

Dangers in the Way #5 'Dangers of Arrogance and Defeat'

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon warns against the dangers of arrogance and defeat, emphasizing the importance of humility and reliance on God.

Scripture: Psalm 18:2, Proverbs 24:16, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 23:12, Romans 8:38-39, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 4:13, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5-6

Topics: "Overcoming Discouragement", "Humility"

Description

A.W. Tozer addresses the dangers of arrogance and defeat in the Christian life, emphasizing that success can lead to pride and a false sense of superiority, while failure can result in discouragement and defeatism. He warns that both states can hinder spiritual growth and relationship with God, urging believers to remain humble and reliant on God's grace. Tozer illustrates his points with biblical examples, including the triumphs and failures of Israel, and the humility of Jesus. He encourages Christians to avoid making decisions during times of discouragement and to remember God's unwavering love and promises, regardless of their circumstances. Ultimately, Tozer reminds us that our worth is not tied to success or failure, but to our relationship with God.

Transcript

"Dangers of Arrogance and Defeat"

"Message #5 in Dangers in the Way and How to Avoid Them "

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Arrogance is that sin that follows in the wake of success. You know, it's an old trick of radio and theatre and newspapers and novels and all the rest; the arrogance of the rich lady. I've seen a few of them in my time. I know their voices when I hear them on trains or hotel lobbies. I know their voices. They've bought their way through life. They've bought their way through. They only have to pay for it and get it and boss everybody around. They had the money to pay for it. And so, the maid became a slave, and the gardener became a slave, and everybody became a slave, and bought their way through. And they get a tone of voice. I've heard a tone of voice. Somebody addressing somebody else and turned around and said, now that's a dowager, that's a dowager. And sure enough, there she would be. They're always big. I wonder

why? I never figured that one out. But they're always big. You never saw a little dowager. They're always big. But there's that tone of command and that superior look and superior way of bearing, even though it takes several dressmakers and lots of other people to help them. They learn to so balance themselves that they've got pride and arrogance sticking out all the way around.

And now that's bad, brother, and it's always bad when it gets into the church of God, the successful man. I remember once I tried to call a very famous preacher and ask him if he'd come and preach. And I couldn't even reach him. He was too busy. He couldn't talk to me. It was good many years ago, I don't know whether he would talk to me now or not in deference to my advancing years. But he wouldn't then. The Lord will always punish us for that kind of thing, brothers and sisters. God will never let you high hat anybody else. Never, if you're a Christian. Now, if you're a sinner, God won't care. It's just one more sin and you will carry that one to hell with you with all the rest. But if you're a Christian, the Lord who loves you too much by letting you get away with it, to let you get away with it. So, watch out for arrogance. Watch out for the danger of arrogance; assuming that you are somebody indeed. The Lord had no servants. He bossed nobody around. He was the Lord, but he never took the tyrannical attitude toward anybody. You say, what will the Lord do then if I get arrogant and presumptuous and full of pride over my victory and success. Well, the Lord will rebuke you and chasten you painfully.

Our Lord Jesus Christ once, rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday centuries ago. He was a carpenter's son, they thought, at least the son of the wife of a carpenter, though God was his true Father. He was not brought up in the schools. He did not know nor use the jargon of the learned halls. He spoke the plain language of the Jerusalem streets. And then one day, they put him on a little donkey, strew palm branches and garments in the way and the mobs lined the streets on all sides and shouted, Hosanna to Him that cometh in the name of the Lord. There was success. There was recognition. There was honor to whom honor was due. There was public acclaim. There would have been the place where Jesus suddenly could say, well, maybe the devil was right. Maybe I can be king of the world. Maybe my friends who wanted me to be king were right about this. And He could have reached into the depths of His mighty power and become king overnight. But He dismissed the little donkey, went into the temple and cleansed it, and then a week later went out to die. He would not allow any success of any kind, any temporary success, to lead him astray.

You want to watch it. If you get established and accepted in your field as being a victorious, successful person, you're in danger. And if in your Christian life, you make some strides forward, you're in danger. The old devotional writers would not grant that any man had made any forward progress, if he knew it. They always said he's conscious that he's getting somewhere in the kingdom of God. That's pride, and until that dies, he's getting nowhere. And Paul said if any man thinketh that he amounts to anything, let him know that he won't amount to anything until he gets over it. That's paraphrased, but it's approximately what Paul said.

So, let's remember, they may say Hosanna today, but next Friday they'll say, away with this man from the earth. Crucify Him, crucify him. And the same crowd, the same multitude that said, Hosanna, said, crucify Him. So, keep that in mind. The great politician today can be executed tomorrow or in jail. A man highly honored today can be looked upon with scorn tomorrow. And the same crowd that thought you were worthy of acclaim today, may turn their backs on you tomorrow. Never tie yourself up to public opinion, and never accept any success you may have as being due to your superior gifts. Thank God for anything you get and then go on.

Now, second is the danger of defeat or in failure. That's exactly of course the opposite. The best example of this that I know of is where defeat came upon failure. You remember the famous battle of the Walls of Jericho, and how the walls came tumbling down. And Israel became overconfident, misplaced her confidence and thought she was doing it and went out to Ai. And they only took a few thousand along. They said, look what we did at Jericho and they hadn't done anything, only shout and blow a ram's horn. God had done it all, but they thought they had done it. I don't know how they figured it. They must have thought the wind from the horn blew the walls down, for they thought they had done it. So, the next day or so, they said oh, we'll take Ai and said boy, we're really, we're in high gear now. And nothing generates success like success. And we'll don't take Ai the same as we took Jericho. And they went out with their chest high and their heads held high and fled ignominiously before those of Ai and 35,000 died. Their defeat followed their victory as effect follows cause.

So, there's danger that we have. There's danger in defeat or failure. It can plunge us into discouragement. That is, it can take out of our spirit, hope and optimism and drive. Discouragement, incidentally, is hardly a sin, but it can lead to any number of sins. Of course, to discourage is to dishearten. It's to weaken the intention to want stomach for religion. That's an old Shakespearean expression that I run into every once in a while. I like it. He says, he hath no stomach for it, meaning that he just hasn't any zeal for that job. He doesn't like it. Like a sick person who's completely lost his appetite. And they say, but you must eat, but he said I have absolutely no appetite. Then he forces something down. That's discouragement. That's loss of stomach.

And in the kingdom of God a lack of victory, a defeat or two, a good hard reversal, often drives us into a state where we have no stomach for anything. We pray, but we have no stomach for it. We take it like food we don't enjoy. We go to church, but we don't care for the church. Nothing means anything to us. The hymns are dull and tasteless and the sermon is a bore. And the whole thing is tasteless, because we have lost our stomach. We are disheartened. We're discouraged. And there are a lot of God's people that have done it. Now, they haven't become unborn again. They haven't lost eternal life. Their relation to God hasn't changed any. They're still his children. Christ is still pleading their cause at the right hand of the Father. Heaven is still their home. But for the time being, they've lost their stomachs. They have no appetite. They've been defeated. And so defeatism has got hold of them. Lots of churches are like that. I've gone into churches where it was obvious that nobody expected anything to happen. And the result of course is what you'd expect, nothing did.

Now, the danger of defeat is that it will bring defeatism. It is never a disgrace to lose, but it's questionable to allow your loss to give you a psychology of defeat. And that's what can happen if we don't look out. There's a real danger in defeat. It is as though a man were to slip and fall on an icy sidewalk. And then he would say, I don't suppose there's any use for me to try it again. But he would finally struggle to his feet and go another block and fall again. Then he would say, well, I know something is seriously wrong with my equilibrium. And I'll have to, I'll have to accept myself now. I never can walk up right again on ice. Well, of course, he'd have to go to bed too. But that's defeatism. It's the allowing of a reverse to put a permanent reverse in your heart. A Good man falleth seven times but he getteth up again, says the Proverbs.

