

# Five Vows of Spiritual Power

A. W. Tozer



# FIVE VOWS FOR SPIRITUAL POWER

*By*

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# FIVE VOWS FOR SPIRITUAL POWER

Some people object to taking vows, but in the Bible you will find many great men of God directed by covenants, promises, vows and pledges. The psalmist was not averse to the taking of vows: “Thy vows are upon me, O God,” he said. “I will render my praises unto thee” (Psalm 56:12).

My counsel in this matter is that if you are really concerned about spiritual improvement—the gaining of new power, new life, new joy and new personal revival within your heart—you will do well to make certain vows and proceed to keep them. If you should fail, go down in humility and repent and start over. But always keep these vows before you. They will help harmonize your heart with the vast powers that flow out and down from the throne where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

A carnal man refuses the discipline of such commitments. He says, “I want to be free. I don't want to lay any vows upon myself; I don't believe in it. It is legalism.” Well, let me paint a picture of two men.

One of them will not take vows. He will not accept any responsibility. He wants to be free. And he is free, in a measure—just as a tramp is free. The tramp is free to sit on a park bench by day, sleep on a newspaper by night, get chased out of town on Thursday morning, and find his way up a set of creaky stairs in some flophouse on Thursday night. Such a man is free, but he is also useless. He clutters up the world whose air he breathes.

Let's look at another man—maybe a president or prime minister or any great man who carries upon himself the weight of government. Such men are not free. But in the sacrifice of their freedom they step up in power. If they insist upon being free, they can be free, just like the tramp. But they choose rather to be bound.

There are many religious tramps in the world who will not be bound by anything. They have turned the grace of God into personal license. But the great souls are ones who have gone reverently to God with the understanding that in their flesh dwells no good thing. And they know that without God's enablement any vows taken would be broken before sundown. Nevertheless, believing in God, reverently they took certain sacred vows. This is the way to spiritual power.

Now there are five vows I have in mind which we do well to make and keep. The first is: Deal thoroughly with sin. Sin has been driven underground these days and has come up with a new name and face. You may be subjected to this phenomenon in the schools. Sin is called by various fancy names—anything but what it really is. For example, men don't get under conviction any more; they get a guilt complex. Instead of confessing their guilt to God and getting rid of it, they lie down on a couch and try to tell a man who ought to know better all about themselves. It comes out after a while that they were deeply disappointed when they were two years old or some such thing. That's supposed to make them better.

The whole thing is ridiculous, because sin is still the ancient enemy of the soul. It has never changed. We've got to deal firmly with sin in our lives. Let's remember that. “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink,” said Paul, “but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). Righteousness lies at the door of the kingdom of God. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

This is not to preach sinless perfection. This is to say that every known sin is to be named, identified and repudiated, and that we must trust God for deliverance from it, so that there is no more sin anywhere in our lives. It is absolutely necessary that we deal thus, because God is a holy God and sin is on the throne of the world.

So don't call your sins by some other name. If you're jealous, call it jealousy. If you tend to pity yourself and feel that you are not appreciated, but are like a flower born to blush unseen and waste your sweetness on the desert air, call it what it is — self-pity.

There is resentfulness. If you're resentful, admit it. I have met people who live in a state of sputtering indignation most of the time. I know of a preacher who acts like a hen thrown out of the nest. He keeps running in all directions clucking and complaining — somebody is always doing him wrong. Well, if you have got that spirit, you must deal with it now. You must get that out of you. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. Instead of covering it up and trying to find a Greek marginal rendering somewhere to hide it under, call it by the right name, and get rid of it by the grace of God.

And then there is your temper. Don't call it indignation. Don't try to christen it by some other name. Call it chat it is. Because if you have a bad temper you will either get rid of it or it will get rid of much of your spirituality and most of your joy.

So let's deal with sin thoroughly. Let's be perfectly candid. God loves candid people.

Now the second vow is: Never own anything. I do not mean by this that you cannot have things. I mean that you ought to get delivered from this sense of possessing them. This sense of possessing is what hinders us. All babies are born with their fists clenched, and it seems to me it means: “This is mine!” One of the first things is “mine” in an angry voice. That sense of “This is mine” is a very injurious thing to the spirit. If you can get rid of it so that you have no feeling of possessing anything, there will come a great sense of freedom and liberty into your life.

Now don't think that you must sell all that you have and give it to charity. No, God will let you have your car and your business, your practice and your position, whatever it may be, provided you understand that it is not yours at all, but His, and all you are doing is just working for Him. You can be restful about it then, because we never need to worry about losing anything that belongs to someone else. If it is yours, you're always looking in your hand to see if it's still there. If it's God's you no longer need to worry about it.

Let me point out some things you'll have to turn over to God. Property is one thing. Some of the dear Lord's children are being held back because there's a ball and chain on their legs. If it's a man, it's his big car and fine home. If it's a woman, it's her china and her Louis XIV furniture and all the rest. Take that vase for instance. There it stands, and if anybody knocked it off and broke it the poor owner would probably lose five years from her life!

