

(Dangers in the Way Series): Dangers of Prosperity and Adversity

by A.W. Tozer

Prosperity and adversity are both dangers that can lead Christians away from God, and it's essential to maintain a strong relationship with God regardless of external circumstances.

Duration: 46:51

Scripture: Luke 12:16-21, Luke 21:34, Revelation 3:18-20

Topics: "Prosperity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the dangers that Christians face in their journey towards heaven. He emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and addressing these perils, as ignoring them is a rejection of the Bible. The preacher also highlights the need for Christians to detach themselves from earthly possessions and worldly philosophies. He references the story of Nebuchadnezzar as an example of someone who had to learn this lesson the hard way. The sermon concludes with a reminder of God's faithfulness in leading and providing for His people.

Transcript

David says, the Lord is his rock, and his fortress, and his deliverer, and his strength, and his buckler, and his high tower. Verse 2, the inference we draw from this is that the man David must have needed a rock, place to hide, a fortress, a deliverer, and a horn of salvation and a high tower. There must have been dangers from which David had to hide, and weaknesses for which he needed strength, and arrows aimed at him for which he needed the shield of a buckler.

So, I am dealing these few Sunday mornings, up to missionary convention time, and maybe I'll resume it after that for a couple of Sundays, on the dangers that are in the Christian way. This psalm, I have said, is a mirror of life, and it indicates that there are dangers in the way. That the way to heaven is hedged in by perils to our souls.

Now, to ignore these perils is to reject the Bible. The Bible is not only rejected when a man stands and boldly declares, I do not believe the Bible. I believe that the Bible is a saga full of myths.

I do not believe the Bible. That's a rejection of the Bible, but at least it's an honest rejection of the Bible. The Bible is more insidiously rejected when a man rises and says, I believe the Bible, and then ignores the

teachings of the Bible on his own pet subjects.

We are all likely to do that. I'm likely to do it. I want you to pray that I may never do it, that I might be wise not to do it.

But well-intentioned men, without meaning to ignore the scriptures or to deny them, have ignored the dangers in the Christian way, and so they have taken away the markers on the highways. Can you imagine if it were possible to sabotage this country all over in one night, say, and take down all highway markers from Maine to California, from the Gulf to the Canadian border? Not one left. Can you imagine how many thousand people would be killed the next evening? Thousands would die the next evening.

Because our Department of Highways have carefully marked dangerous places, warned to slow down, warned even someplace to put in second gear, and so on. The idea is there are dangers, you don't have to stop and go back, and you don't have to drive all jittery and afraid, because the dangerous places are marked. And if we pay attention to the markers and drive with some degree of relaxed care, the possibility of an accident will be cut down to an infinitesimal minimum.

But if we pay no attention to the markers, or if the markers are removed, then comes the danger and then multiplies the dead. So to ignore or remove the markers on the highway is, of course, to do a great disservice, a dangerous disservice to the people of God. I mean to show these dangers in pairs.

Today I want to talk about the danger of prosperity and the danger of adversity. We'll talk about the danger of prosperity first, and we might as well call it financial prosperity to begin with. Now, it is a solemn thought to me that the history of mankind and of nations and of churches chose that we trust in God as a rule when there is nothing else in which to trust.

Though I wish it were possible to be realistic and honest and still tell a different story, I'd love to do it. But a Christian, I have insisted, ought to be a realist. That is, he ought to stay by the facts as they are, not invent them and not push them.

But stay by them as they are. And the simple fact is that the history of men, Israel and the Church and of nations and of individual churches as well as individual men, the history shows that we trust in God last, and we tend to trust in God when we have nothing else in which to trust. And as other trusts appear, we turn from God to them and excuse ourselves eloquently by saying that we are not trusting them, we are really trusting God.

But we do trust them nevertheless. I thought that to support this, I had better give you some Bible. So I have selected an Old Testament passage and a New Testament passage.

The Old Testament passage is found in Deuteronomy 32.9 and following. Here is the story of Jacob, that is, Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

He found him, that is, he found Jacob, and from Jacob came Israel, the nation of Israel. He found him in a wasteland, and in the waste howling wilderness. And he led him about, and instructed him, and kept him as the apple of his eye.

