

# Begotten Unto a Living Hope

Pastor and Author A.W. Tozer

July 26, 1953

In the first book of Peter, Peter the first epistle, and the first chapter, and third verse, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And we'll stop at that comma.

I spent nine days in the, what's called the American Keswick in New Jersey as one of the speakers, and while there I had very warm and personal and friendly fellowship with David Clifford, head of Matlock Bible Institute in England, only 40 miles, I believe he said, or 70, was it, from Brother Ravenhill's home.

Well, this man and I got along wonderfully together. He listened to me preach a while, and then he said, well, I've figured you out. He said, your method of preaching is not to preach words, but to find out the principles that lie back in the text and preach that. And I said, I guess you've hit it, that's what I try to do. Well, he said, at that rate, you could preach endlessly on a book of the Bible. And I said, well, I just closed a year on the 17th of John. It can be done.

And in the book of 1 Peter, first chapter, third verse, I have already preached three sermons or two sermons from it, the one called, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we dug around at the roots and tried to discover what he was saying about God when he said, blessed be God. We found that the same word in the original is that which we use when we say eulogize. He was telling us to eulogize God. If you want to eulogize dead men, you probably, when you know all the facts, will blush at your own eulogy. But if you want to eulogize God, you never can overstate the case.

Then I went on to this one, which according to his abundant mercy, and I stopped there and I talked about the abundant mercy of God. Today I come to this part, God who hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Now, Peter, who wrote this epistle, he arrived at a major miracle of the New Testament. Now I want to bear down and pause and walk around her bulwarks and behold her gates and walls thereof. This major miracle we call, begotten again, this, like a great many, almost all, Bible teaching, has fallen into cold hands. We feel as if we were in the mortuary, when instead of in the church of the living God. Instead of a man just having come fresh out of a tomb, we feel as if we were in the presence of a corpse brought fresh in from the street.

But born again has become a word that means precious little. It is used as a hyphenated adjective among us. We say, yes, he's a born-again man, I'm born again, is he born again? And I revolt from it, I don't mind telling you frankly that I revolt from it. I revolt from it not because I don't believe it, but because I always shrink from hearing dead men talk about live subjects. And there isn't anything, I have said, quite so chilling, and I think that a brother of mine said it not so long ago either, too, there isn't anything quite so

chilling, quite so disheartening, as a man without the Holy Spirit preaching about the Holy Spirit. And there isn't anything any worse, I guess, than to hear the hyphenated adjective born-again tossed around by people with manufactured smiles heading to the nearest restaurant.

Now Peter talked about a major miracle, that of being begotten again, born again, a major miracle. And I don't mind telling you that it is my earnest faith that all that is worthwhile in Christianity is a miracle.

I don't mind telling you that the trappings and paraphernalia and outward dressings of Christianity I can get along nicely without. But there is a series of miracles that throb and beat within the true message of God and within the hearts of those who believe truly; and that's all about all there is to the Christian faith. Supernatural grace has been the teaching of the Church from Pentecost to the present hour.

I talked with a gentleman this week who came to see me, two brethren, two preachers, and one of them told me an amazing story. It was the story of being forced out of a certain missionary society, forced out for no moral charges, no unethical charges, not even any doctrinal charges, but from throwing an emphasis where they claimed it didn't belong.

And that emphasis was upon supernatural grace. These friends believed, they were fundamentalists all right, but they believed the whole thing was a mental thing. You believe mentally, you receive Christ mentally, and all that you do is a mental thing.

And a certain brother began to preach the supernatural quality of grace and said that if a sinner repents, it's supernatural, and that if he gets under conviction, it's supernatural, and if he's unable to believe in God, it's supernatural. And he taught supernatural grace, he was a Baptist preacher. And the whole town, fundamentalist town, rose against him because he was preaching the supernatural quality of the acts of God.

Now, I don't mind telling you why I said to him that strange thing, because I've been preaching that ever since I can remember. This church is founded on it, we believe it. We believe in the supernaturalness of the things that God does for people. And we believe that religion is a continuous perpetuation of a major miracle. And we do not believe in the mental quality of things.

Now, mentality is here, and it's a part of us, and God redeems it too. But the new birth is a miracle, a major miracle. It is a vital and unique work of God in human nature. Now, I believe that if this was taught instead of glibly hyphenated and tossed around, born again, I believe that if we'd stop and get underneath this to the divine principles that lie there and realize that a truly born-again man is a man who has undergone regeneration, supernatural regeneration.