The third vow is this: Never defend yourself. We're all born with a desire to defend ourselves. And if you insist upon defending yourself, God will let you do it. But if you turn the defense of yourself over to God He will defend you. He told Moses once, in Exodus 23:22: “I will be an enemy unto thine enemies and an adversary to thine adversaries.”

A long time ago the Lord and I went through the 23rd chapter of Exodus

together and He gave it to me. For 30 years now it has been a source of untold blessing to my life. I don't have to fight. The Lord does the fighting for me. And He'll do the same for you. He will be an enemy to your enemy and an adversary to your adversary, and you'll never need to defend yourself.

What do we defend? Well, we defend our service, and particularly we defend our reputation. Your reputation is what people think you are, and if a story gets out about you the big temptation is to try to run it down. But you know, running down the source of a story is a hopeless task. Absolutely hopeless! It's like trying to find the bird after you've found the feather on your lawn. You can't do it. But if you'll turn yourself wholly over to the Lord He will defend you completely and see to it that no one will harm you. “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.” He says, and “every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn” (Isaiah 54:17).

Henry Suso was a great Christian of other days. Once he was seeking what some Christians have told me they are seeking—to know God better. Let's put it like this: you are seeking to have a religious awakening within your spirit that will thrust you farther out into the deep things of God. Well, as Henry Suso was seeking God, people started telling evil stories about the man, and it grieved him so that he wept bitter tears and had great sorrow of heart.

Then one day he looked out the window and saw a dog playing on the lawn. The dog had a mat, and kept picking the mat up, tossing it over his shoulder, running and getting it, tossing it some more, picking it up and tossing it again. God said to Henry Suso, “That mat is your reputation, and I am letting the dogs of sin tear your reputation to shreds and toss it all over the lawn for your own good. One of these days things will change.”

And things did change. It was not very long before people who were tearing his reputation were confounded, and Suso rose into a place that made him a power in his day and a great blessing still to those who sing his hymns and read his works.

Next vow; Never pass anything on about anybody else that will hurt him. “Love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). The talebearer has no place in God's favor. If you know something that would hinder or hurt the reputation of one of God's children, bury it forever. Find a little garden out back—a little spot

somewhere—and when somebody comes around with an evil story, take it out and bury it, and say, “Here lies in peace the story about my brother.” God will take care of it. “With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged” (Matthew 7:2).

If you want God to be good to you, you are going to have to be good to His children. You say, “That's not grace.” Well, grace gets you into the kingdom of God. That is unmerited favor. But after you are seated at the Father's table He expects to teach you table manners. And He won't let you eat unless you obey the etiquette of the table. And what is that? The etiquette of the table is that you don't tell stories about the brother who is sitting at the table with you—no matter what his denomination, or nationality or background.

Our next vow is: Never accept any glory. God is jealous of His glory and He will not give His glory to another. He will not even share His glory with another. It is quite natural, I should say, for people to hope that maybe their Christian service will give them a chance to display their talents. True, they want to serve the Lord. But they also want other people to now they are serving the Lord. They want to have a reputation among the saints. That is very dangerous ground—seeking a reputation among the saints. It's bad enough to seek a reputation in the world, but it's worse to seek a reputation among the people of God. Our Lord gave up His reputation, and so must we.

Meister Eckhart once preached a sermon on Christ cleansing the temple. He said, “Now there was nothing wrong with those men selling and buying there. There was nothing wrong with exchanging money there; it had to be. The sin lay in their doing it for profit. They got a percentage on serving the Lord.” And then he made the application: “Anybody that serves for a commission, for what little bit of glory he can get out of it, he is a merchant and he ought to be cast out of the temple.”

I go along with this. If you're serving the Lord, and yet slyly—perhaps scarcely known to you—you're hoping to get just a little five percent commission, then look out! It will chill the power of God in your spirit. You must determine that you will never take any glory, but see that God gets it all.

Now the easiest possible thing is to give a message like this. The hard thing is to make it work in one's own life. Remember that these five vows are not

something you write in the back of your Bible and forget. They've got to be written in your own blood. They have to be made final, irrevocable. If it only comes off the surface, it's no good. Much of our promises come off the surface. No, no. Let it come out of the depths of your heart, the deep depths of your spirit.

Theses vows cut against the old human nature. They introduce the cross into your life. And nobody ever walks back from carrying his cross—nobody, ever. When a man takes his cross he's already said goodbye. He's pulled the roll top shut on his desk and said farewell to his wife and children. He's not coming back. The man with the cross never comes back. When you make these vows, remember: They introduce the cross into your life, they strike at the heart of your self-life and there is never a place to go back to. And I say, “Woe to the triflers!”

In America—and maybe in other places, too—so many people are saying, “Try Jesus, try God!” Triflers, experimenters, tasters they are. Like a rabbit with a half dozen holes so if one is stopped up he can flee to another! No! From the cross there is no place to flee. You don't “try” Jesus. He's not there to be experimental with. Christ is not on trial. You are. I am. He's not! God raised Him from the dead and forever confirmed His deity and sealed Him and set Him at His own right hand as Lord and Christ. Turn everything over to Him and you'll find your life begin to lift. You'll blossom in a wonderful way.