Jacob himself testified that all he had then was a staff with a little bandana handkerchief on the end of it, over his shoulder. That's all he had. With my staff I came over this brook, and, lo, I am become too band.

That was Jacob's testimony. And as an eagle stirreth up her nest, and fluttereth over her young, and spreadeth abroad her wings, and takes them, and bears them on her wings. So the Lord alone did lead him, when there was no strange God with him.

And he made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields. And he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the plenty rock, butter of kind, and milk of sheep, fat of lambs, and so on, drink the blood of grape. Then verse 15.

But, Jeshurun, that's still Jacob, it's God's pet name for Israel. But Jeshurun lacks fat. And it was God that made him fat.

God gave him butter, and milk, and honey. You can't eat butter, and milk, and honey and not get fat. It says here, I gave him butter, and milk, and honey, and lots of it, and gave him the increase of the fields, and gave him the fat of wheat, and the pure blood of the grape.

But the result was, Jeshurun lacked fat, and when he lacked fat, he got independent, and sassy, and he kicked. Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness. Then he forsook God, which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.

Now, when he was wandering in the desert place, in the waste, howling wilderness, because, remember, it wasn't the wind that was howling, it was tigers, wolves, and bears. Not tigers in that land, but wolves and bears. And these wolves and bears were dangerous, and so Jacob had to hide in God or else get eaten up.

And as long as he was hiding in God, he was all right. But as soon as he got fat, he kicked, and grew thick, and forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods.

With abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils and not unto God, to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom their fathers feared not. And remember this, that there would have been eloquent defense of these gods made by men.

Magazine articles written, and books, and when committees meet, strong defense in favor of wisdom and the fact that we mustn't miss the boat, and that after all, we've got to give them something to do. And so they were sacrificed unto devils and not unto gods, to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom their fathers feared not. But of the rock that beget them they were unmindful.

And thou hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking that his sons did, and his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them.

I will see what their end shall be, for they are a very froward generation. Froward, you know, means bold, with a hard forehead, brash. Children in the womb is no faith.

They used the very prosperity that God gave them as a stumbling block to fall. Now we come to the New Testament. We think humanity changed over the hundreds of years.

When was that? Way back there, about 1450 B.C., and this is about 50 or so A.D. So there we have about 1500 years, and in that 1500 years now, Christ has come and died and ascended to the Father and sent the Holy Ghost. And the Church has been formed, and now an apostle writes to a church in Laodicea.

Third chapter of Revelation.

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things saith the man, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou art cold or hot, so because thou art neither lukewarm nor cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. And knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.

And to white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. And anoint thine eyes with thy sight, that thou mayest see. And in case you think he's severe, notice he says, As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Be zealous, therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. This pitiful condition of the church in the latter days.

Rich, increased with goods, endowed, beautiful buildings, and the Savior standing outside trying to get in. Now, there's the New Testament example. And then we find in Luke 12 and 13 and on, the rich fool who said, I will tear down these barns, they're not adequate, and I will build larger barns in order that I might house my increased crops.

And God said bluntly, you fool, you've got to die. And you can't take these barns to the other world with you. Then whose will these things be? Now, there we have plenty of Bible, and I only quote these verses because I can't read Bible all morning here.

The whole Bible teaches this. That plenty, however justly it may be acquired, constitutes a great danger. John Wesley admitted this frankly.

I've told you this before, but it fits in so perfectly here and illustrates from a classic source, so I'll repeat. John Wesley, after his Methodist societies got going, and they had circled the world and they were growing in number, Wesley admitted one time in print this. He said, we are in a peculiar paradox in our Methodist societies.

He said, I have noticed something. I have noticed that as soon as a group of people meet together and form a society and subscribe to the New Testament doctrines and bring their lives into line with the truth, they immediately get honest, frugal, saving, hardworking, and upright and industrious, and the result is they lay off money. Then he said, as soon as they get some money, they begin to trust it.

And as soon as they begin to trust their money, they cease to be holy and spiritual and frugal and hardworking and honest and good. And so they backslide. And so he says, here is the vicious circle.

