



THE DEVIL
SHALL
NOT
PREVAIL

UNSHAKABLE CONFIDENCE
IN GOD'S ALMIGHTY POWER

A.W.
TOZER

COMPILED AND EDITED BY JAMES L. SNYDER

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BOOKS BY A.W. TOZER

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Alive in the Spirit
And He Dwelt Among Us
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BOOKS BY JAMES L. SNYDER

The Life of A.W. Tozer: In Pursuit of God—The Authorized Biography

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CONTENTS

- Introduction 7
1. Facing Our Real Enemy 11
 2. The Danger of Compromising Our Confidence 21
 3. Causes of Backsliding, the Devil's Toolbox 31
 4. Symptoms of Backsliding the Devil Uses 39
 5. Self-confidence vs. Confidence in God 47
 6. How We Can Prevent the Devil from Taking Advantage of Us 57
 7. How God Uses Trials and Disappointments 69
 8. How the Devil Uses Religion to Attack Us 81
 9. Discouragement: A Valuable Tool of the Devil against Christians 89
 10. The Mistakes of Israel and Possibly Ours 101
 11. How the Devil Manipulates the Plague of the Heart 107

Contents

- 12. The Dangers of Arrogance and Defeat 117
- 13. The Root of Our Spiritual Warfare 125
- 14. The Wall between Us and the Devil 135
- 15. The Ultimate Spiritual Temptation 143
- 16. Standing against the Wiles of the Devil 151

INTRODUCTION

A.W. Tozer was very passionate about worship. This came before anything else, and whatever interfered with his worship, he dealt with as firmly as possible. One of the things interfering with that worship was the devil.

Tozer often said he would rather talk about anything other than the devil. He never wanted to give the devil any credit, but because the devil poses a significant threat in undermining our worship, he must be dealt with. This book is not based on a series of sermons on the devil, but on selected sermons focusing on the devil's influence on the life of the Christian and how we can better protect ourselves from evil.

Tozer often referred to Ephesians 6:10–11, where the apostle Paul wrote, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” It is the standing against the “wiles of the devil” that Tozer emphasizes in this book. And to stand against the devil, we need to be prepared spiritually. Many of the chapters involve building ourselves up in the Lord, so we are in a position to resist the devil's temptations.

Tozer rejected the world's definition of the devil, as well as Hollywood's, since they both have characterized him in ways that are not compliant with the Word of God. What, then, does the Bible have to teach us about the devil? For *that* is what we need to remember.

Even though Tozer didn't like discussing the devil, he stressed that we as believers should never take him for granted. Many people assume they can defeat the devil in his own territory, i.e., this world in which we live, and that the devil isn't much more than a menacing presence. Biblically speaking, this is not the case. Instead, we must view the devil as an enemy of God and therefore the enemy of our souls.

In practicing spiritual warfare, there are several truths we need to be aware of. First, we must come to understand who exactly the enemy is. Too many Christians have no idea who the real enemy is and instead point their fingers at someone at church or someone in their family or perhaps workplace. Yet to wage battle against the enemy, we need to learn who he is, and it's only in God's Word that we get a clear understanding of him.

In the fourth chapter of Matthew, we see Jesus going up against the devil head on. The interesting thing about this passage of Scripture is that Jesus didn't take the devil for granted. We see Jesus approaching the enemy of God through the quoting of Scripture, always responding to the devil's attacks by saying, "It is written."

While knowing your enemy is vital to developing a strategy against him, another aspect has to do with understanding our spiritual warfare equipment. "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." If we don't have the whole armor of God, we will

not stand for long. The devil only requires a small vulnerable spot in which to focus his attack.

A large portion of this book involves preparing ourselves to encounter the enemy wherever that may occur, guarding against those things that might compromise our ability to stand against him, and confronting him from God's perspective—the way Jesus did when being tempted in the wilderness.

Tozer was concerned about our spiritual growth as Christians, so that the devil could not make inroads and manipulate our hearts and minds. He makes it clear that the devil cannot take away our salvation; however, he can hinder our Christian life and cause us to forfeit our reward when someday we meet the Lord in heaven. If the devil cannot take away your salvation, he'll do everything he can to steal your joy plus any fruit you may have received as a follower of Christ.

This book is meant to show how critical it is that we understand our vulnerability toward the devil's wiles. We cannot deal with him in our own strength, that much is certain. And the key element of the devil's attacks against believers is to undermine their confidence in God.

Tozer points out that this confidence is not based on our understanding of the situation before us. He often repeated Paul's words, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). That is to say, we trust God in situations that we cannot understand from a human standpoint. If the devil can get us to question our confidence in God, he'll have us pointed in the wrong direction.

To stand against the enemy, we need to be everything God wants us to be and have all that God wants us to have in this battle. It's possible we will not know every battle before us,

Introduction

for that too is one of the strategies of the enemy. But if we can trust God wholeheartedly even when we don't understand our situation or circumstances, with God's help we'll defeat the devil every time.