As in the beginning, God generated the heaven and the earth, in the breast of a believing man he generates again. It's regeneration. Just as surely as the work of God in calling the world out of nothing was a major miracle, so the work of God in calling a Christian out of a sinner, making a Christian out of a sinner, is a major miracle.

But in our day, we get them in any way you can get them in. And then after we get them in, we try to work on them. And we even have two works of grace because the first one was so apologetically meaningless and worthless that we try to have two.

I am not speaking against the two, but I am saying that what used to be done the first time a man met God, nowadays we're having to invent some second or third or fourth or fifth epoch down the hill or up the hill to get what we used to get the first time they met God. I believe in the anointing of the Holy Ghost after regeneration, but I also believe that we ought not to preach down the new birth in order to find a place for that anointing of the Holy Ghost.

The old Methodist Christians were better Christians when they were just newly regenerated than any of these so-called deeper life people that I run into now, because a major miracle took place. And they wouldn't believe if a major miracle hadn't taken place. They wouldn't accept this pale, inefficient, and apologetic believing. They insisted upon a miracle taking place in the human breast, so that Peter said he hath begotten us again unto a living hope, and he was preaching there a miracle.

Now this miracle was hinted at in the Old Testament. Create in me a clean heart, O God, renew a right spirit within me. There was at least a hint of a miracle within the human breast, not a reasoning yourself into a position, but something happening that could not be explained.

I might take time out right here to say what wasn't in my notes at all, that just as soon as a psychologist can explain what happens to a believer, that believer has been unfrocked. Just the moment that a man's experience in Christ can be broken down and explained by the psychologist, we have a Church member on our hands and not a Christian. For what happens to a Christian can never be explained by the psychologist. He can only stand off respectfully and say, Behold the works of the Lord. He never can explain it. But this work of God wrought in the breast of a man was hinted at, I say.

And then there are two passages in the Old Testament that I want to read that are hints of this. Behold, the day has come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their heart, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And in Ezekiel, and I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Now that is a hint of what happens, a hint of our regeneration, moral new birth. But when we come to the New Testament, there is no longer any hinting about it, it's boldly and openly declared. Our Savior said that if we came to him and were not born again, we could not enter the kingdom of God. We had to be born from above, John 3. In John 1.12, John said, As many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. There is a work that is a miracle.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5, If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. All things have passed away, and all things have become new. You couldn't make it any stronger than that. Then Peter says in the 23<sup>rd</sup> verse, Being born again of the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. James says in his first chapter, Of His own will begat He us, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of these creatures.

Now that's as plainly as it can be stated. In other words, if you were setting out to teach a major miracle within the human heart, you would use those very words to express it. And if you wanted to make it very emphatic, you would use those words to express it. If you wanted to strip it down until it stood stark, unqualified before you as a strong, vital teaching of the word of God, you would use those words concerning it.

In other words, the Holy Spirit could not have said what he was setting out to say and he would not have used any other words. These express it. And they tell us that there is supernatural grace, that there is a work which we may call a major miracle.

There is a work which is as truly a work of God as was the first creation. It is the creating of another man in that heart where another man had been. It is the putting of a new man in the old man's place, and we are born anew.

This draws a sharp line between those who have become Christians by any other method and those who have experienced true regeneration. I have claimed all the time that if we were securing examples of true regeneration, we would not have to be talking about revival so much. The Church would be a miraculous group in the midst of a hostile world, and she would be as separated from the world as a can of oil floating on the ocean. She would be in contact with it but she would not be of it. She would be separated from it. And we would be the most amazing people in the world, a whole group of true Christians.

There are several hundred people here listening to me now. And if every one of you had experienced fully the miracle of regeneration, we would be the most astonishing Church in the city of Chicago. They would come from everywhere to look at us and say, what are these people?

But we have watered down the miracle of divine grace to a point where you actually have to have a name on a record to know if a fellow is a Christian or not. There is a difference. And in that great and terrible day, there will be those white with shock when they find that they have depended upon a mental assent to Christianity instead of upon the miracle of the new birth.

Now he said we are begotten again. And we are begotten again unto a lively hope. And the word hope is one of the great words that Christ gave us. Have you noticed this about the New Testament? That our Lord Jesus Christ rarely introduced a word that wasn't known before, not even a word construction that wasn't known before to Bible readers, but that He almost invariably charged that word with a new and wonderful meaning so that we go back to the Savior and say He gave us that word.

Well actually, He didn't. It was a word that was used in the Old Testament, perhaps in Greek literature, but it was a word which now receives a wonderful new meaning

because the Savior took it into His mouth. So that word, hope, is a word we may properly say Christ gave us, though it is used 140 times in the Bible. And better than that, better than counting the number of times that it was used, better than finding a text where it is used, is this, that it is the drift and direction of the whole Bible.

Hope is the direction the whole Bible takes. It is the music of the whole Bible. It is the heartbeat, the pulse, the atmosphere of the whole Bible. That word hope, and it means a desirable expectation. It means a pleasurable anticipation, pleasurable anticipation. How many of us there are who pleurably anticipate that which we'll never, never receive.

Tennyson, in his wonderful *In Memoriam*, paints a picture so poignantly, sharply pathetic that it's almost unbearable when you read it. He paints a picture in that smooth, musical English of which he was a master, of a bride waiting for, or soon to be bride, waiting for her loved one to return. He had been somewhere in a far city across the water and he was coming home.

Tennyson tells with that sympathy and human understanding that makes him the great poet that he was, made him the great poet he was, tells of how this young woman, flushed with anticipation, stood before the mirror and made herself look as good as she could, got the best clothes she knew how, for that evening he was coming. And he indulges us a little in human sympathy as we see this young lady prepare herself for the long-awaited reunion.

Then he adds, but she doesn't know that for days the one she loved has been floating face up out on the sea. She doesn't know that the ship whereon he was returning has gone down with all of its crew and that he stares tonight at the stars with sightless eyes. She doesn't know.

Pleasurable anticipation sometimes blows up in our faces, cruelly disappoints us. And there's the picture of pleasurable, flushed anticipation turning to bleak, pale-cheeked sorrow in a moment when the news is brought that her loved one is dead. That's the way human hopes do with us. They throw us down.

But the Christian hope is alive, for it is said here that he has begotten us again unto a lively hope, but the old English word lively, three hundred and forty years ago, that word lively meant what the word living means now.

Now lively means hopping around like a little boy, real fast and full of ginger. But in those days it meant living. And here is a word which comes from God himself. It is the strongest word in the Bible for life and the strongest in the New Testament. It is a word used of God himself when it says He is the living God. So that God takes a Christian's hope and touches it with Himself and imparts His own livingness to the hope of the believer.

Once more, I repeat that Christians are living too much in the present now. And the pleasurable anticipation of better things to come has almost died out of the Church of Christ, because now we don't need any tomorrow's heaven, we're too well situated now. We don't need to hope, we have it now. That's the emphasis in our day, and I think it is a

wretched emphasis. And when we do talk about the future, we talk about eschatology instead of heaven.

But the true Christian is one who is kind of sick of this world. If I find anybody that's settled down too snugly into this world, I'm made to doubt his spiritual regeneration, whether he's ever truly been born again. He can live here and work here and serve here, but if I find he sits down into the world like a hand into an old and familiar glove, I worry a little bit about the man, because all the Christians I meet that are amounting to anything are Christians that are very much out of key with their age, very, very much out of tune with their generation.

Jesus called it a wicked and adulterous generation, and that generation has not improved any. We're still the same wicked and adulterous generation that were in the days of Jesus. And if you can live in it too comfortably, I am being made to wonder whether the miracle has ever been wrought within your life or not.

When God works the miracle within the human breast, heaven becomes the Christian home immediately and he is drawn to it as a bird is drawn in the springtime to fly to the north. There is a migratory instinct within the breast of the bird. And without knowing why, along about March, he suddenly begins to look at himself and look around and feel dissatisfied, flap his wings a bit, and finally takes to the air and fans the cool breezes long and far, until he goes back to what is his summer homeland.

And the Christian has a homeland, and the fact that we're not anticipating it nor looking forward to it with any pleasure is a serious mark of something that's wrong with us. But that isn't what Peter had in mind particularly when he talked about the Christian hope, though that's part of it, and he says that the hope of the Christian is something that's alive the way God is alive.

I read someplace, I don't recall where, maybe Time magazine, maybe a newspaper, but I read that there had been one of these pollsters going about, like Roper and Gallop pollsters, and they had gone to the man on the street, the man and woman on the street, and they had taken a cross-section of the American public and asked them whether they believe in God and whether they expected to go to heaven. I think it was 82% of the American people believe in God and expect to go to heaven. I don't like to deal in percentages, my hearers, but I should like boldly and bluntly to say that I should guess that about 75% of that 82% are indulging in an invalid hope, a hope that can do nothing but dash them when it's too late and cruelly disillusion them when it's too late to do anything about it.

I believe, as the old colored preacher said, if you're going to go to heaven, you'd better begin to live like it now. And if you're going to die like a Christian, you'd better live like a Christian now. And I have no place in my heart, that is, no hope in my heart, for those who indulge a vague hope.

There's a Christian hope that isn't vague, it's valid. The hope of the world is vain, but the hope of the Christian is a valid hope. You can't out-expect God, keep that in mind, friend.

You can't out-expect God. It's unbelief that prevents our minds from soaring into the celestial city and walking by faith with God across the golden streets. It's unbelief that keeps us narrowly tied down here, looking eagerly and anxiously to the newspaper ad to see who's going to come and preach to us to keep our spirits sheared up.

Anybody that needs to have to be chucked under the chin all the time to keep him up is in bad shape spiritually and needs something else. Anybody that has to have the gospel preached to him all the time, and have it repeated all the time, there's something wrong with him. You've heard the gospel, you have believed, you say, you have turned to God from idols to serve the living God and wait for his Son from heaven, then why have to be always attending popular evangelistic meetings and listening one time more to the same thing that you've heard a thousand times?

Leaving, therefore, the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, the baptism and laying on of hands and all such, let us go on under perfection, that the Church of Christ is satisfied with the latest gospel peddler, the latest gospeleer that comes along, they're satisfied because they have cowbells and a handsaw and a lot of other fine things.

You can get them at the 8th Street Theater any night by just riding in. I can't think of a single one of their names, but anyway, I know they're down there with their cowbells and banjos and their hillbilly songs, and if that's what you want, go down there and get it. And if the gospeleer has to bring that in order to get a crowd, boycott him. Let him preach to empty seats.

But the Christian's hope is a valid hope. He has been born of God. There has been an act as truly miraculous as that act described in the beginning. God created the heaven and the earth. There's been a new creation there. And he has a hope now. It's a valid hope. No emptiness there, no vanity there, no dreaming dreams that can't come true, it's a valid hope. And your expectation should rise and you should challenge God and begin to dream high dreams of faith and spiritual expectation and expect God to meet them.

When Jesus said, I go to prepare a mansion, a place for you in my Father's house, there are many mansions. The best some of us can do is to think of our own house or some house a little better, or maybe think of something up on the Gold Coast. Where our Savior has gone to prepare the simplest and poorest mansion there, would make a \$125,000 mansion on the Gold Coast look like a goat's sty by comparison.

There isn't in humanity any place, the Taj Mahal or Buckingham Palace or the White House or what have you, that can compare with the glory that belongs to the true child of God who has known the major miracle, who has been changed by an inward operation of supernatural grace unto an inheritance, unto a hope.

You can't out-hope God and you can't out-expect God. Remember that all your hopes are finite and all of God's ability is infinite. Remember that your highest hopes have a limit, but the ability of God to come through is limitless. Remember, you're on earth and God is in heaven, and therefore don't be afraid to hope, don't be afraid to expect, don't be afraid to dream high spiritual dreams, and don't be afraid to read your Bible and believe it, and don't be afraid to read the book of Revelation.

And don't let anybody shoo you away and say it's Oriental imagery. Of course it is Oriental imagery, but it is imagery which is struggling to say that which is so wonderful it can't be said, so that anything he describes in the book of Revelation you'll find the reality is infinitely greater than his description.

Any hope the Christian has, let it soar, let it loose like a bird into the blue sky, let it spread its wings and soar heavenward, for when it's soared as high as it can, God will smile still higher and say, Come on up. For the hopes of the Christian are valid hopes, and the expectation of the Christian shall not be cut off.

I have on occasion once in a while, I'm not exactly a Frankie Sinatra, but I have occasion once in a while to sign an autograph book or a Bible, they'll come when you go somewhere you know, and stick them under your nose and say, Sign this, and they all want you to have a verse of scripture.

I never was much remembering, you know, favorite verses because they're all favorite with me, so I have one that I get by with pretty well, it's Jeremiah 29:11, you know what it is? Maybe I've signed some of your books with that, Jeremiah 29:11. I know the thoughts, says God, that I think of you, thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you an expected end. God's thinking high thoughts and dreaming high dreams for us, and every one of which he's able to bring to pass, and they're thoughts of peace and not of evil.

Now, one more word and we're through. What gives this hope life? What is it that imparts the adjective, living, to the word hope here? What links it with the golden link to the word hope and makes that hope live? What is it? He says, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, that's what it is, and here is your guarantee.

Let me stand before you to say this, my friends. Your Christian hope is just as good as Jesus Christ, no better, no worse. Your anticipation for the future, live or die with Jesus. Let me say that. If He's who He said He was, then you can spread your wings and soar. If He is not, then you will fall like lead to the ground. Jesus Christ is our hope, and God raised Him from the dead.

The simple fact is a man died and rose again. He was crucified and came out of the grave the third day and ascended to the right hand of God. There is the guarantee of our future. That is why hope can be real.

When I was in Keswick, I met some, well, years ago when I was a very young man. I came under the influence of a missionary under the African Inland Mission, a man by the name of Emil Sywulka, an Austrian, but an American. There was a man of God, there was a man of God. He gave fifty percent of everything God gave him to the work of the Lord.

He and I would say, We're going to meet and pray, and I'd get there late. When I got there, my friend would be already down on his knees in tears, naming names of which I had never heard, black boys over there, naming them by name and begging God to have mercy on them and keep them strong and bless them. We'd pray long hours. This brother went back to Africa.



I heard when I was in Keswick that he had been riding his motorcycle from one village to another, felt something go wrong with him, and got off quickly and lay down beside his motorcycle. He never woke up. My friend Emil Sywulka went off to be with Jesus.

Oh, it's the way he wanted, that serious Austrian face so lined with furrows and wrinkles. With a smile that would light up, I can remember it after these thirty years, a smile that would light up that serious, sad face. And when you'd say something good about the Savior in his presence, he'd laugh with delight. He enjoyed it so. He dreamed about those times when he would be with his Savior. He's there now.

And Jesus Christ rose from the grave, and because he rose from the grave, he guaranteed this man's hope, and he dared to lie down beside his motorcycle in a little dirt jungle path in Africa. He dared to do it. Christians dare to die, and nobody else dares to die. Christians dare to die. Christ may come, I know. It's what everybody has thought, that he would come, and we hope he'll come, and he will come. But if he doesn't come, until your old heart wears out, you dare die. Sinners don't dare die. Christians dare to die.

Behold how these Christians die, they say. And I repeat, they only died well because they'd lived well. And a man who hasn't lived well will have a tough time getting in. That'll shock some of you nickel-in-the-slot theologians that put a nickel of faith in the slot, pull down a lever, take eternal life, which you can't lose, and walk away. That'll shock you. But some of you need a shock worse than you need whipped cream and lollipops. You need a shock.

So, remember it, that a Christian dare die if he's lived right, and he's got his hope alive and he's been born of the Spirit and walking with God. But he doesn't dare die if he hasn't. A man who's only a church member doesn't dare die, and yet he has to, and there's a tragedy of it. Forced to do what he morally doesn't dare to do.

They said to old Uncle Tom, tell me where she is. He said, I can't, Master, I can't. Tell us where she is. I can't, Master, I can't. Tell us where she is or we'll kill you. Well, Master, I can die. That lady who wrote that had something there, brother. He couldn't betray a friend, but he could die. So Christians dare to die.

Now, somebody to comfort me at Keswick said, Brother Tozer, you must take it easy. He said, we can't afford to lose men like you. You must take it easy, nice and complimentary. Then he added this, he said, Dr. McQuilken had your hour last year, and we warned him to take it easy, and he didn't. Dr. McQuilken died suddenly, so I stalked off, you know, feeling sort of morbid.

But I want to live, I want to live. I want to be with my family and my friends and preach the gospel and write a little. I want to live. But if God sees otherwise, I can die. There's always a place for a Christian to go, because God has given him a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I think that's all I want to say, but I'm asking Brother McAfee to do one thing. I deplore two things in the Church of Christ. One is that that beautiful Christmas music is concentrated into two weeks in December and sung until it's worn out and you don't

want to hear it. And yet it's so beautiful that it ought to be heard a little, spotted in here and there all through the year.

Second thing I deplore is that we've taken this majestic, triumphant Easter music and forced it into one Sunday a year. Then the leaders are ashamed to announce a hymn on the resurrection because it isn't Easter. My brethren, Easter is every Sunday, and the resurrection of Christ is as vividly new as if it had taken place this morning at six o'clock.

So, I want Brother McAfee to lead us in singing a triumphant Easter song, begotten again unto a living hope and guaranteed it by raising Jesus Christ from the dead. Amen.