Get right with God and you become frugal, saving, honest, hardworking, serious. That makes you tend to get rich. When you tend to get rich, you tend to backslide.

So he said, here is the vicious circle. What are we going to do? Well, leave it to John Wesley. He wasn't going to be licked by a vicious circle.

He said, I have the answer. He said, be honest, holy, hardworking, frugal, saving, get all you can, then give it all away. And he said, you'll never backslide, because you'll never have anything there to backslide on.

He said, get all you can in order that you may give all you can and continue to trust God and work hard and get more and give that away. He said, in that way you'll never backslide. Now, I thought that was classic, brethren.

And that's exactly what John Wesley did. They would have laid the wealth of England at his feet, at least the common people would have. But when he died, he died with twenty-eight pounds.

Five times twenty-eight, what's that? Over a hundred to a hundred and twenty-five or so dollars. He took with him, I didn't mean he took with him, but he could have taken with him if taken with him was in order. But he left it.

About a hundred and, say, thirty dollars. Now, that, after a lifetime, he lived eighty-three years and died with a hundred and thirty dollars to leave behind. He didn't have to make out a will.

He took more than that to bury. Now, that was John Wesley. Brethren, unaccustomed plenty is pretty deadly if you don't know what to do with it.

No boy gets so arrogant and so reckless as a boy who is newly rich. And no girl gets so extravagant and so wild as the girl into the big city making good money. I don't say that always happens, but I say the temptation is there.

Anybody brought up, they say, that men brought up in money, they can wear the old clothes. I said about one old fellow who was going around in an old suit that even I wouldn't have worn. They said, oh, he can afford to do it.

Everybody knows he's rich. See? But the fellow that has just come into the money, he wants to prove it by the way he dresses and what he drives and what kind of a house he lives in. But the man who's had money and inherited money, he doesn't tend that way because it's nothing to him.

He's bored with it. So unaccustomed plenty is especially deadly to a Christian. Ah, what mine eyes have seen over the years.

I have seen young men who, while they were in high school and college, struggled and fought and prayed and loved God and got along a little. Then they met a girl, and she had had the same experience, fighting her way through and working after hours to get enough to continue and help with the home. And she had little and he had little.

And then they met each other, and they got married. And then they got out of school, settled down, got good jobs, used his sanctified Christian intelligence to get a good position. And pretty soon the money was coming his way hand over fist, and they moved into a finer home, got a bigger car, and a bigger television set and finer of everything.

And they began to come to choir less often and to prayer meetings rarely and to church less frequently and to take long holiday excursions, and then longer ones. And pretty soon they dashed it. I have seen it happen over the years.

I have seen it happen. Now, brethren, it's always dangerous. Prosperity is dangerous for a Christian.

Now, what can you do? Is this, am I saying, I wish all my people were poor people? If all the people were poor, poverty-stricken people, how would we ever manage to keep missionaries on the field? How would we ever promote publishing societies? How would we ever get books out to the public? How would we ever keep schools going? How would we finance God's work so as to keep our missionaries going, our radio programs alive, our books flowing out? How do we do it? No, it is not God's will that his people should all be poor. It's God's will that his people should prosper, but know what to do with prosperity. Now, I give you three rules, and if you care enough about it to take this down, I think it may help you.

I give you three rules what to do with prosperity. First of all, thank God reverently. Never ought to receive anything, never ought to receive a raise, never ought to receive anything but that we do not go to God and reverently thank him and acknowledge the source of it and know that it cometh from the Father of lights, from whence every good gift comes.

Thank God reverently. Second, share it generously. If you do not share it generously, it will begin to canker and rust on your spirit and soul.

And the bigger the bank account, the smaller the heart, unless you share it so generously that your conscience feels good about it and God satisfied. And then walk circumspectly, those three things. If you have plenty, thank God reverently, share it generously, and walk circumspectly.

Now, if you want some Bible on this walking circumspectly, I don't feel it necessary to quote scripture on the other two because it's just an essence of scripture. But I do want to give you a passage or two here, verse or two here from Luke 21. Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unaware.

