

(Titus - Part 4): In Hope of Eternal Life li

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God's character, particularly His trustworthiness, as the foundation of our hope for eternal life.

Duration: 33:24

Scripture: Psalm 121:4, Isaiah 40:28, Isaiah 53:12, Malachi 3:6, Luke 1:37, 2 Timothy 2:13, Titus 1:2

Topics: "Titus"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by emphasizing the importance of family night and invites everyone to attend. He then focuses on a passage from the book of Titus, where Paul declares himself as a servant of God and apostle. The preacher highlights the significance of the phrase 'in hope of eternal life' and discusses the trustworthiness of God's promises. He also mentions the struggle to believe in these promises and encourages the congregation to have faith. The sermon includes references to various biblical figures and teachings, such as John Flavill's sermon on Isaiah 53:12 and the concept of a covenant between God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Transcript

At the young people's hour tonight and the senior young people, I expect to be present and will give a short message. I want all my young friends to be there to hear what I have to say. I want to give a practical talk on how to make the most of your present spiritual privileges and means of grace.

Then I'd like also to accent the family night, Wednesday night, 745. This Wednesday night will be Family Night Reports Lecture. Now we're in Titus where Paul says that he is a servant of God and apostle sent to declare the faith of God's elect and acknowledging of the truth, promotion of the truth which is after godliness in a hope of eternal life which God that cannot lie promised before the world began.

I think that's probably as far as we'll get. I talked last week on this phrase, in hope of eternal life. Now, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began.

If you people who don't preach want to know how humiliated we preachers feel, well, I'll whisper something to you. That an apostle inspired by the Holy Ghost can write a letter to a church or to a man and pack it so tight with truth that four or five words will be enough for us, that's rather humiliating. I'd like to think that I could paddle right along beside Paul, but Paul has to wait for me to catch up, wait weeks, months for me to catch up with him.

So he said, in hope of eternal life, and that was last week, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began, that's this week. Now, we look at that, God that cannot lie. Of course, we know what God it is.

It's the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom Paul has said to be the only God. We have one Father, one God. And he told us here of the hope of the promise.

We have the hope of eternal life. We have eternal life now, and we have the hope of eternal life in its broader aspects and the world to come. Now, we have this as a promise.

We have this as a promise. And I would rather have some people's promise than to have other people's gifts. A long time ago, a great preacher was in this city, I think one of the greatest preachers of the first 50 years of church history, Paul Rader.

He said that a man, a businessman that he personally knew to be rather windy and not too much given to fulfill his promises, who allowed his imagination to run away with his ability to produce, promised him he was going to give him, I think, if I recall, \$100,000 for missions. Rader said, Have you got a dime? He said, Sure. He said, Could I have it now for missions? He said, Yes.

Now he said, Thank you. He said, I know God will get this. But he wasn't sure about that promised \$100,000.

But the dime, he knew God would get that. Well, that was his half humorous but profoundly meaningful way of saying that some people's promises are not too valuable. And I would turn it around and say that I would rather live by some people's promise than by other people's gifts.

And here we have a promise. Not yet that full eternal life, but the promise of eternal life. And always remember this, that a promise is only worth whatever the character is of the man who made it.

So that the God that cannot lie promised, and this promise is worth just as much as God, no more, no less. All truth rests down upon and begins with God. A promise is only as sound, I repeat, as the one that made it.

It is amusing, if it were not so obviously painful, to see people struggling to have faith, on their knees struggling and writhing to have faith, a frantic struggle to believe, only indicates that the person who is thus struggling has lost sight of God and has got involved in God's promises. God's promises are made by God, and they are as good as God and as sure as God, and they are to us whatever God is. And they cannot be less nor more.

They are whatever God is. And when a person is struggling to believe a promise, it's obvious that he has detached the promise from the God who made it and is for the time in a state of mental confusion. Remember, you only have to ask, Who made the promise? And if you can get a satisfactory answer, Who made the promise, then you've gone a little way.

Then if you say, What has the record been of this person who made the promise? And if examination shows the record to have been 100% sound, that he always came through the promise, if further investigation shows that this person has never been known to be anything but honest and true, and if further investigation shows that this person is able to make good on the promise, then why worry about the promise? Think first about the man who made it. You get a letter promising you something, and you say,

Now, Lord, help me to believe this. Help me to believe this.

Oh, I want to believe this, Father. Help me to believe this. Well, you don't want to believe it if it isn't so.

If a man wrote me a letter and said, Mr. Tozer, I'm going to give you a Cadillac. Well, I don't know if my wife, I guess, could learn to drive it, but if somebody gave me a Cadillac, or was going to give me a Cadillac, first I'd look whose signature was at the bottom of the letter, and I would then quietly decide or try to find out whether the man was used to making promises. One dear little old brother who's long ago gone to heaven, who used to be in our church years ago, and whose mind began to break, and I never noticed it.

I never noticed anything wrong until one day he came up to me and said, Did you get the car? And I said, What car? And he said, Why, I have given 40 automobiles to missionaries and preachers this last month, and he said, I wonder if you got yours? And I shook his hand and said, No, not yet. And I knew. Dear little old brother, he, a lot long after that, he went off to be with his Lord.

His mind was breaking. And, what do they call it, blood shut off from the mind and it doesn't function. Some great men, including Emerson, and Dr. Simpson, and Dr. Zemer, and many others have gone that way.

Their minds wouldn't work toward the last. Well, now, if I investigated and I found that this was simply a kindly promise by a man who was beginning to slip, then I'd smile it off. But if I looked at the bottom of the letter and I knew that that letter was signed by a man who not only had always kept his promises, but was fully capable of keeping them, why, I wouldn't worry about it.

I'd be looking up on which lever to pull to start awaiting the curb. Because I know I'd get it. And it's this way with the promises of God.

God, who cannot lie, promise. Now, that's all you have to know. Grant me God and the promises are all right.

The struggle to believe promises, I insist, is psychologically and mentally off. It's not sound. Because it is a wanting thing to be true, but not being sure that it is and trying to make yourself feel that it is, that's not the way to approach it.

Who made the promise? Is he able to make good on it? Is his character such that he will make good on it? Find that out. And when you've found that out, your promise is as sound as the throne of God. God that cannot lie, promise, and all truth begins with God and rests down upon God.

So don't struggle to believe God, and don't insult God by asking, help me to believe thee. God, that saying, help me to have confidence in thy character, O God. Help me to stop thinking that you're crooked.

Help me, Lord, to believe that you're honest. Well, that would insult your father if you'd go to him and say, Dad, you've promised to see me through college, but I can't believe you. Help me to believe you.

Well, your father would say, have I lied to you in the past? And you'd say, never. And have I always made good on all my promises? Yes. Well, why do you doubt me now? And he'd feel bad about it because it would be a reflection on his fatherly kindness and his basic honesty.

God that cannot lie made these promises, this promise of eternal life. And I, for one, don't intend to lie awake nights wondering if he can keep it. I know God will keep it all right.

Now, Paul here uses a negative, I want you to notice. He said the God that cannot lie. Saint Dionysius said, we know God more perfectly by negatives than we do by affirmatives.

That is, we can know what God is not better than we can know what God is seeing that the name of God is secret and the nature of God is so infinitely removed from ours that we fallen men find it very difficult to visualize what God is like. But we can know what God is not. And the theologians have always had to follow that more or less.

To understand God's perfections, they have to go to negatives. For instance, if you were preaching on the self-existence of God, you'd say God had no origin. And I don't know how else you would say it because human language won't go any further than that.

That's it. God had no origin. Everything else had an origin, including the very seraphim archangels, but not God.

Therefore, if God had no origin, therefore, he must exist in himself. And so we get the positive by means of the negative. If you wanted to preach on God's self-sufficiency or meditate on it, you could say God has no support.

And if God has no support, if nothing holds him up, then he must hold himself up. Therefore, he must be self-sufficient. So by a negative, you'd arrive at a positive.

If you wanted to think on the eternity of God, you'd say God had no beginning. And if God had no beginning, he always must have been. And if he always must have been, therefore, he is eternal, and you'd have the eternity of God.

If you wanted to meditate on the immutability of God, you'd say that God knows no change. And if God does not change, he always must have been what he is now. And if he always was what he is now, it's easy to reason that he will always be what he was and is.

And infinitude, if you wanted to meditate on God's infinitude, you could say God has no limitations. Well, if God has no limitations, then it can only mean that there is no boundary anywhere, that God is limitless. This is, of all thoughts, the most difficult to grasp, so we'll skip over it pretty fast.

And if you wanted to think on the omniscience of God, you'd say, well, God cannot learn. God cannot learn. Why? Because he already knows all there is to know.

Knowing himself perfectly, and containing all things, he knows all that can be known. That is the negative. So Paul used it here.

God that cannot lie. And the scriptures, not only the theologians, but the scriptures also follow this method. He says in Isaiah about himself, The Lord fainteth not, neither is weary.

And he says, I the Lord change not. And he says, He that keepeth thee will not slumber nor sleep. And he says, He cannot deny himself.

And he says, With God nothing is impossible. And he says, With God it was impossible for him to lie. So there we have all these passages from the scriptures showing that we can know God by what he is not.

And so Paul used it freely and said God that cannot lie. If he had simply said the true God or the God of truth, you could have figured that out. All right, but it's more powerful put negatively.

And the gentleman who believes in positive thinking might learn a lesson here, though he never will. That sometimes you can back into the station better than you can pull the head in in this terrible day. And this is true, that sometimes God is able to tell us what he is by telling us what he's not better than by telling us what he is.

So this hope of eternal life was promised by this kind of God. What are you going to do? Go home and sweat it out and wonder if it's true and pray for faith? No, get acquainted with God and be at peace. Acquaint thyself with him and you'll not worry.

And then he says he promised before the world began. That is, other versions say before eternal ages he promised. Now if he promised before the world began, he must have promised somebody who was present.

And if he promised before the eternal ages, he must have promised somebody who was before the ages were. Now to whom then was the promise made? Well, I wouldn't have thought of this myself, but there lived about 200 or more years ago a brilliant and godly Presbyterian preacher by the name of John Flavell. I've always called him Flavell, but I see that the dictionaries of biography call him Flavell.

John Flavell. He was an English Presbyterian preacher. When I was a boy on the farm, for the sheer paucity of reading matter, I read everything I could get hold of from the time I can remember.

Calendars, anything. Railroad sketches, anything. Even the writing material or printed matter on cereal boxes.

I read everything. And we had nothing around there to read. Nothing.

Didn't even take a daily paper. I couldn't read that. Nothing.

My mother bore a book occasionally, and I'd read that. And somewhere there fell into my hand a book of sermons by John Flavell. Now, John Flavell was an old Puritan, an old Presbyterian Puritan type of preacher.

And though I was only a boy, maybe 12, I read his sermons. And I remember to this day after the passing of the years some of the brilliant and wonderful things John Flavell said. And he was preaching in one sermon on the text, Therefore, from Isaiah 53, 12.

Therefore, I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoiled with the strong. And he was preaching on that text, Therefore. And he said, This indicates, this indicates that the Father made a covenant with the Son before the world was and before man was, and that the covenant rests not upon poor man but upon God.

That this man's salvation was a compact made between the Father and the Son. And incidentally, John Milton puts that same thing into Paradise Lost. We've forgotten to read Paradise Lost, now that we can get Al Cap.

And, what's his name? Well, my brother, I think we ought to read Flavell and Milton. I believe we'd get more out of it than we would out of reading Moon Mullins. And he says that the Father made a compact with the Son.

Back there. And therefore, shall he divide a portion with the great and divide the spoiled with the strong. And he went on brilliantly to set before his readers in heavy language without illustration and without any side remarks.

They weren't supposed to have illustrations and side remarks. They'd gone to church in those good old days or the kirk, they called it in Scotland. They went there not to hear stories but to hear theology.

An hour long. Two hours long. John Flavell's sermon on the therefore from Isaiah 53 that God made the covenant with the Son before eternal ages.

With whom else could he have made a covenant before the worlds began? Before there was a seraphim to stand by the throne of grace or the sea of fire? Before there was an angel? Before a man ever breathed? With whom did he make his compact and to whom did he make his promise? He made it to his eternal Son who later became flesh to dwell among us. So that the God who cannot lie promised before the world began. Now your certain hope rests for the future rests upon this kind of God.

This kind of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And the promises depend upon the covenant. And that's why you don't have to worry.

Your certain hope for the future absolutely rests in God and I want to say this to you. It's independent of anything you can see or touch. Independent of anything you can see or touch.

This covenant anything that you can see, touch, taste, smell, hear, anything that is sensible that belongs to the senses is completely divorced from the things we tie it up to. We tie the tri-Christianity up to democracy, civilization, politics, financial conditions and all the rest. Never, never, never.

Never. Your hope for all the ages doesn't rest upon democracy. What do I think about democracy? Do I think that democracy is a good way of life? Yes, I do.

I don't think it's the best but I think it's a good way of life. I think the best government is theocracy. When Jesus Christ comes back to rule the earth that will be theocracy, the rule of God over the world.

That's the best. I think second best is democracy, the rule of the people. And I am quite satisfied with our Republican form of government, our American way of life and I have nothing to say but good about it.

But I would only say this, that Christianity has flourished under every sort of political system. It flourished in the court of Caesar. It flourished in the Middle Ages, in the days of chivalry and the days of manors and lords of the manor and serfs and slaves.

It prospered in the day when men were slaves. As Paul said, he was a slave of Jesus Christ, drawing an illustration from current society. It flourishes now in Korea.

It flourishes now under Jean Cachet out on that little island of Formosa. It flourishes in tiny little places in some of the hard, tough countries of South America. And Christianity rests upon God and it antedates not only all political systems but all politicians, all statesmen and all men.

And it goes back before eternal ages and links itself like a mighty chain to the very throne of God. Therefore, political systems don't change anything. But you say, well, political systems can soon stamp out Christianity.

That's what we think, my brethren, but I don't believe it for a moment. I am not, I am not for these, these Russian and other churchmen who come over here and try to pull our legs and tell us that they have religious freedom in Russia. I know that they don't.

But I also know that the Holy Ghost hasn't permitted the seed of God to die in Russia. I heard the other night on FM a beautiful, beautiful choir. It was a Russian choir.

The recording was made in London and it was made recently. It was sung by Russian voices. I lay in my bed after I'd gone to bed, I lay and listened to the FM to this wonderful music of the Russian choir.

And in my heart I had an indignation. I said, people like this, that have genius like this and ability like this, that have the warmth and the emotion and the feeling of passion that they have, that they have to be ruled by those devils in the Kremlin. That these fine, warm-hearted, friendly, religious-minded Russian people have to be ruled over by these communistic, atheistic devils.

In my heart I'm indignant that it should be so. And I pray that the day may come even in Russia when God will destroy this octopus and will take from the hearts and brains and bodies of the Russian people the chains that are there. For all you have to do is destroy the ruling classes in the Kremlin and destroy communism.

And you have the finest and most emotional and passionate and friendliest people. Now don't misunderstand me and go ahead and say Tozer made an impassioned speech in favor of Russia. Never in favor of communism.

It is the breed of the devil. It is the vomit of hell. It is the seepings from the sewers of limbo.

And I hate it with everything in me. And all of its sneaking devilishness and all of its evil chicanery. I hate it.

But I pity the people upon whose hearts and minds it's been clamped down like a vice. They're better than that. They don't deserve it.

But you say, then why don't they rise and throw it off? They tried that in Hungary, didn't they? You know what happened there. Only God can deliver them. So don't you believe for a minute that the ancient seed of God that was planted in the minds of the common plain people is dead in Russia.

There are still Christians there. Operating under difficulties, but they're still there and they're still in China. Don't think that the 40 or more years that our alliance missionaries labored and sweat and struggled and suffered in China is for nothing.

There are still Christians. The God who cannot lie promised before the world began and he promised before Marx and Lenin and he promised before Mao Zedong and Khrushchev. Well, some others would say, well, Christianity must go along with civilization.

No. Civilization is simply a combination, application of science to man's life. And it's given us this we call civilization.

Christianity, philosophy, and science are combined. That is the top froth of Christianity, as combined with science and philosophy to create this civilization that we have now. But civilization can disappear and we can go back to the ox cart.

And still it won't change anything in heaven yonder. It won't change anything inside of men. It won't change the covenants of God and the God who promised the sun in holy compact before the ages began.

He will not fail us if our civilization is destroyed. It goes back to the Constitution of the United States. I believe in this Constitution of the United States.

I hold it to be one of the greatest documents, as the English said, ever struck off by the hand of man. For all these years it has kept us free, the freest people in the world. And I grieve when I see Supreme Courts interpreting the Constitution so as to shield the communistic vermin that crawls in Washington.

But nevertheless, before the Constitution of the United States was written, the cross stood high above all times. And so it doesn't depend upon it. It doesn't depend on politics, nor wars and financial situation, nor space travel, nor churches, nor denominations, nor the Christian and missionary alliance.

God that cannot lie promised before the world began. And there is our hope. God never does anything new, said Meister Eckert.

By that he means that God never does anything suddenly or impulsively. He says, behold, I will do a new thing, and I make all things new. But he's talking about our new.

He only talks from our side. He said, behold, I will do something that from your standpoint will look new. Behold, I will do something that to you will seem new.

But he does nothing that he has in covenant to do with his eternal son before an angel's wing trembled by the sea of fire. He never does anything new. And the old German theologian is right.

God never does anything new. And if he blesses you today, he promised it before the world was. And if he saves you today, he does it according to a covenant he made with his son before the eternal ages.

And if he answers your prayer, he answers it according to a compact he made with his eternal son before the world was. So God never does anything new. God never adds any codicils to his will.

When God made his will, he made it and sealed it in blood and settled it in the God who cannot lie sore by himself because he could swear by no other. And he never adds any codicils. Our assurance is in him.

Let me read 2 Timothy 1, 9, and we'll close. Who has saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. Maybe we could read yet a little passage from Ephesians 1. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his will, that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Ah, my brother, you don't have to worry about the promises nor about the God who made them. All you have to be bothered about is whether you are living as you should live, whether you love him as you should, whether you are living as clean as you should live and as right and as good, and whether you are as useful and as fruitful as God wants you to be. You can think about that and pray over that all you want to, distrust yourself all you want to, never insult the majesty in the heavens by doubting him, for he is the God who cannot lie, and he promised eternal life before the world began.

And we who have believed him become part now of that eternal compact which he made with his Son for eternal ages. Amen and Amen.

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