesh, and eating and gorging until they started over the falls. And then they screamed and waved their wings and circled and soared into the sun and back up the river again to find another carcass. And then getting down onto it, and tearing it, and eating until it started over the falls, and then pulling loose and circling away.

But it was very cold weather and it was those times when you freeze and don't know you're freezing. And they said, one great Eagle was tearing away with its great talon buried in the wool of the sheep, and unknown to it, its talons had frozen into the wool. And when it felt the sheep give away under it and ready for the plunge, it screamed once more and waved its wings, but it was frozen into the wool. And with one last scream, it went over the falls to its death on the rocks below.

Now, we have been living off the world and floating around on the world and then gracefully pulling away when it went into the gutter. But still, we've been riding the carcass of the world, and then just guess, getting away in time. How far can I go and not go over? How far can I go and still not go over? Would you please answer in your magazine and tell me what I can do and still not be lost? Just how far can I go? Well, we've been doing that and doing that, and one of these days, we're going to freeze our claws into the world's wool and go over with the world. There's only one thing today to do, spread your broad wings and soar into the sun and let the floating carcasses of the world alone to the god of this world, Satan. That's another source. That's a direction from whence all these dangers come; any danger may come.

Now, the devil is called by four names in the Bible. He's called the Dragon, the Serpent, the devil and Satan. He's called the Dragon in such places as Revelation 12. That is, it's the devil when he's in government. When the devil in the Roman Empire was busy destroying the church, they named him the Dragon. And they said, he is like the dragon. And I can see how the Romans; they say that thirteen million

Christians alone perished around the city of Rome in the first two centuries. And I can see as they saw their loved ones led away and beheaded one after the other. I can see how they said this is the Dragon. This is the devil in government. And I think of the six million Jews that died in gas chambers and other means and methods of execution under Hitler. I can see how they might say, Satan is in this man Hitler, and he's thrashing his dirty destructive tail around and killing people. Whenever the devil gets into government and starts persecuting, he's called the dragon in the Bible.

Communism today is killing them over there. We have hope and optimism, but we don't know how many are dying, but we do know it must be many. That's the devil in government. Now, I don't say the devil is in every government. It would be pretty hard for me to believe that the devil could ever get into as kindly a man as our President, or as fine a young man as our Vice President, or as fine a man as our Governor, or as fine an old gentleman as our mayor. I'm not saying the devil is in these men. Don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying that politicians are devil-possessed men. I'm only saying that there are times when this dragon can so wind himself into government that he takes it over and starts his destructiveness, then it's the dragon. He's the Dragon when he's destroying it.

And then, there he's called the Serpent also. The same one only he's got a different mask on this time. In here, he wouldn't hurt you for the world. He wouldn't kill you. He wouldn't put you in jail. He wouldn't cut your head off. He's a wily, smiling, slick tempter working by cunning and deception, and winning by compromise and tolerance and patience, and getting your confidence and then selling you the Brooklyn Bridge. The confidence man of Hell with his tricks and his cunning and his deceitfulness. That's the serpent; the smooth slick serpent. He didn't go to the desert to destroy Jesus with a blow on the head. He went and said, speak to these stones that they be made bread. He knew that if Jesus the Son of God had listened to the devil and turned and spoke to a stone and done a miracle out of the will of God, that he would have destroyed Him more easily than if he had put a spear through His heart. But he didn't tell Him that. He was a compromiser. He said, poor you, you're hungry aren't you. Patted his shoulder and said, poor you. Why don't you get some bread here? You've got the power, you know you have. And Jesus said, a man shall not live by bread alone. He said, I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world, and Jesus said something to the effect that He was not to fall down and worship anybody, but worship God alone. But he was also smooth and slick. Ah my brother, the devil is an orator, and he's as smooth as a salesman, the wrong kind. He'll sell you anything. So that's a direction.

Now I don't want you to become devil-conscious. Even though I'm talking about the god of this world at the same time, I don't want you to be devil-conscious, because I have met Christians who are jumpy because of the devil. The best thing to do is keep your eyes on Jesus and let him take care of the devil. But always remember, he is a source of danger. And then, he, this god of the world is called the devil. I've called him the Dragon, the Serpent, and now he is called the devil. That he is diabolus. He is the opposer. He is what you call a counter puncher.

