

The Christian's Inheritance

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

August 2, 1953

Summary

Inheritance in Christianity is limitless and cannot be fully comprehended by human imagination, according to A.W. Tozer. God's benefits are given as a gift, making believers beneficiaries of His grace. Believers receive blessings and inheritance from God through faithful service, inheritance, and upon death. Tozer encourages believers to look forward with expectation and hope, as their inheritance is guaranteed by their relationship with God. He also warns against dwelling too much on the past, emphasizing the importance of a forward-looking outlook.

Message

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Now, Peter here says that these strangers, believers who were scattered about, were elect and begotten. And the electing and the begetting means up unto, a hope and an inheritance. They lead into a hope and an inheritance. We would be better Christians and wiser students, if we would remember this, that God rarely uses periods. We might speak in the language of a stenographer or an editor. I might say that God rarely uses periods. Almost always there are colons or at most, semi-colons. There rarely is a full stop. Occasionally, God will put down a full stop. Pray no more for him for I have deserted Him. Stop. Rarely though, mostly everything God does becomes a means toward something else that He's planning to do.

So, when God elects a man, that doesn't mean that that man is to sit down calmly and say I have arrived. For the election is unto a begetting. And when a man is begotten of the Spirit and becomes a Christian, it is not to be said, now I have arrived. Put a period there. Write finest across the bottom of the page. Well, that also is not true. God gets us unto and up into, and that which is before us is always greater than that which is behind us.

Now, he says that we are begotten unto a hope and an inheritance. Last week I talked about the hope. This week briefly I want to talk about the inheritance. Now the begotten one is a beneficiary of God. And I want to stop and say, at the expense of good preaching, but to the point and and that we might get the facts straight, that this is not a figure of speech.

When I say, that begotten one, the true Christian is a beneficiary of God, I am not using poetry. This is not a figure nor is this verse an isolated reference. This truth is openly taught from Matthew to Revelation. More than that, it's openly taught from Genesis to Revelation that the true believer is a beneficiary of God. That is, he stands to benefit, God being who He is. God beneficences, his benefits, are infinite and limitless.

Now when we benefit from another, we benefit from our parents. Our parents can give us certain physical and mental inheritances. We get what we get. They can't give us what they don't have. When we get what we get, we've gotten that. Then, in a sordid and earthly way, sometimes our parents also are able to leave us an inheritance. I mean, it's sordid and earthly when we introduce it into this holy place, able to leave us an inheritance, a legacy. And that is perfectly proper and right and even Scriptural if they should, if they can. And that also has a limit. Even a Rockefeller can inherit from his father only what his father had, not anymore. Even a J.P. Morgan, if he had any children, would leave them only what he had. Your parents can leave you only what they have.

My father used to drive along the way and point to great areas of land and say, I had hoped before I died that I could have that and could leave it to you. He never left us anything. We signed a quitclaim deed for one little piece of property. I did, gladly, joyously, quickly and sent it airmail special back so they would get it. I didn't want anything they could leave me. But our parents can leave us something, but it's always limited.

But God being who he is, the inheritance we receive from God is always limitless. The word infinite means limitless. We could help ourselves a lot if we could remember that. That when a preacher or a hymn or something he talks about, infinitude, or infinite. They always mean that which is unlimited. And when we say that the inheritance we receive must be equal to the God who gives it, because God does not deal in things that are merely finite. God always touches with infinitude everything that He touches, so that the inheritance which the child of God receives is limitless and infinite.

For that reason, it is very hard to write a hymn that can state the facts, all the facts. They can only sketch it. They can only gather seashells on the shore of the vast ocean that stretches away there with island upon island, all belonging to God in redemption, or to His people in redemption, coming from Him.

So, it is always well to remember that when your highest flights of imagination have winged their way upward, you can be sure you have never quite reached as high as it goes. Because always your imagination falters, runs out of energy and falls weakly to the ground. But the limitless, infinite benefactions of God Almighty through His redeemed ones have no limits to them.

