

'The Treasures of Hope'

by A.W. Tozer

Hope is a precious and powerful gift from God that enables us to endure adversity, persevere under pressure, and look forward to a brighter future.

Scripture: Psalm 146:5, Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 5:5, Romans 8:24-25, Romans 15:4, Romans 15:13, 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, Hebrews 11:1, 1 Peter 1:3, 1 John 3:3

Topics: "Faith in Adversity", "Hope"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the dual nature of hope in his sermon 'The Treasures of Hope,' describing it as both a precious gift and a potential treachery. He explains that hope is essential for enduring life's adversities, providing comfort and strength to those who believe in God's promises. Tozer illustrates how hope has sustained figures like Noah and Abraham, and how it remains a vital force in the lives of believers today. He encourages the congregation to nourish their hope through Scripture and to trust in the character of God, who is the ultimate source of hope. The sermon concludes with a reminder that true hope is grounded in faith and the love of God, enabling believers to face challenges with confidence.

Transcript

"The Treasures of Hope"

June 10, 1956

The treasures of hope. In this day, this morning, I want to talk on the preciousness of hope, and tonight, The Treachery of Hope. Because hope is both the most precious, and the most treacherous gift which God has given to the sons of men. The two texts, Psalm 146:5, we've already read it, happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, who's hope is in Jehovah his God. Then in the New Testament, 2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17. Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father which hath loved us and has given us ever lasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good work and worth.

Now, the Old Testament is full of hope and its synonyms. And also, we find the New Testament full of it. The Holy Spirit in the first text has pronounced that man happy who has the God of Jacob for his present help, and who has God also for his hope for the future. You see, there's a difference between help and hope. Our God is a very present help in trouble. But it doesn't say a very present hope in trouble, because help has to do with the past or the present and hope has to do with the future. The very essence of hope is

in its futurity. Watts caught the distinction here when he said, our God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come. Our help in the past and our hope for years to come. Now, there is a difference in tense you see, and Paul explains that in the eighth chapter of Romans, I think it is, the eighth chapter of Romans. Paul explains the difference between hope and help. He says, for we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for it? But, if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. If you are hoping for a letter, you hope until you get the letter in your hand. And then you smile and walk in the house, opening it as you walk from the mailbox. Why hope for what you have in your hand. But if you don't have it yet, but believe you may receive it, then you will with patience wait for it.

Now hope, as I have said is a universal treasure and it is native to mankind. It's a gift of God to the human breast. It's native there. It's indigenous as the missionaries like to say. It wasn't carted in from the outside; it grew there. It was native to the human soil. It's indigenous, the hope which God puts in the human breast. And it is probably the most precious, I said before without a qualifying word that it was the most precious, but I would say that it is among the very most precious things the human heart can entertain or enjoy, depending upon its object. But because it springs from within and doesn't need an outer object to fix upon, it therefore may be a parasite that grows on itself and nourishes itself on itself with no object to fix upon. In which case, it is the most treacherous thing in the world, and I will preach about that tonight.

But this morning, I want to talk about the blessedness of hope. Hope you know, is an expectation of things desired. It is an anticipation of better times ahead. It is the belief that those better times are going to be ours. And there's scarcely a human being anywhere in the world that hasn't felt the lifting encouragement of hope when he was in a difficulty. Hope said to him, now things will be better, and if you just wait with patience, things will turn out all right. And you know, mostly they do.

And thus, hope cheers us along the way. Without hope, that is, if hope were suddenly to take wings and fly away from the human breast, and sweet anticipation of better times, never visit again, the human heart, life in a fallen world like this, would be totally unbearable. Adversity would break our spirits and drive us to suicide. Why do men bear up under adversity? Because hope whispers to them that it can't last forever. That there will be better times ahead. But if there was no hope to whisper, I'd say that a little adversity, even an hour's adversity would break our hearts, because we would imagine that that adversity was to be forever. And the fallen sons of men who hoped not in God would die by the millions by their own hand. And I believe that the race would die out in a few years. Not even the ever-present procreational drive, nor the instinct for self-preservation, could possibly save a race from extinction when one's hope had fled forever from the hearts of mankind. Hope is both a nurse and a comforter.