I've always been interested in boxing. Just the wind off a good blow would knock me out. But I've always been interested in it anyhow. And I listen to them sometimes on the radio, the counter puncher and not much anymore. But I used to be much interested. I used to box when I was a kid, a very, very lot. And I could at least lift the gloves. But there's such a thing as a punch and there's a counter puncher. and the counter puncher is this, he never leads, but he waits for the other fellow to lead, and then he ducks and counter punches. Always, for every blow that is aimed at him, he has a defense and then and a quick counter punch. And there have been great fighters who are not punchers, but counter punchers. And the devil is a perfect counter puncher. No matter what a Christian tries to do, the devil blocks him and hits him

a blow. Not a bad one, just enough to stun him a bit. And wherever you find the work of God going on, you'll find the devil there counterpunching, hitting back, hitting back, always hitting back, always hitting back. He's not omnipresent, but he's ubiquitous. There's a difference. God is omnipresent, present everywhere at once, but the devil gets you around so fast that it adds up to almost the same thing.

So, no matter where the work of God is going forward, you will find the devil there blocking and countering and hindering. I told you when I preached some years ago about how the devil got his name, the devil. There used to be in the Greek Olympic races, they had some fellow who they didn't want to win, and some scoundrel would hide with a long javelin, a long, lance affair, like a clothesline pole. You wouldn't know what I mean by that. And as a racer would go racing down on his way to win, this fellow would hide behind a hedge somewhere, and as the racer raced by, he would just throw that lance between the fellow's legs. But you know what would happen? He'd be rolling yet, because he was doing time pretty fast, and when that lance went in between, it didn't hurt him much, but it just tumbled him over, and by the time he got untangled, the other fellow is five miles down the road. And that's the way the devil works. That fellow was called Diabolus. And they just put that name right on to the devil. They said, that's the way he works. And a child of God is running the holy race. Satan is either blocking him, always blocking him and and tripping him so that he falls. Now that's a danger.

Then another. Another name for the devil is Satan. And as Satan, he is the accuser of the brethren. He tries to destroy a reputation before God and before men. Whenever a man's reputation is torn down, you may be sure who did it. Whatever agent he may have used, or whatever old gossip he may have gotten into, he's the author of it. So, we have this god of the world; the Serpent, the Dragon, the devil and Satan.

Then, the third source of danger is the unmodified self. That's the direction from which great dangers come to the Christian. Now, I'm going to bring this to a close, but this is only really an introduction. But, I point out the dangers I'm to preach about, and these sources of danger are very, very real. They're not imaginary. They are real and only the very reckless will ignore them. Only a reckless driver will ignore a red light. Only a very reckless driver will ignore a sign says, "S Curve" or "Slippery when Wet." It takes a fool of some kind to ignore danger signals. And no Christian who is serious, I'm preaching, I want to at least preach to serious-minded Christians. And if you're a serious-minded Christian, then you will not take this as just one more sermon to fill up time. But you will take this series in a very serious way. The serious and the wise want to know where the dangers are. And they want to know what they are. And they want to know how they can recognize them, and how they can overcome.

Now, I'm going to name some for instance, I won't name all now, but I'm going to preach on the dangers of prosperity. I believe there's real danger to the souls of men in prosperity. I'm going to mention the dangers of adversity. I think there's a real danger to the sons of God in adversity. I'm going to talk about the dangers of idleness, with nothing to do, and I'm going to talk about the dangers of busyness, with too much to do, and dangers of victory and dangers of defeat. There are dangers that come from one of these three directions, but they come.

Now, what are you going to do? Just name dangers over the next weeks, Ah, my brethren, we're going to name them and show you how to escape them. And then we're going to show you what God said here to this man David. Notice, he said the Lord is my Rock and Fortress and Deliverer. He had to have help. So he said, I will call upon the Lord who was worthy to be praised. So shall I be saved from mine enemies. And he said, God sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy and from them which hated me, for they were too strong for me. He brought me forth also

into a large place. He delivered me because He delighted in me. I believe that deliverance is not only possible, but normal for the child of God, if we have our eyes open.

God doesn't want us to walk around with our eyes closed nor careless. But if our eyes are open, we don't need to be struck down. If our eyes are open, we don't need to fall, for our eyes are open. No matter what direction, no matter what the enemies are, we have David's God for our help. And if we will call upon the Lord and cry unto Him, He will hear from His holy temple and He will send from above and take us and deliver us out of many waters. And He will deliver us because He delights in us.

And never was a time when I felt that God's people should be more optimistic than now. Never a time when I felt that they should be more encouraged in God than right now. We're living in wild, turbulent, dangerous, dramatic days. The four winds are striving on the great sea. And the moon is mourning the time when it shall be turned to blood. You and I need not fear. God is on our side. And God's on His holy throne and in His holy temple. And all is right with the man or woman who dares to believe. Do you believe it? Amen.

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