Dr. James L. Snyder

— 1 —

FACING OUR REAL ENEMY

Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.”

1 Samuel 17:45

Every battle begins with understanding who the enemy is. If soldiers do not know who the enemy is, how then are they going to be prepared to deal with them? I believe a lot of Christians today do not know their real enemy. The enemy is not in the church pews. Many Christians spend a lot of time in conflict with one another, much to the great delight of our enemy the devil.

It’s in our understanding of the enemy that we can begin to prepare ourselves for the battle and ongoing conflict that is before us. As Christians, we are engaged in what is called

spiritual warfare, and this war cannot be fought with physical or military might, guns, and torpedoes. How we comprehend spiritual warfare says a lot about our relationship with Christ. Many do not realize the significance of the spiritual fight we are in and the fact that this very real enemy has marked each of us for attack.

The apostle Paul set forth our responsibility when it comes to spiritual warfare: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:10–11).

One of the great Old Testament stories is the story of David and Goliath. Goliath represented the latest technology in military warfare. He was a man of prowess and strength, had the best equipment, and was well trained for battle. His whole life had been devoted to fighting and vanquishing the enemy, and he was confident that he could defeat anyone.

David, on the other side of the field, was a young man who had no experience or training whatsoever in battle. When he faced Goliath, it was not a fair match from a human standpoint.

When David was given his first slingshot, I’m sure he didn’t look at it and think, *This slingshot will help me take down Goliath, the enemy of Israel*. As a young man, David had never heard of Goliath, and he likely didn’t comprehend the danger Israel was facing. In other words, we never know what or who God will use for His purposes, nor when or how. When we place ourselves in God’s hands in submission and obedience, we are at His disposal, and He always prepares us for the battle in front of us. That is why it is crucial that we learn how to wait on the Lord.

So David was inexperienced when it came to warfare and fighting techniques, not knowing how to triumph on the battlefield. He was simply a shepherd boy who was naive concerning the greater world. His expertise lay in taking care of his family's sheep out in the fields. He knew how to deal with the wolves and the bears, but outside of that, he had no experience.

As David went before Goliath, he told the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" (1 Samuel 17:45). Prior to this encounter with Goliath, King Saul thought it was his responsibility to prepare and equip David for the battle. "Then David said to Saul, 'Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.' And Saul said to David, 'You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth'" (1 Samuel 17:32–33).

This was David's testimony before King Saul. Why King Saul went along with this little boy named David is beyond my understanding.

"So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, 'I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them.' So David took them off" (1 Samuel 17:38–39).

David had no hesitancy in believing that God was on his side. His confidence was rooted in his lifelong relationship with Yahweh or Jehovah, as God was called then. Thus David's strength and confidence was not in knowing everything

about the enemy, but in understanding and knowing his relationship with God.

To study the life of David is to delve deeply into his confidence in God. No doubt he did a lot of things that were wrong, but when everything was on the table, his confidence in God was unshaken.

The end of the story, of course, is that David came out victorious, while the enemy of Israel was defeated.

There is also the confrontation David had with Nathan the prophet concerning the episode with Bathsheba and her husband, whom David had killed. When Nathan rebuked David, saying, “You are the man!” (2 Samuel 12:7), David did not do what Nathan was afraid he would do. As king, David could have ordered that Nathan be executed, but he did no such thing. Instead, he fell on his knees in utter repentance, which I’m sure surprised Nathan.

David’s repentance before God reveals the confidence that he had in God even when he failed and things went terribly wrong. For anybody to have such confidence in God in David’s situation is beyond human comprehension. His confidence was bigger than his failure.

On the day David faced off with Goliath, he was not doing so because he felt confident in his own strength and ability and understanding; he faced off with Goliath solely because of his confidence in his God.

Scripture tells us that David had no confidence in King Saul or in the equipment Saul had for him. Rather, David turned his back on everything and everybody and fought Goliath simply because he knew what God could do.

It’s important for Christians to cultivate the same sort of confidence in God that we see exhibited by David throughout

his life. For it was this confidence that made him fearless, a man of faith. Many have tried to introduce into the Church the equipment and technology and methods that come from the world, but attempts like this have no place in the Church. We must embrace confidence in God to do what God has called us to do the way God wants it done.

But what does it mean to have confidence in God? Often we are tempted to use the world's definition of the word *confidence* instead of relying on God's definition. Paul said, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). At the center of our confidence in God is our faith and trust in Him for all things—regardless of whether we understand the situation before us at the time.

Paul also said, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Our faith, then, is grounded and nourished in the Word of God. As we surrender ourselves to His Word, He begins to develop the faith in us that we need to have His perspective, which in turn nourishes our confidence in Him.

The world offers a lot of things that we can choose to place our faith in. Everybody puts their faith in something or someone. For the Christian, that faith is the result of the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We come to the Word of God not as experts but as passionate worshipers of God. The Bible is not a "beat the chest" kind of thing, but rather it enables us to worship God as He desires and deserves to be worshiped.