I think of the shipwrecked sailor out there on the sea floating in a little boat or on a raft. He's been there for days, and his throat is parched, and he's hungry, and he's in discouragement. But, always hope whispers, they'll find you, they'll find you. You won't perish, they'll find you. And thus enables the man to endure through the days that seem like long years until at last, a plane flying overhead drops supplies and later they land and pick him up. The prisoner who is in his cell and has been there for long months, is able to wait it out and not go insane or commit suicide, because he marks off the years and the months and the days and last, even the hours on his homemade calendar when he shall be free. And it enables a man who otherwise would go insane with loneliness, to wait it out and hope for the day when the great iron gates will yield. And he will walk into the free sunshine and breathe once more the air of liberty.

And the sick or injured man who lies in his home or in a hospital bed, injured or sick and suffering from pain, it enables him. Hope enables him to wait for the day when returning health shall once more drive the pain away, and the sickness that turns him inside out shall leave, and he'll be able to eat again and live on the nourishing food. And that returning traveler who has come from a long distance because he has heard that some dear one lies ill. That returning traveler is able to lift those feet which every mile get heavier and heavier and though near exhaustion, hope whispers, a little longer and you will see the face of your loved one. And he believes hope and moves on and arrives and sees before too late the one who lies on the bed of sickness. Now, I've noticed that hope, I've talked about hope among the sons of men. But I have noticed how hope in God's dealings with those men, how much sweeter it becomes.

We go back and find Noah hoping against hope. God told him to build an ark and he builds an ark, and it rained and the waters of the great deep roared up and floated his ark and Noah there between the waters and the rains above, waited and hoped. And all was able to hope it out and wait for the waters to assuage. And Abraham years later, left his home in Ur of the Chaldees and started to a land which he knew not, except that he knew the God who knew the land and was willing to follow Him. And Abraham hoped against hope and considered not his body as good as dead, neither the deadness of Sarah's womb, and hoped and God gave him a son from whose loins was born the Messiah.

I think of Israel in Egypt under the taskmaster's lash, when for 400 years she felt the sting and watched the blood ooze and made bricks without straw and was cursed and oppressed by the slave drivers of Pharaoh. But she still could believe on, because the memory of her promises, the promises God had given to the Father Abraham, Isaac and Jacob still stayed with Israel and later in Babylon. When the Jews were captive there and they hung their harps on the willows and said, we cannot sing the songs of Zion in a strange land, yet they did not despair. Neither did they turn away. In fact, they were cured of all idolatry in Babylon, and they say there has not been a Jew worship an idol since. They were cured there even though in the land itself they had been tempted to run to idolatry sometimes. But the terror of the Babylonish captivity soured them on all men-made gods. And they could wait it out a generation and a half long until Ezra and Zerubbabel and Nehemiah and the rest, lead them back to the land of promise.

And then, we think of that which we call the Messianic hope, the hope of the Messiah. It still burns like fire in the breasts of ten thousands of Jews around the whole world. And when our Lord Jesus Christ came to the temple, you'll remember, two old people, old Simeon, and old Anna. I tried to figure her out today. She had lived with her husband seven years from the time she was married, then he died and she lived eighty-four more years in the temple. I figured that say, she was seventeen or eighteen, maybe twenty when she was married and twenty-seven when she was widowed and lived eighty-four more years. You've got her 111 years old there if my mathematics is correct. That's the time when Jesus was brought into the temple. And Simeon, who had been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and Anna, who had been hoping for salvation in Israel. They made their little speeches and went home because at last, hope had turned to fruition. And that which they had hoped for through their long lives, was now before them in the form of a little pink baby. Thus, hope has enabled God to deal with His people, and enabled His people to stand every kind of pressure and persecution down the years.

Then, the church. We have three sacred sisters in the church. They are called faith and hope and charity. And faith is first. She reckons God to be true. And hope is next. She expects and anticipates that God will fulfill His promises. And charity surrounds them all with an aura of divinity, enables faith and hope to wait without impatience while the slow wheels of God's clock move the hands across the face; so big that we can't see it or some big it never seems to move, and yet it's moving.