Now, the Christian receives, or stands to receive, riches for all parts of his being. We are mental and physical and moral and spiritual, and I suppose we'd say, social. We are all these. Some Christians don't like the word social because they think it means going to church and eating out of a box, a church social. But we are social. We do have relationships. We have relationships with the neighbor next door. We have relationship to our precinct. We have relationship to our state, to our country, and in a larger way to the whole world. So the Christian does have a social relationship.

And I have always insisted, though the editors have tried to plow around this one, I've always insisted that Barnard knew what he was writing about when he said, I know not, oh, I know not what social joys are there. What radiancy of glory, what joy beyond compare, writing about heaven. He says there are social joys in heaven, and that is perfectly true. So, man does have a social relationship.

But he has a spiritual life and a moral life and a mental life and a physical life. He may also have hidden parts or facets to his life that are not thus classified. But we are more than a mental being. We are more than a physical being, thank God. We are more than a moral being, though morality touches all the rest of our being or should. And we are more than a spiritual being, though if we were not spiritual beings. We would not be better much than the beast, though we have the spiritual and the moral and the mental and the physical plus the social, seeing that there are others beside ourselves.

Now we receive or stand to receive infinite amounts of riches given to all of these parts of our nature. A Christian, I said last week, can die. A Christian can die. Also, a Christian can get old. A sinner shouldn't. A sinner has no right to. There's no ground for it, no moral right. No, sinner has any right to get old, because the older he gets, the nearer he gets to the grave and judgment and hell.

But the Christian can afford to get old. He can afford to get sick and afford to die, because all that's happening is his physical body is receiving a certain breakdown, but God has made provision for that physical body. And He's made provision for the mental life and the moral life and the spiritual life. And I say that the amount of this is unsearchable. That's a good word.

You know, it was Clarence Darrow that said, when the Christian didn't know what to call it, he said was a mystery. And I think he had something there all right. He meant it in a nasty way. But I take it in a nice friendly way, because the Christian runs into mystery almost everywhere he looks. The

difference between him and the world is, that the world is always running into mystery, but they call it science or something, where we have frankly admitted we don't know what it is.

So, there's mystery everywhere. But that word unsearchable is a good word. I don't know what it means all together. But we talk about the unsearchable riches of Christ. Riches, I suppose that cannot be counted, that cannot be searched into that have so many glorious ramifications and endless qualities about them, that they cannot be searched into nor searched out. They are the unsearchable riches of Christ. And because God is who He is, and the Christian stands in the relationship that he does, therefore, the Christian receives or stands to receive these unsearchable riches.

Now, God's benefactions are dispensed in three ways. You might take this down; I don't know whether anybody ever does or not. But you might take this thought down because I think it would do you some good when you think and pray and when you read your Bible. God dispenses to His believing children His benefactions, His unsearchable riches, in three different ways, three that I know of. Maybe there are ways I don't know about.

The three plain ones are, even I can find. They are, by direct, present bestowment. There are some things that God gives directly. Now, in this present age while we're still on our feet, still alive, through conscious, still here in this veil of tears and life. By direct present bestowment God gives, for instance, forgiveness. He bestows forgiveness upon a believing child. He gives life to His believing children. Life is a present bestowment. It is not an inheritance to be received sometime in the future. It is a now, a present gift which we have. Have eternal life is in the past tense. He has it. He has it at the moment of belief.

We ask God to help us, to give us this, or do something for us or send us that. And the Lord mercifully does it and we make a great deal of it. But mostly those are trifling things and passing. But the great lasting gift of forgiveness, eternal life and sonship and reinstatement in favor with God; these are everlasting gifts.

Then God gives us sonship also. And we become sons; we are sons of God. And there are many other gifts which God now bestows upon His children. Either we have these, or we are not God's children. And if we are God's children then we do have these. Then also, there are countless little gifts made too much out of I think by God's people, maybe, countless little gifts. What about the other times where God sends bread when you're hungry and gives you jobs when you're out of a job. Those are valuable and they're not to be made light of. For anything that cometh down from God is good, but they're certainly not as important as the others that we have mentioned. So, there are some gifts that you can now receive.