Our confidence is a result of the passionate worship that God has created within our hearts. It has nothing to do with knowledge or experience or technology. It has everything to do with the inward working of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The Scriptures give no indication that David ever bragged about his experience with Goliath. He never tried to tell people what a brave person he was when he took on that great giant and defeated him.

If we have true confidence in God, we do not need personal affirmations. We must surrender that completely to God because our battles are not based on any battles we had previously, which often seems to be how people think. What we need to understand is that every battle is unique in and of itself. The main thing each battle does is confirm our confidence in God.

The roots of self-confidence are in the devil himself. It was the devil who said, "I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14). This attitude of self-confidence has been transferred to humanity. We now have confidence that we can overcome anything. If we can think it, we can achieve it.

That may work in the fantastical world of entertainment, but it does not work in the spiritual world of being confident in God and living confidently in Him. Self-confidence takes all the glory away from God and brings it back to us. If we have confidence in ourselves, we will fail at spiritual warfare.

"Put on the whole armor of God . . ." (Ephesians 6:11). By that, Paul meant that we need to take on everything of God and shun the flesh. You cannot have the armor of God and indulge the flesh. The enemy would have us concentrate on the flesh, protect the flesh, and put our confidence in the flesh. However, when we do that, we rob God of that which rightfully belongs to Him.

"I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied," David said to Goliath.

In spiritual warfare, we find that God does things that are beyond human understanding. Therefore, we must stop second-guessing God.

When the Israelites were being led by Moses out of Egypt, they got only so far before coming to the Red Sea. They were angry with Moses and blamed him for their failure. In Exodus 14:10–12, we read of their approaching the Red Sea, with the Egyptian army not far behind them. They had no solution to the problem facing them—no human solution, that is. It is a great delight for God to bring His people to a place with no human solution at their disposal. When we come to that place, God will show us how powerful He is.

At the very last moment, God parted the Red Sea for the children of Israel, and they marched between the walls of water, heading for the Promised Land. The part that's most interesting about this story is that as soon as the children of Israel got across the Red Sea and reached the other side, the Egyptian army, running hard behind them, entered the Red Sea in pursuit. God brought the sea back together and the whole of the army of Egypt was destroyed in that moment.

Sometimes God brings us to a place where we don't know how to deal with the enemy, but the enemy soon finds it is God whom they're fighting. I think of Joseph in the Old Testament, a young man who encountered many problems and difficulties, none of them of his own making. It started with his brothers selling him into slavery and eventually led to his imprisonment in Egypt. Then, as the story goes, God brought Joseph out of slavery, and he was made second only to Pharaoh himself. He then went on to save the people of that time from a devastating famine that threatened them.

When the famine grew worse, Pharaoh allowed Joseph to bring his family to Egypt, and this was how Israel got to be in that land. Yet after his father died, Joseph's brothers were very much alarmed. They thought now that their father was dead, Joseph would seek revenge and repay them for their evil deeds aimed at their brother Joseph.

I like what Joseph told them: "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Genesis 50:20). Joseph endured much hardship and suffering to accomplish with God what he could never have imagined.

Joseph's confidence in God enabled God to use him without explaining what He was going to do. That's true confidence. Often we want God to explain everything before it happens so we can then give God our approval. Of course, God doesn't need our approval for anything.

Our confidence in God must be unconditional. God wants us to get to a place where He can accomplish His will far and above what I could ever comprehend or even put into words.

Someday when we get to heaven, I believe we will be surprised to see how God used us while we were here on earth. The trials and tribulations we have gone through may not make sense to us, but in heaven we will begin to understand how God was using each difficult situation in our lives to accomplish something we could not comprehend at the time. I think this is why James wrote, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2).

Such rejoicing is an act of faith. They might not make sense at the time, all the things that happen to us. Still, we can rejoice because our confidence in God is that He is actively

using us in ways we can't understand right now and that, through us, God is defeating the enemy. Our confidence in God is worthy of Him even though we may not see what God is doing and how God is using us.

How did David know that he would slay Goliath in the name of the Lord? How did Joseph know during his agonizing journey that he'd end up precisely where God wanted him to bring blessing to all those around him?

Confidence in God releases us from the need to understand all that God is doing. Sometimes we don't realize that God was using us until after it's all over.

Dear Father in heaven, what a blessing it is to be used by You, even if I don't always know at the time that You're using me. May my heart be so surrendered to Thee, O God, that You can carry out Your perfect will through me for Your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD

A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper he, amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
does seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,

THE DEVIL SHALL NOT PREVAIL

were not the right Man on our side,
the Man of God's own choosing.
You ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth his name,
from age to age the same;
and he must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed
his truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! his doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.

That Word above all earthly powers
no thanks to them abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours
through him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever!

Martin Luther (1529)