It says in Romans 5:5 that hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. They have laughed at the church all down the centuries and there are even Christian people laughing at us today. They say you're still believing in the second coming of Christ? Don't you know they believed in this coming of Christ when Paul was here? Don't you know they believed in the coming of Christ in the days of the church Fathers? Don't you know that a few people in the dark eclipse we call the Dark Ages still believed that Jesus would come again? Don't you know that when the reformers were saving the church back in the 16th century, they believed that Christ would come. And don't you know that in the 19th century they believed that Christ would come and still He didn't come and you're believing He will come again. And in 1,000 years, people will look back and say, you believed that He would come and He didn't come. And thus the scoffer is saying all things as they were from the beginning.

What is it? How is it we can look without being red-faced? How is it that we can walk up to our enemies and say, I still hope for His coming? It is because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts and maketh our hope not ashamed. You can be not ashamed of a deferred hope if the love of God's in your heart.

Well, now I want you to notice what the apostles say about hope. In Romans 15:4 it says that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Thus, faith is nourished by the Scriptures. Our brother Paul told us this morning about that young fellow who got converted awfully quick and who made a big move towards the things of God, and then went away and it withered. Well, it's possible for your hope to wither on the vine and never ripen. It's possible, if you don't nourish it on the Scriptures. We through patience and comfort of the Scriptures have hope. So, if you will nourish your hope on the Scriptures, it'll keep alive in your heart.

The baby that's born into the home must be nourished. I went Thursday or Friday to see a little fellow by the name of Stanley Wilson Tozer who was born at 6:45, Friday morning down here at, what do you call it-on the Midway. And one thing they're doing for him, they're nourishing him. He has to be nourished or he'll die, and so with every living thing. If you want to keep your hope alive and keep it happy, keep it nourished on the Scriptures. Then, it says that hope says that Christ and righteousness must win. For he talks about the hope of righteousness through faith.

There's one thing about a Christian, he's not very vulnerable. He's hard to kill brother. If he's a real Christian, he's awfully hard to kill. Because when everything turns against him, he can rise and say, I still believe that Christ and righteousness shall triumph. When Hitler and Mussolini, the Fascists and the Nazis, had conquered half of Europe or more, and had England rocked back on her heels, and it looked as if that great braggart and big mouth enemy of humanity over there in Berlin, was not only able to beat the good people, but continue to beat them, and make righteousness look silly and make sin look right. I remember preaching in this pulpit. And I said, now, I have a word for you. At the moment, evil is winning and righteousness is cowering in her corner. But don't you dare to believe that it's going to stay like that. God and righteousness are going to win!

Where is Hitler now, outside of being in hell? And where is Mussolini now? And where are the heel shooters now? All gone the way of history. And righteousness and liberty won in that instance. And they will win every time until that dark hour called, The Tribulation, when for a short period, God allows sin to take over in the person of the Antichrist and fling itself and spread and prosper like a green bay tree. And it will imagine as it grows unnaturally fast to fill the whole earth with its iniquity, it will imagine that it has made even God ashamed and that sin is going to win at last. But it won't know that in every root and rootlet, there are the cutworms and borers working.

And the day will be when that great tree of iniquity, that great, green bay tree that has spread itself and filled the earth shall come crashing down, never to rise again. And Jesus Christ will take over and there will be righteousness from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. And hope tells us this and whispers it to us. And hope looks forward to salvation for a helmet, a hope of salvation. What keeps you from going insane these days? What keeps your mind right? As you look around about on the world? What is it?

Somebody sent me, you get this later if you read the Alliance Weekly, I don't know whether anybody here does, but they do other places. But I have a word to say about this. There used to be an organization in the United States during the 30s and 40s called the Four As. The Association for the Advancement of Atheism in America. And I used to read their literature. They're a pretty strong bunch. They had little cells in the cities all over and they had a magazine with quite a circulation. The advancement of atheism in America; that was their job. And they were fighting the preachers and fighting the Bible.