Now, if you happen to be one of those on whom God has laid His hand for a deeper life, a more powerful life, a fuller life, then I wonder if you would be willing to pray this kind of prayer: “O God, glorify Thyself at my expense. Send me the bill—anything, Lord. I set no price. I will not dicker or bargain. Glorify Thyself. I'll take the consequence.”

This kind of praying is simple, but it's deep and wonderful and powerful. I believe, if you can pray a prayer like that, it will be the ramp from which you can take off into higher heights and bluer skies in the things of the Spirit.

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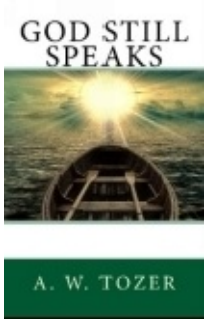



God Still Speaks
A. W. Tozer

Tozer is as popular today as when he was living on the earth. He is respected right across the spectrum of Christianity, in circles that would disagree sharply with him doctrinally. Why is this? A. W. Tozer was a man who knew the voice of God. He shared this experience with every true child of God. With all those who are called by the grace of God to share in the mystical union that is possible with Him through His Son Jesus.

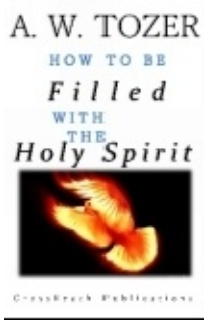
Tozer fought against much dryness and formality in his day. Considered a mighty man of God by most Evangelicals today, he was unconventional in his approach to spirituality and had no qualms about consulting everyone from Catholic Saints to German Protestant mystics for inspiration on how to experience God more fully.

Tozer, just like his Master, doesn't fit neatly into our theological boxes. He was a man after God's own heart and was willing to break the rules (man-made ones that is) to get there.

Here are two writings by Tozer that touch on the heart of this goal. Revelation is Not Enough and The Speaking Voice. A bonus chapter The Menace of the Religious Movie is included.

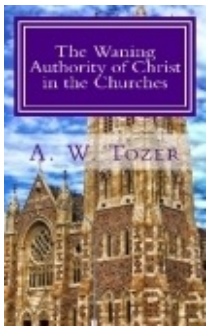
This is meat to sink your spiritual teeth into. Tozer's writings will show you the way to satisfy your spiritual hunger.

—Dave Kinsella




How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit
A. W. Tozer

Before we deal with the question of how to be filled with the Holy Spirit, there are some matters which first have to be settled. As believers you have to get them out of the way, and right here is where the difficulty arises. I have been afraid that my listeners might have gotten the idea somewhere that I had a how-to-be-filled-with-the-Spirit-in-five-easy-lessons doctrine, which I could give you. If you can have any such vague ideas as that, I can only stand before you and say, "I am sorry"; because it isn't true; I can't give you such a course. There are some things, I say, that you have to get out of the way, settled.

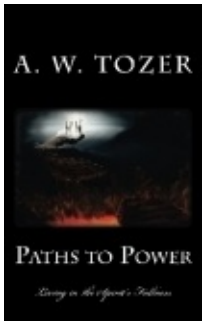



The Waning Authority of Christ in the Churches
A. W. Tozer

This book has been described by James L. Snyder as Tozer's valedictory. It was his last message ever given to God's people. Written shortly before his death in 1963, it was published two days after his death. It is a challenging message to all who want to walk with Christ.

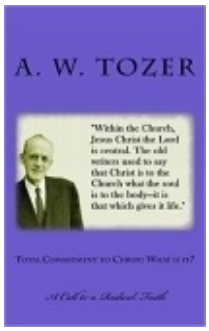
"HERE IS THE BURDEN of my heart; and while I claim for myself no special inspiration I yet feel that this is also the burden of the Spirit. If I know my own heart it is love alone that moves me to write this. What I write here is not the sour ferment of a mind agitated by contentions with my fellow Christians. There have been no such contentions. I have not been abused, mistreated or attacked by anyone. Nor have these observations grown out of any unpleasant experiences that I have had in my association with others. My relations with my own church as well as with

Christians of other denominations have been friendly, courteous and pleasant. My grief is simply the result of a condition which I believe to be almost universally prevalent among the churches."




Paths to Power
A. W. Tozer

We present in these pages an outline, which may at least serve to suggest the way to a greater spiritual power for many of us. Or, as the title intimates, each major idea may be a “path” leading to a life of abundant grace promised in the Sacred Word. Let us remember that a path is merely a way toward something; it can never be the thing itself. A knowledge of the truth is not enough; the truth must be followed if we would realize in actual experience the blessedness which is here described.




Total Commitment to Christ: What is it?
A. W. Tozer
Tozer was a modern day prophet. His call to the Church was unequivocal: We must put Christ at the center of our lives and live for him and through him alone. He was an iconoclast among Evangelicals. One who sought to please God and not man. In this way he made many friends and many enemies. But everything that drove him was for the betterment of the human race in general and the Church in particular.

IN THE FIRST CHAPTER OF COLOSSIANS we read that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. (1:15-19)

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