Then God has a second way of dispensing His blessing, and that is by giving it as a reward for approved service. This is too well known and too often taught for me to go into it much this morning. But the Bible is full of that. That the riches of God come in the nature of a reward. All belongs to God and there is no sense in which we can earn it. We talk about earning a reward, and I guess the word does occur there. But really, earning is not the word to use. It's meeting a condition whereby and under which God can bestow blessing as a reward for meeting that condition. That's about all there is to it. He said that blessed are you because you have been faithful in a few things. I will therefore make thee rule over others. And other places in the Bible, He talks about the rewards that He will give. Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life. These are the things that God bestows as a result of faithful loyal service, and they come in the future. They are not yet to be received.

Then there is that which specially we would note this morning, the benefactions that comes to us by inheritance. That is, they are also not to be received yet. But also, they are not the result of anything we do, any faithfulness that we may have or show. They are the result of a relationship coming from one who possesses to another, whom the one who possesses delights to honor, and who can establish his rightful claims.

That's why we have courts and that's why we have rules and that's why they're probate wills, because we must establish our right to an inheritance. An inheritance, I say, comes from one to another who has maintained a certain relationship, proper relationship toward the one who has. The one who has, gives to the one who has not. And the one who has not, receives from the one who has by virtue of a relationship which can be established, and or rightful claim which can be proved. Now, I repeat, that is not earned at present.

A boy may be very much of an ingrate and yet may easily prove his right to an inheritance, because the father delighted to honor him and made him his sole heir. He has written a will and it's on record. And when he dies, it's only a matter of going before the proper authorities and proving the right to that inheritance. It's the right resulting from a relationship, not the result of goodness necessarily. So, there is an inheritance which belongs to the children of God by virtue of the fact that they are children of God. But I want you to know how upside down and backwards earthly things are.

Among men, a legacy comes upon the death of the testator, the death of the one who gives the legacy. But among the things of God and with God, the legacy comes upon the death of the legatee. That is, the person who inherits. That's all confused enough without my confusing it anymore but let me stop and back off here and put it like this. That a man has a son, an only son. He makes that son of his, the wife we'll say being dead, he makes that son of his sole heir. He makes a will giving everything he has to that son. But as long as the father lives, the will is not operative to the son. And one day the father dies. After the proper mourning time and the funeral, the son goes before

the authorities and proves that he is the one who receives, and he gets because the father has died, and the will is become operative by a death.

Now, it's exactly the other way around in the kingdom of God. The Father gives an inheritance to his children, but that inheritance does not come upon the death of God, but upon the death of the children of God or the coming of Christ. It adds up to the same thing. Paul knew about it and expected it. He expected his reward and wrote about it. He also wrote about the inheritance. He talked about being co-heirs with Christ. So, God did not die though we sing when God, the Mighty Maker died, for man, the creature's sin, in the book of Hebrews, does turn this around and make an illustration out of it there.

But as we're looking at it this morning, the inheritance the Christian receives, he receives only by dying. So, I said, not only can a Christian die, but if we were as spiritual as we ought to be, we might look forward with a lot of pleasure today. And yet, if we are believers in the second advent of the Savior, we'll be looking for that second advent. Common sense and the perspective of history and the testimony of the saints and reason and the Bible all agree with one voice to say, He may come before you die. But it's nevertheless appointed unto man once to die. So, it's entirely possible that the Christian may die before the Lord comes. If he does, he cannot only afford to, he would be better off for being so. Paul said, it's far better that I go to be with the Lord. That's far better. There's a difference between being down here and being up there; is the difference between being good and far better.

The Christian's future is before him. I'll give you time to smile about that one. You say, there's a bromide, a self-evident cliché if ever one was uttered. The Christian's future is before him, and I assure you that is not a self-evident venality. It is rather a truth that we had better ponder, because for many Christians, their future is behind them. Their glory is behind them.

The only future they have is their past. They're always lingering besides yesterday's burned-out campfire. Their testimonies indicate it. Their outlook indicates it; uplook indicates it and their downcast look indicate it. Above all, their backward look indicates it. They always get an uneasy feeling when I get around a group of people who are discussing the glories of a day that is passed. They always sense a burnt-out campfire, the ashes of the day that once was and is no more.