The other day, the head of that organization, what's left of it, was interviewed by a newspaper man. And the newspaper man said, how's your organization doing? He said not doing good at all? He said, what happened to it? Well, he said, it is not needed much anymore. He said, do you got any organizations? No, we don't have any left. We had quite a number, but they're all gone, all petered out. He said, how's your magazine? Well, he said, the circulation has fallen off to 2,000. Well, he said, where's your preachers that used to go out and preach this atheism? He said, they don't have any anymore. And he said, well, you're failing. No, he said, we're not failing. He said, there was a day when preachers believed in God and hell and sin and the fall of man and miracles and the new birth and repentance and preached it. And they believed the Jonah was swallowed by a whale and that Lazarus was raised from the dead. And we fought that because we didn't believe it. But he said, now, there's no battle line. There's no issues. He said, they don't preach that those things anymore. They preach peace of mind and how to comfort yourself and how to be happy though married and how to be nice and how to be kind. And he said, that's what we always preached. And he said, we've no fight with a church that doesn't preach the Bible. Isn't that a horrible thing brother? That's too horrible to let alone. I've got to wool that a while yet. And let the world know!

Now, Brother Dave Enloe said in conversation about this, that man didn't know there are some people that still preach those things. That's true, but before the eyes of the world they don't count. And the atheists know that the churches that have the numbers and that count, don't preach those things. Even those who pretend to, usually peter it out to come and accept Jesus and have peace of mind. And then he said this cynical thing. I think this was the unkindest cut of all. He said, why these Christians are as good as atheist now, that they believe the same thing.

Now, brother and sister, how can you keep your head from swimming in times like these I tell you. The helmet, the hope of salvation. Wear that helmet and the bullets will fly in all directions, and there'll be a bomb when it hits you. But outside of a little jarring, you won't mind it. You got a helmet on, all right? Hope expects Christ's coming and hope is a purifying hope, for every man that hath this hope in Him does what? Purifies himself, what, even as He is pure.

Now I'll close by reminding you that the Christian's hope is sound. It is sound because it's grounded on the character of God. And because it is grounded on the atonement in God's Son, and Peter calls it a living hope. Why did he call it a living hope? Because there's so much dead hope. He called it a living hope because it rests on realism and not on fancy. Because the hope of the Christian is not wishful dreaming. It's a valid expectation. And the Christian expects and he has a right to expect, for he's got the character of

God back of him.

If I had a piece of paper with the Continental Illinois Bank back of it, I could sleep comfortably knowing that I had the famous and honored institution whose very future required and necessitated that they keep their promises. I wouldn't worry. I could hope if I knew that the character that was back of that hope was sound. If I had a government bond, I wouldn't worry as long as Washington is still in the hands of Americans. And as long as the President still sits in the White House, that bond is good. And as long as the glory-circled throne, still sees dimly, dimly there, the great God Almighty, the Most High God maker of heaven and earth, my hope is all right and so is yours a valid expectation. Once, one of the Old Testament writers felt a little impatient with God. He was in trouble he was getting kicked around. And then he comforted himself with these words. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

So, brother it's good. Don't let things get you down. Of course, you'll get in trouble, of course you will. In Chicago, there's not three days it seems to me, or not thirty out of the whole year when you can be comfortable. The weather is always too hot, too wet, too dry, too cold, too something. And today, it's too hot. Next week, it may be too cold. I went to the East and took along, my wife suggestion but might have easily been mine. I didn't know what to do. Took along one of those little plastic raincoats, and brother it got so cold I needed an overcoat. And all I had was a plastic raincoat and some nice summer clothes. You never know weather or what weather it's going to do. You never know what the economic system is going to do. You never know what Buggana is going to do. And you never know what polio is going to do. You never know, you never know. You never know what some wild, young fellow driving a hot rod is going to do, smash into you and wreck your car and hurt your family, you never know. But you do know one thing brother, it's good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God. God will bring it out all right.

Now, I leave you with this lovely little benediction of Paul in Romans 15:13. The God of hope, says Paul, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. He is the God of hope says Paul. May he fill you full with all joy and peace in believing that ye may abound in hope. Not have a little pale hope but abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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