I remember once over in one of our Eastern conferences, walking by a porch and there on the porch sat a young preacher, a fine-looking young fellow. But that morning, his chin was just about reaching the ground. And I started to tease him bit and gave him a nice pleasantry, and no response, no response. He didn't smile, didn't respond, except to say, Mr. Tozer, something awful has happened to me. Something awful has happened to me. And I said, what's the matter? What's happened here? Well, he said, I just

took my examination for ordination and I flunked it. I flunked my examination, and they won't ordain me.

And I said, listen, Lincoln was defeated twice before he was elected. If God has called you, go to your examining board and find out what you didn't know, buy some books and study up on it and ask for another examination. And his chin began to come up, at least where you could see it, or I could see it. And he said, that is what you would suggest? I said, sure, don't allow a little thing like this to get you down. If God has called you, He's not withdrawing the call because there were some questions you couldn't answer it. Study up on it. Find out what the trouble is and bore into the book and get hold of it and pray and ask God to help you, and the next time you go through all right, and that's just exactly what happened. He's now one of our successful young pastors, getting along fine. But if somebody hadn't come around there, it might have been the end for him. He'd probably got in the old Chevrolet and gone home and said there's no use. God has let me down; the Spirit has deserted me and I don't even know enough to pass an examination. You can't quit like that brethren, you can't.

Suppose you pray for something and you don't get it and it's obvious, you're not going to get it. Don't let that finish you off. Maybe you're not living right. Maybe you're praying selfishly. Maybe you've misunderstood the will of God. Go to the Scriptures. Search it out and get right with God. Give God a chance at you. And then, try it again and press on. And finally, the Lord will either tell you, now hold on, you're praying for the wrong thing. Pray for this thing and He'll give it to you, or else we'll give you what you prayed for in the first time, but don't be defeated. I don't have this long face for nothing brothers and sisters. I am a born pessimist. And I can see the dark side of the fleeciast cloud that ever floated in this cerulean blue above. But I've trained myself by the Word of God and prayer never to look that way at things, but to take God's side and take the resurrection side and the victory side and live on that side of things.

Now, I want to give you some rules and if you haven't gotten anything up to here maybe you'll get help here. I want to give you some rules for the moment of discouragement, the hour when you have no stomach. You know you ought to eat but nothing tastes good. Prayer doesn't taste good; you feel you've failed. You've been defeated in your work and your effort. Either in your business or in your school work or in your spiritual religious work. The class got smaller soon as you took it.

We tried to elect a superintendent here one time. Brother Chase will remember this but nobody else does; a wonderful man. We liked him so well we wanted to make him superintendent of the Sunday school and we suggested to him, brother, the nominating committee would like to present your name. What do you say? They like you and we think the church would like to have you as superintendent. No doubt you'll be elected. Well, he said, I don't like to turn you down, but he said, my past experience has not been very encouraging. He said one time I was superintendent of Sunday school and the Sunday school got smaller and smaller from the time I took it over. And at another time in a different church, I was superintendent of the Sunday school and the Sunday school not only got smaller and smaller, but the church closed up. And I said, brother, we won't say any more about it. The nominating committee will no doubt will want to look for somebody else. Now, I have no doubt, but what that gentleman had been the victim of a couple of funny coincidences. And I believe that if with the help he would have had and the prayers of the people and if he'd had a new psychology, a new outlook, I believe he could have succeeded in the Sunday school. But you can't take a man who has no stomach and force-feed him. So, we didn't force feed him. We elected somebody else.

But now, if your class has gotten smaller and your prayers just aren't seeming to get answered, and somebody has, in a roundabout way, suggested that you're not what you thought you were. Maybe you sing. Maybe you were an artist. Maybe you paint on china. Maybe you're a budding architect. Maybe you've got a professional job, and you're not getting the recognition that you think you should have, and you're just discouraged.

Now, I want to give you four rules. And if you'll remember these, they'll help you. First, do not accept the judgment of your own heart about yourself, because anybody's heart is likely to go astray. And a discouraged heart will always go astray. So don't think about yourself the way you feel about yourself. Don't accept the testimony of your own heart about yourself. Go to God and Christ. God loved you; Christ loved you enough to die for you. He thought you were worth something. If you're a converted man, the Holy Ghost dwells in some measure in your bosom. And he hasn't turned you away. And if everybody else thinks and the gossips and those that talk around behind your back, and it gets to you. They think you're not so good in your profession. They think your voice isn't quite as glorious as you would like to think it is. Maybe your brains and wisdom are not as great as you'd like to think they are. Somebody has gotten the news and it got around to you by the grapevine, and you've heard it and your blue.

First, don't accept the judgment of your own discouraged heart about yourself. If Gideon had accepted the judgment of his own heart, he would have stayed in that depression and pounded out a few grapes and made a little wine and a little oil and kept out of sight. But God came to that defeated, discouraged Gideon and said, get up thou mighty man of God. And he said, did you mean me? Me, a mighty man of God hiding in a hole in the ground? He said, you say, me? God said, I said you. Get up. Get up. He got up. And he accepted God's judgment of him and went out and became victorious and put the Midianites straight.

The second rule is, make no important decisions while you're discouraged. Now, this is serious. Make no important decisions while you're discouraged. If he has proposed, never say yes, while you're down, as if anybody ever was down under those circumstances. I don't know. I'll back out on that one. But never say yes to anything and never say no to anything while you're blue. Get up, look down on it and then make your decision. Because if you make a decision when you're discouraged, it'll be the wrong decision every time. Never resign when you're discouraged. I suppose there isn't a pastor in all of Cook County that hasn't at some time written out his resignation on Saturday, and then Sunday, the blessing came and he tore it up. Don't write out your resignation when you're discouraged. Don't resign from anything when you're discouraged. When you're down and blue, don't move. Don't sell your property. Don't buy a property. Don't accept a job. Don't do anything when you're down. Get down before God and get straightened out. Get the sunshine in. Ask God to roll the clouds away and give you the light of His countenance. Take the defeat out of your spirit and the reverses out of your heart. And then, when you're on top of the world and you say well, I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me, then make your decision.

Now, third thing is, remember that failure, whether it's business failure or any other kind of failure, doesn't make you any less dear to God. Oh, I'm so glad God doesn't look at our bank balance to know how much to love us. Preachers sometimes do. They're always careful to play golf with the big boys. And the little boys that can't help them much, they don't. Now, that's unkind, but then I am an unkind man when I have to tell truth. And I know literally, that's so. Some fellows love to cultivate the boys with the bank account. And they're just as good as anybody else as far as that's concerned, God bless them, because they will give most of it to missions if they're in the Alliance anyhow. But remember that the fact that you have failed doesn't make God any less loving towards you and doesn't affect God's love for you at all. Neither does it

affect the promises. And the fourth thing is remember the promises of God. Go to the Bible and read the promises. Read the promises. Read the promises until your heart begins to leap with the joy of the promises. They're still good, even though you've suffered reverses.

Now, I close. Today, God is everything. Not success, not victory, but God. Not winning, not losing, but God. God is everything. My victory can't enrich God and my defeat cannot impoverish God. If I make good, I bring God nothing. And if I peter out, I robbed God of nothing, if my heart's honest and I'm right. God is our Rock it says back here, and our Fortress and our Deliverer and our Buckler and our Strength and our High Tower. And He sent from above and He took me and He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me. He brought me forth also to a large place and He delivered me because He delighted in me.

Now, I have this little verse. I've loved it for years and I'll give it to you. Thou wilt light my candle. The Lord God will enlighten my darkness. This poor, little light of mine. Maybe it's gone out. Maybe the little candle has gone out. Well, God will light your candle for you. He'll light it and He will enlighten your darkness. Believe it? Amen. All right. God is our refuge and we're not going to let victory spoil us nor defeat, defeat us. We're going to take them in stride, win or lose, we're on God's side. And if we keep away from sin, and keep above it all and keep happy in God, we're winning whether we know it or not. So, we can be just as happy when we're not happy, as we are when we are happy, because that is the prerogative of faith.

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