Now, here, of course, means prosperity. Your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and of course that is overeating, drunkenness, and of course that's drinking. The cares of this life, the poorer a man is, the fewer cares he has.

And the more he gets, the more cares he has. And if he allows his heart to be overcharged, numb, overwhelmed with these earthly things, the day of Christ shall come upon him unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch ye therefore, watch ye therefore, and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. There is an urgent exhortation that we might watch carefully, lest prosperity, with its surfeiting, its overeating, its careless drinking, and the cares of this life, unfit us for that day. And we should be caught like a little animal in a snare when our Lord comes.

Rather, we ought to pray that we might be worthy to escape these things and stand before the Son of Man. Now, it's an odd thing, but not only is prosperity dangerous, but adversity is dangerous. Brother Van Keppel, who incidentally is in the hospital and needs your prayers, getting on all right after surgery, he often quotes when he arrives to testify, Give me neither poverty nor riches, lest if I be rich I forget God, and lest if I be poor I be tempted to steal.

That was a wise, practical little verse of the man of God in the Old Testament. Now, adversity, that is financial reverses or physical afflictions. We'll deal with them in turn.

Financial reverses, that is the exact opposite of prosperity, and yet it is dangerous too, especially if it follows prosperity. Some people are so habitually in a state of financial reverses. I think they call that monetary impecuniosity.

That is the name for it. But a lot of people are in that state so much that they have nothing to react from. But if you've been reasonably prosperous and then you have had reverses, it's especially dangerous because prosperity tends to make us soft.

We're soft compared with our fathers. Now, don't imagine we're not. I rather am glad we are.

I'm glad we are. Our sons are getting taller, and our women stay younger looking longer. Down in the hills where a child goes to work in the cornfield at five and plows at eight, and women milk half a dozen cows and churn the butter and hoe in the garden and help their husbands in the field, they're old ladies at thirty.

I know, I've been around a little. And at thirty, they're old ladies, wrinkled and weary looking with a thick, fuzzy voice and a drooping, disgusted attitude toward the world. Well, too much work and poverty can beat you.

And it's never good. The poets and the philosophers have all sung the praise of poverty. About the only literary man I ever knew that had honesty enough to come right out and say he didn't believe in poverty was Dr. Sam Johnson.

He said you can talk about it all you want to. It's a horribly debilitating and discouraging thing, and I don't believe in it. Well, too much poverty will beat you down and sicken you and weaken you and make you old before your time.

But if you've had prosperity and then you're plunged into reverses, you are likely to blow up because you've been made soft. Too much prosperity will make you soft. Too much poverty will do what I've described.

A moment ago. So what do we do about it all? Well, to have prosperity suddenly removed from us means that it's likely to take away the rock of our trust and plunge us into panic. Now about physical afflictions.

It's an odd thing how people react to physical illness two opposite ways. Some react by using it as a means of grace. David said, Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I have kept thy word.

David got ill, and while he was ill he had time to think it over and pray and wait on God. And he used his affliction as a means of grace. But there are others who, as soon as they're touched with physical affliction, they throw in the towel.

And I suppose I ought to be ashamed to admit it, but I am in the second category. People say, Oh, I have been ill two weeks, and all that time I've had waiting on God and getting caught up on my prayer and all the rest. And if I get a cold in my head, I'm finished until the cold gets out of my head again.

If others don't pray for me, I admit I don't get very far. I can't get a hold of myself. My father was a strong man, a wiry, strong, tough man.

And so far as I knew, I don't think he was ever afraid of anything on four legs or two. I never knew anything my father was afraid of. He was completely fearless, almost to the point of psychopathically fearless.

But when he got a cold in his head, he became a whimpering baby. And everybody had to run after him and look after him. And he would moan, sigh, and look around for sympathy.

It didn't do him any good to get sick. That disassures your lip. And his son follows in his footsteps.

But some people know how to use physical affliction. David did, I say. Before I was afflicted, I went astray.

He said, I got careless. But when I got sick, I had time to think it over. And I got right with God.

Now, in any case, these are dangers. Financial reverses or physical afflictions. But this little verse has comforted me.

If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. I don't know why that verse comforts me, but it does. It doesn't promise anything, it just makes a rather uncomplimentary statement about a man.

And yet I get help out of that verse. If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. It's among the Proverbs.

Now, I have a conclusion here, and of course the conclusion ought to be the best part of what I'm telling you. So listen to it, and if you want to, take down a few notes. How to avoid these dangers.

The dangers of having too much and the danger of suddenly having not enough. The danger of a big bankroll and the danger of debt. Opposite ends, related to each other.

One is the seamy side of the other. But they're here and they're dangers. And we need a rock and a shelter and a hiding place and a fortress and a buckler and a shield and strength.

We need help, because these are two dangers. A fat lion and a skinny, scrawny lion. The fat lion's prosperity and the scrawny, hungry lion's adversity.

But they're both lions, and they're both sources of danger. Now, how do we avoid them? I'll give you about four rules. First of all, get thoroughly detached from earthly possessions.

If you are not detached from earthly possessions, your every dollar you accumulate will be a blight on your spirit. But if you have an understanding with God that goes clear down deep into tears and emotions and moves you, your increasing riches will not hurt you at all, because they're not yours. You'll hold them for the giver, as we sing.

You'll hold them for the giver. God gave them, and you'll hold them for him. The man is a treasurer of General Motors.

I don't know who he is, but the man who is treasurer of General Motors. Well, for General Motors to prosper, it doesn't hurt him any, because it isn't his money. He just works for General Motors.

And while he can sign checks, I suppose, running into the hundreds of thousands and maybe a million dollars, he never signs them, except he signs them for the company. He doesn't say, look how much money I've got. He says, the company has so much money, and I'm the treasurer.

Now, a treasurer was called a steward back in the days of Jesus' time. And Jesus talked about stewards looking after other people's money. And if you consider your possessions, everything from the garment on your back to your factory or office or store or whatever you have, everything, if you consider it as being

God's, and you being God's steward, it won't hurt you at all.

And no matter how much it multiplies, it still won't hurt you, because it's outside of you. Money never hurt any man as long as it stayed outside of him. It's when it gets inside of him that the curse begins.

The monks of old times thought that the way to prosperity was to choose poverty, and they took a vow of chastity and poverty. But a man can take a vow of poverty and go into a monastery and be just as proud and can own the very book and the very table and the very cell and can say, this is my cell, you stay out of it. This is my book, let it alone.

This is my bunk, don't you sleep on it. And he can still possess things even if he's barefooted. He can be a possessor of something.

On the other hand, a man like, well, a man can own loss and still not possess a thing and be completely cut away from it. For you see, getting rid of the curse of prosperity is not a physical thing, it's a spiritual thing. A man is not free from prosperity if he were to give everything away and live on bread and water.

He'd still have self and pride in his heart. But get rid of your possessions. Blessed is the man who possesses nothing.

It's a sermon I preached once and wrote it later into a chapter in a book. The blessedness of the man who possesses nothing. And if we possess nothing, God will allow us to have loss.

But if we possess anything, we're cursed by it. So get it outside of you. Get thoroughly detached from earthly possessions.

Look out for a thrill if you get a raise. Look out for a thrill if you get more money. Look out for a thrill that comes from possessions.

A man had them one time. He built a great, big, beautiful city. And he walked around it.

And he said, Behold this great pavilion which I have built. And God loved him too much to let him be an idolater. So he struck him.

And when he came back into the throne room, he was shaking his head and muttering. And somebody said, What's the matter with his majesty? Well, his majesty went plain off his head and had to go out into the field and eat with the beasts. Seven years until his fingernails were as long as evil claws and his hair like evil feathers.

At the end of seven years, he said, My reason came back to me. And I knew that the Lord God on high reigned over the affairs of men. He had to take seven years in the pasture field to find out what you can know now, if you will.

We're no better than ever could ne'er was by nature. So let's get thoroughly detached from earthly possessions. Two, let's break the grip of the world's philosophies.

The magazine ads, the radio, television, newspapers, conversation, social groups. That subtle philosophy underlies it all. I've got to keep up with the ads.

I've got to keep up with the ads. I just must keep up with life magazine. I must.

All right. You're not a very good Christian if that's got you. A Christian is one who has said goodbye to the philosophies of the world, keeping up with the Joneses.

Goodbye. They make us ashamed to wear a suit if it isn't the latest cut-out. Ashamed to drive a car if it isn't the latest.

Ashamed to live in a house if it isn't the latest grotesque monstrosity. Like a lot of this stuff they're building now. They make us ashamed to be a little behind the times.

But a man who's big enough to know that he's above all times is big enough to dare to live boldly where he pleases. In style or out of style. It's no act of righteousness to be out of style, mama.

Maybe you just are slow. And it's no sin to be in style. Glory lies in giving not one care to either.

Saying I'll live decently and respectably and strike a happy medium and go my way and I don't care what the world says. But they feed it into us from the time we're in kindergarten. They feed it into us and make us ashamed to wear clothing a little too long.

Shame to not have, we have a bicycle, it's got to be the best one. We have a car, it's got to be the best one. Whatever we have, it's got to be the best.

If you don't get free from that, prosperity and adversity will grind you to pieces. Prosperity, if you have it, will kill you. And adversity, if you have it, will grind you.

But if you will get free from the world's philosophies and dare to be a Christian, standing on your own feet, thanking God for what you have and being an independent Christian, neither one of them will grind you. God will take you out from between the nether and the upper millstone. These are the days when we're even ashamed not to have traveled.

Have you been to Europe? No. Oh, poor fellow. Emerson said the best thing about travel is sure you didn't have to travel.

He said you travel around the world and come back and find what you're looking for in your backyard. Now, I think traveling is a good thing. But I'm not running around here with a permanent inferiority complex because I've not been to London.

I've been invited often enough, but I've been too lazy to go or else felt I had too much to do and didn't go. But watch it, brethren. This using other people as examples and then trying to keep up psychologically so you don't feel inferior.

What a shame. God's people. Jesus was never out of Palestine.

Jesus never wore a garment somebody didn't make for him. Jesus never owned anything that would have sold at auction probably for more than a dollar and a half. Yet Jesus was the Lord of glory and the riches of the world were his.

He could have spoken to those stones and they'd been gold. He could have spoken to the trees and they'd have turned to rich wheat bread. He could have spoken to the very air and it would have blown riches to him.

But he walked calmly, quietly through the world and left one garment behind him. Not that he despised possessions. No.

And if God gave you possessions, thank God for them. While I was having breakfast this morning, I got up a little ahead of the rest. And while I was having breakfast, I was reading.

And dear old Thomas Traherne. Thomas Traherne said this. My sermon notes are already made, so I didn't get anything from him for you particularly.

I didn't get my message certainly from him. But he said this. He said, God made a wonderful, beautiful world.

And he said, some people think you oughtn't to enjoy it. He said, I don't agree with him. I think we ought to enjoy all things that God has made because God made them to be enjoyed.

For instance, if somebody gives me a tie and I don't wear it, it tells the fellow that I didn't appreciate the tie. And if God gives you a blue sky or a flowing river or a singing bird or a lovely mountain, and you say, I don't believe in enjoying earthly things, you're saying to God, take it back, I don't like it. So said Thomas Traherne, in my language.

I believe with him. Jesse Penn Lewis, who worked with Evan Roberts in the revival, and some people said they did him no good, teaches that we've got to condemn our enjoyment, all of our enjoyment, our soul, she said. Soul and spirit are divided.

The spirit's the redeemed part, and the soul will only be redeemed if we deny it. So she said, we are not to enjoy anything in this world, music, art, literature, poetry, beauty, anything. She says, sacrifice all that enjoyment and keep it unto life eternal.

I heard the mockingbirds sing down in Virginia. Funny, those people down there. I said, oh, mockingbirds.

Some people said, yeah. I hadn't noticed them. Said, I never hear them.

Never hear a mockingbird. And here they were, up on the TV antennas and on telephone poles and on trees and on church steeples, singing like an angel. Now, somebody told me, if you like to hear that, you're unspiritual, who made that mockingbird? Did the devil put that harp together and throw a bunch of feathers around it and give it a tail and a pair of wings? Did the devil make the mockingbird? No.

God made the mockingbird, and he said, here's a little present to you. Let it go out of his hand. It went fluttering around and began to sing.

Now, I'm not to enjoy it. I am to enjoy it. Sure.

Enjoy all God's lovely world, but keep it all out of you. Keep everything out of you. Keep your heart clean and keep God in your heart and keep everything outside.

The missionary in the South, that is the missionary who's lived in the South and loved the mockingbird, if he's called to go to Tibet or Timbuktu where there's not a bird, it's his business to get up, say goodbye to the mockingbird, thank God for the little delight he's taken in it, and go where never a mockingbird is heard. But the idea that when God gives it to you and it's where you are, you can't enjoy it, seems to me to be the height of fanaticism. And I still love to see the moon at night.

And when I'm outside Chicago, I love to see the stars at night. So break the grip of the world's philosophies and make God everything. If God is everything, you can have anything and still it won't hurt you.

If God is very little or nothing, anything will hurt you. And then lastly, accept your status as a pilgrim. You're a pilgrim, dear friend.

You're not a resident here. You're passing through. You're a Christian.

We build no nest here for our hearts. We're migrating to a permanent home. We're migratory birds.

Some of you that live out a little world, such things take place. In another three weeks or four, three maybe, you will see a brown bird with spotted breast and a white ring around its perfectly round eyes. And it'll be down on the ground among the bushes, scratching about all by itself.

And it'll be singing the gentlest, softest little song you ever heard. Now that's an oven bird, a migratory bird. The flight song of the oven bird is one of the great things to hear on the North American continent.

But there are no oven birds in Chicago. The ones that come here are migratory. They're passing through from where they were to where they're going to go.

And they just stop around your house long enough to give you a little taste of what their beautiful song is. They're shy. You can't get near them.

But if you're just real patient, you'll hear them sing. Oven birds on their way from the South to the North to hatch, raise their little brood. Then next fall, they'll be back and scratch under your window again.

They're migrating. God's children are not resident birds. They're migratory birds.

They're passing through from where they were to where they're going. And where they're going, of course, is God Almighty's heaven. William Cullen Bryant, when he was a young fellow just out of law school, had passed his bar examination and hadn't established himself yet as a lawyer.

He left home to go, I believe, to Boston, if I remember, one of the New England cities, to hang out his shingle. And being a home-loving boy, he was rather lonely and homesick. And sick at heart as he walked one night, one evening.

And as he walked, as the sun was going down, he looked up and saw a wild duck migrate. Mostly they travel in flocks, but this old duck must have gotten lost. And he was all by himself.

And from seeing this wild duck flying all alone, beating its way steadily toward the south, he wrote the famous poem to a waterfowl. There are several verses, two of them being, Whither, midst falling dew, I'll glow the heavens with the last steps of day, Far through their rosy heights just I'll pursue thy solitary way. And he concludes by saying this, He who from zone to zone guides through the boundless air thy certain flight, In the long way that I must tread alone will guide my steps aright.

I heard William Jennings Bryan quote that in that organ voice of his one time. And Bryan, the young Bryan, picked himself up and accumulated himself, as they say, and went away with a big smile on his face and wrote this poem. He said, I'm a lonely boy here in the New England shores, But I know God and Christ, and that bird tells me That the God who holds him up there safe as he migrates Will help me, a migratory

man, and will guide me all the way.

And the old man of God said, Brief life is here our portion, brief sorrow, short-lived care, But the life that knows no ending, the tearless life, is there. We're migratory birds, we're pilgrims passing through. This is not our home.

So let's get saved from things, and people's opinions, And ourselves, and our money, and our clothing, and our possessions, And yet have these things, but use them reverently, thankfully, wisely, And give them generously. And remember, we're pilgrims, And that he who guides through the boundless air The certain flight of the bird Will also guide us until we arrive at last On those shores that are washed by the water that flows from the throne of God. It's worth waiting for, brethren.

It's worth what little sacrifice it costs. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/1/SID1989.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/dangers-in-the-way-series-dangers-of-prosperity-and-adversity/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net