The Christian's future is before him, and we ought to keep that in mind. Not behind him, but before him. The whole direction of the Christian look is forward. Paul looked back a few times briefly. It's perfectly proper that we should occasionally steal a quick happy look back to see where we've been and to remind ourselves of the goodness of God to us and to our problems. The soul of Paul was never set looking back. The soul of Paul was always facing forward.

Now there's a little word, s-p-e-c-t and it has different forms, but there's your word. And it comes from the Latin meaning to see or to look. And that little word s-p-e-c-t in common English has two prefixes in front of it. And your Christian life, the richness of it, the usefulness of it, the fruitfulness of it, will depend upon which prefix you attach to that word. Spect, meaning, see, we get it when we say our spectacles. Nobody does any more, but they used to, and other such words.

But the word, sees, see, see, all we see. Circumspect, look around, all around you. But there are two prefixes that I want to mention. You have one or you have the other clinging or hanging to your soul there. One word, retro, meaning, back, and, pro, meaning forward. Every town has its prospects. I have a new one. What does prospect mean? It means a forward outlook. What does retrospect? It means turning clear around and gazing the other way. It means standing at salute and looking at the setting sun. That's retrospect. But spect you must do, brother. You're looking somewhere. Even if you're blind, you're looking somewhere. Your soul has got to look somewhere. You can't escape that any more than you can escape breathing. Any more than you can escape thinking.

Have you heard of the man who said that he knew that he could stop thinking. They argued with him and joshed and told him he couldn't. He said, I can. So, he said, I know what I'm going to do. I'm going up here and sit down on this rock, and I'm determined, I'm not going to think of an elephant. There he sat on the rock. You know what he was thinking about all the time, he couldn't help it. Pachyderms, and many of them.

You can't stop thinking and you can't stop looking. Your soul is facing some direction as a Christian. The Bible says, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Lot's wife looked back. I believe it's historically true, but I believe that it is more than history. I believe that it is a brilliant object lesson. She looked the wrong way. And because she looked back, she turned to salt.

So, you are either retrospective or prospective in your outlook. You're either looking back or you're looking forward, and your future will depend a great deal of upon which way you look. I mean your future down here and perhaps even your future in the world to come. Let us put the word retro aside. Let us think of the past only when we have to. Paul said, forgetting the things that are where--behind? I press forward. There was his attitude. Occasionally, two or three times when he had it to do, he stood and pointed back and told of his conversion. That's legitimate. But never get fixed in that direction. Never. Never get a sore neck from looking over your own shoulder. Never. Always look forward.

Satchel Page, the great Negro pitcher, said he never believed in looking back. Because he said there was always going to be something behind you. And so, he always looked forward. Maybe that's why he's still pitching big league baseball when he is nearly 50 because he has had the simple little

philosophy of never looking back to wonder what that is breathing on his neck. Go ahead, God will take care of the fellow behind you.

Prospect is the word for you and me. Forward is the word. Look ahead. Expect something. For the Christians future is more glorious than his past. One moment of the Christian's tomorrow will be more wonderful than all of the glories of his yesterdays. Methusaleh lived 969 years on earth. And yet, if he did die and I think he did die and go to be with God. One hour with God was more wonderful to him than 969 years living on the Earth. I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, for one day in thy courts is better than 1000 outside thy courts.

So, let us Christians look forward. Look forward with expectation and hope because we are begotten again unto an inheritance, and that inheritance comes from God our Father. It is ours by virtue of our relationship. There are other things that are to be rewarded. Some things that are present gifts, but the inheritance is ours because we are the children of God.

Therefore, cheer up and believe and hope and look forward with a most eloquent tongue. For the most exquisite poetry could never adequately paint for us the glories that are ours by the inheritance, by virtue of our sonship to God and our relation to Jesus Christ our Savior.

Father, we pray Thy blessing upon the Truth. We pray Thy blessing upon the service that follows. Let us, we pray Thee, think on heavenly riches and the blood that was shed. But the blood that is still shed, the blood that is now on the altar, the sacrifice, the priest, the lamb, and all that is now ours, until He comes. And open before us all the riches of His will and show us our inheritance which is ours in Christ Jesus. Graciously bless us as we wait upon Thee. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen