

'The Blessed Hope of Christ's Coming'

by A.W. Tozer

The Christian life is a joyous anticipation of Christ's coming, and we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world while looking forward to the future with anticipation and joy.

Scripture: Titus 2:11

Topics: "Hope in Christ's Return", "Living in Anticipation"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the 'Blessed Hope' of Christ's return, urging Christians to live with joyful anticipation of His glorious appearing. He explains that this hope encourages believers to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world, as they await the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. Tozer contrasts the past epiphany of Christ's first coming with the future epiphany of His return, reminding the congregation that their faith is rooted in a divine plan. He calls for a life of preparation and purity, as the anticipation of Christ's return should inspire believers to reflect on their relationship with God and others. Ultimately, Tozer reassures that while the exact timing of Christ's return is unknown, the certainty of His coming should shape the Christian life.

Transcript

"The Blessed Hope of Christ's Coming"

Author and Pastor A.W. Tozer

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We are continuing in the book of Titus, the second chapter of the book of Titus. The man of God says, for the grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared. Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Now, I have on a previous occasion dealt with some care with that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly and righteously and godly in this present world. Now, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the Great God and of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Those words will engage our attention for a brief time.

Now, if you will note here, and it's always well to follow punctuation carefully in our King James Version, and not break into verses without regard to punctuation. If you will notice what it says here. That the grace of God teaches us to live-looking. It teaches us to live. Of course, there are some adverbs coming in between, soberly, righteously, godly, and the phrase, in this present world. But, it doesn't in anywise destroy the force of the passage, teaching us that we should live-looking.

Now, I want to just talk about that a little bit, that the Christian lives-looking. That is, the Christian life is a joyous anticipation. Everybody knows what anticipation does for human life. If you did not have some hope of something you planned to do, somebody you hope to see, some advance you hope to make, your life could soon level down to a drab, colorless existence that wouldn't be worth the living. If you were to take joyous anticipation out of the hearts of men, the suicides in the world would be so many, that literally there would not be enough technical help to dispose of the dead. We must have something to look forward to. We should live, looking, says the Holy Spirit here to Christians. We Christians should live-looking.

Now what is it that a Christian looks forward to? A Christian looks forward to what the Bible calls, the blessed hope, which is the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Now this is the epiphany that the churches talk about the shining forth, used for the coming up of the sun, and used also for the coming of Jesus Christ to the world. Used of His first manifestation to the world and also used of His second. The churches, the ritualistic churches that follow the church calendar, have certain times when they celebrate the Epiphany, the shining forth, the coming, the appearance of Jesus Christ our Lord.

And the Bible also talks about another epiphany, a shining forth. The two of them are found together in the Books of Timothy. Paul wrote Titus, from which the text is taken; he also wrote First and Second Timothy. And here's what he says, God, who has called us, saved us and called us with a 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. But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, there, after an eternal purpose.

I want you to understand I've said this and continue to say it because it is a very basic spiritual truth, that the Bible-taught Christian is not an orphan. He is not somebody who by some accident has happened upon a book and is now a Christian. He is a part of an eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began. And this eternal purpose says, the Man of God is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Now, those are all past tense expressions. That's something that has in our modern English, has been done. Now, if you have the same kind of Bible I have of columns, just cast your eye up, just a quarter of a page and you will read these words, where the man of God says, same man writing in a different letter, to the same man. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession. I give thee charge that thou keep His commandment without spot, unrebukable until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in His times He shall show. Who, is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see, to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen. Now, below, he has brought life and immortality to the light through the appearing of Jesus Christ our Lord. That's one. He will show in His own times, at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, who only hath immortality dwelling in life.

Now, there we have the two epiphanies, the two shinings forth set before us in sharp, beautiful contrast, the one to the other. We should live-looking. And what are the directions, for there is not one, but there are two. What are the directions that a Christian should look in his living?

Well, at our communion services, we often quote, in fact, almost always quote, somewhere, we do show forth His death till He come. A Christian is one who deeply appreciates the past for what has been done, but who does not anchor to the past knowing that the past is a prelude to the future. And therefore, his gaze is sometimes back for reassurance, and sometimes forward in happy anticipation. When he looks back, he sees the Epiphany, the shining forth of Jesus Christ, to be born of a virgin, to suffer under Pontius Pilate, to be crucified, dead and buried, to rise again from the dead the third day, to go to the right hand of God the Father Almighty to be seated there at that right hand ever making intercession for His own

That's the past, but then we tear our eyes from the past and gaze into the future. So that time when He shall appear, and there shall be another world epiphany, when He shall be shown forth to the world as the Potentate and King, the only Potentate, the only King. The way they're getting rid of Kings these days, it looks to me as if we were kind of cleaning house for the coming of the Lord. There was a day when we had so many kings, every third fellow you would meet in Europe, either was a king or was related to one. But now, either they aren't kings or they're ashamed to admit they're related to them. We don't have many kings left, very many potentates left, nor plenipotentiaries.

I remember when we had a confluence of big shots, political big shots come to this country some years ago. I listened on the radio to the speeches and the introductions and they talked about the plenipotentiaries and potentates. Well, the plenipotentiaries and potentates are sort of petering out. And we don't have so many of them anymore, because the Lord is bringing us to a time when it shall be seen who is the only potentate who only hath immortality; who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords who dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, to Whom be glory and honor everlasting.

Now, even if we should die, yet, we will see this Epiphany, this awaited revelation. Because in 1 Thessalonians 4, notice that again. We're just reading from the Bible itself. Paul says, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and all churches do believe that Jesus died and rose again, or they're not churches. Even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this, we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not go before them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout and with the voice of the archangel. And the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then, we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Isn't it rather ironical that we reserve the reading of passages like this for funerals? Isn't it rather a cynical twist of the human mind, or of the devil, himself that we should have taken all such beautiful passages as say, John 14? Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me, that we should take these and reserve them almost exclusively for funerals.

My dear little old mother was a great lover of flowers. She raised them and had flowers every little spot where a flower could grow she had flowers. But she insisted that they grow, that they have their roots in the ground. When they were cut and put on a table, she shied away from them. The reason being, she had gone to so many funerals, and had seen so many cut flowers, and it smelled the heady fragrance of

so many bouquets for the dead, that she instinctively associated the smell of cut flowers with the coffin. So, Mother didn't care for cut flowers. She liked the kind that grew in the ground. They reminded her of sunshine and rain and wind and clouds and birdsong and beauty. Whereas cut flowers reminded her of the dead.

And we find the same thing true of such a delightful passage as this, let not your heart be troubled. There's Jesus cheering up his people. And isn't it unfortunate that we have relegated this to the dead with the cut flowers, and the silent tread, and the sonorous, solemn tone of the minister. Isn't it too bad that we can't see that this is the Lord calling His people to look forward with anticipation to the Father's house and the many mansions? So it is with the Thessalonian passage here. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again. Soon as you start to read that, you look around for the coffin. And you wonder whether, who died and how you got at the funeral without knowing it?

Well, the simple truth is, this is not for funerals only. This is the word of the Lord for all of his people, all of the time. I tell you again. I've said this many times. In fact, I don't say anything anymore that I haven't said many times before. But I tell you again, that there are lots of worse things than dying. Dying is one of the easiest things possible, and one of the most delightful for a Christian, so that we ought not to associate all the hopeful promises of the Lord with dying, and dying with something we don't want to do. The Lord says, that we are to live, looking. That is, there's anticipation there. What do we anticipate, or rather, who is it that we anticipate? Well, he says, the great God and Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. You know, the great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. That Christ is God is taught here. Do you hear me, that Christ is God is taught here, this is the book of God. And that Christ is God is taught in that book all through that book.

Now, there are some who consider that Christ is not God. That He is only a very, extremely good man. Oh, nearly as good as Albert Schweitzer, but that He is a very good man. Not as wise as Albert, because He didn't know of course how to perform operations and cure up the yaws by an injection of penicillin, but they're willing to put Him along at least with Albert Schweitzer, but He is not God.

My brethren, why can't we be honest with ourselves. I have a great deal more respect for an out and out unbeliever who stands up and smiles and says, I respect your faith, but I don't own it. I don't have it. That can say with Emerson, why should the robe on him allure which I could not on me endure? He said, I like a church; I like a cowl; I love a prophet of the soul; Yet not for all his faith can see, would I that cowed churchman be. Why should the vest on him allure, Which I could not on me endure? I confess I'm modernizing the English, but that's it generally.

And the man said, now, I respect your right to believe. I don't care what you believe, but I just don't believe it. I respect that man. I could shake hands with him and live alongside of him and borrow his hose and lend him my grass cutter. I have no trouble with him and be perfectly tolerant, and he with me and I with him. But what I can't understand, is the person who says I am a Christian, and then denies or doubts or holds in foggy uncertainty, the deity of the Son of God. My brethren, why don't we do one thing or the other? Why don't we get over onto one side or the other? If the people of the Lord, or the people who claim to be people of the Lord, were just to get over on one side or the other, what a fine housecleaning we'd have. It wouldn't be any trouble, no difficulty, we wouldn't fight. We'd still be Americans together. But at least we'd know where we stood. So many of us, we don't know where we stand.

Now, when they said Jesus was God, the old scribes of Jewish days thought he was blaspheming. The Unitarians of the day reject His deity, many liberals reject His deity, and many cults reject His deity. But

the man called Paul, who wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost said, we look for the great God and Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, either he was wrong, or else somebody is wrong today. And I have decided that I'm going to go along with Jesus, who claimed to be God, and with John and Paul and Peter and Jude and Luke and Mark and Matthew and James, who said He was God, rather than going along with those who doubt that He is God. For to doubt or deny the deity of the Son of God is to reject the Holy Scriptures.

And you will have a perfect right to reject the Holy Scriptures, remember that. Nobody is bound in any wise to accept the Holy Scriptures. You can reject the Scriptures and you will get no argument from me whatsoever. I would never spend one minute of my time arguing with anybody, not even pleading with anybody to believe the Book of God, because not all men have faith. And if you have not been touched by the mighty Holy Ghost, you won't have faith. You know, the Presbyterians in their prime, taught election and predestination. And they believe that when God touched a man, he believed, he believed. When he was touched, he had to have some work done on him, some previous work done on him before he could believe.

That's pretty well gone down the drain now, but I still happen to believe it. I believe that no men can come unto Jesus Christ except the Father draw him. And if the Father draws the man, if that mystic something settles on the man and draws him toward the Son of God, he'll come. And when he comes, he'll believe and when he believes he will be saved. That's Bible my brethren. The whole book of Gospel of John teaches that. And our spiritual fathers, the Methodists and Baptists and Presbyterians thought that, well, the Methodists taught it, but not with such finality, perhaps as our Presbyterian forebearers.

But nevertheless, we're live now between two mighty events. His appearing to redeem us and His appearing to glorify us. This then is interim. It is interim, but it is not vacuum. I cannot find in my Bible where any man is ever called to live in a vacuum, that he is called to live in a spiritual emptiness, looking no direction. The Bible says we live in an interim between two epiphanies, two mighty, world-shaking events: the appearing that brought life and immortality to the light through the gospel, and the appearing that shall show to all the world who is the only Potentate, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, worthy to rule the world.

Now, between those two appearings we stand. And you say, well, when is this second appearing going to take place? Now, you won't fool me like that. I'm too wise an old trooper ever to give myself up to a prophecy of when another appearing will take place. Frankly, my brethren, I don't know. I can always answer all questions, either by giving you information which is reasonably accurate or by saying I don't know. And in this case, I say, I don't know. Don't be too hard on people who have set dates and been fooled, because they meant well. But the Lord says, no man knoweth, not even the Son, save the Father which is in heaven. He knows. But we do know that we look for His appearing.

And incidentally, if you imagine that this is some kind of cultism or some sort of strange borderline or fringe doctrine, let me tell you that the Dutch Reformed church believes in it. Let me tell you that the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Baptists, the Nazarenes, the evangelicals, and you can just name them up and down the line and there isn't one church that exists today, that believes the Bible but what also believes that there's to be another shining forth, another shining forth. When he was shown forth, being born in a manger, will shine forth wearing the robes of royalty. Not one. They have differences of opinion about how it will take place. And I for my part, don't care one little bit how it takes place. I haven't the remotest care how it takes place.

A man called me just before I came down here, and he said, Mr. Tozer, you don't know me, but I'm in trouble. I said, I didn't sleep all night last night, I went to bed at seven, got up at seven and didn't close my eyes all through the night and I'm in deep difficulty. Will you pray for me? And I said, yes, I will pray for you and also, I want to give you this verse, that the Lord will not suffer you to be tempted above what you're able to bear. And he said, but you didn't quote the rest of the verse. And I said, well, I couldn't quote all the Bible at one sitting. I said, I gave you that part of it. Well, he said, the rest of it is, but will with the temptation make a way of escape. Now, what is my way of escape? And I said, my friend, this is just the neat, little way the Lord works with people. He promises them a way of escape. He leads them out and saves them, but he doesn't show them how ahead of time. If the Lord were to take you aside and give you a schedule, or up in Toronto, they'd say shedule of future events, your head would get so big there isn't a hat in Cook County would go down on it, not one. You would lose your humility and become so proud, you couldn't keep from telling you wife and everybody else but what you knew about the future.

So, the Lord says, I will make a way of escape, but you leave the way of escape to Me. And so the Lord says, looking forward to His coming. And I said, when will it be Lord and what will be the signs? The Lord said, now, don't ask me questions. You leave that to me. And you trust Me and I'll take care of it. Just believe that there's to be a shining forth. So I believe there's a shining forth. And so this is interim.

But what are we to do in this, live in a vacuum? No. We are to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Soberly, that is my relation to myself. Righteously, that is my relation to my fellow man. Godly, that is my relation to God. And so, there are the three dimensions of the Christian's life, soberly and righteously and godly; God and others and myself. And you can't get out of that. And it's a strange thing that as brilliant as the human mind is and as utterly wonderful as it is, still, we cannot escape these three dimensions. We cannot get beyond them, any more than you can jump into the fourth dimension in space. You've got to stay within them. Everything that you can think about, that touches humanity in your life, everything has to do either with yourself, with somebody else, or with God, and there's no fourth place. Only three. That's where you live. And so we live soberly and righteously and godly.

Then why? Why did the Lord say there's to be another epiphany, a shining forth. Why did He say that. He did it because he that hath this hope in Him, purifies himself even as He is pure. The Lord did it. Oh, could we could we pull an illustration out of the air? Suppose that a man has been away. And, oh say, he's a soldier and he's been on some duty in some far-away country, in the Far East or in Europe. And he hasn't been home for a couple of years. And he calls transatlantic telephone and says, I will be in at such and such a time by Air France or some other of the great lines. And I will land at such and such a field and I'll take a taxi. I should be there by 3:10.

Well, you know what they will do, Mother and the girls? They will clean up that house as it's never been cleaned up before. They will busy themselves fixing things up. And then the girls will dress themselves up in their finest and wait for their father. Now, that's what anticipation does. It gets you ready or tends to want to make you want to be ready and to get your work done, and be ready when he comes. So, he that has this hope in him, he purifies himself even as our Lord is pure.

So, the hope of the shining forth, which is yet future, is not a foolish notion held by certain cults. In fact, a very few cults hold it. It is a doctrine held by our fathers back to Paul, Augustine, and all the church fathers down the years. They varied I say in regard to detail and schedule, but they never varied one little bit with regard to the overt fact. He is coming and there is to be a shining forth. And so in the meantime, we do show the Lord's death until He comes. And there is the beautiful meaning of the Lord's Supper.

I had not planned to bring this up at all, and this is not dragged in by its ears in order to fit. But just here that I have received of the Lord what I delivered, that the Lord took bread the night He was betrayed and when He'd given thanks, He'd break it. And He said, take and eat. This do in remembrance of me there. That's the remembrance of the epiphany that was. And as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death until He come. And there is the epiphany that will be. So, that is one of the meanings among many, of the supper of the Lord, that we remember that he died for us. We remember that He's coming for us. That He died for us is a fact. That He's coming for us is a fact. How His death for us could prepare us to meet Him, we do not know. When He's coming, we do not know. That He's coming, we are certain.

So now, we do show the Lord's death until He come. Only this you say, what qualifies a person for the Lord's Supper? The answer is soberly, righteously, godly. Let a man examine himself. Is he living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, looking. That's all. Let a man examine himself.

How have you been living? Soberly? Or have you let yourself go? Have you forgot you're a Christian when you were out on your vacation? Did you do a lot of things you wouldn't do if you had been home? Strange isn't it how it works? A tame, domesticated Maltese-type of husband who says yes dear, yes dear all year-long, goes away on convention. And the tamer and the more domesticated he was while staying at home with Mama, the more of a long-eared donkey he made out himself when he got in a strange city on convention. It's almost always that way.

Now, that ought never to be so of Christians. A Christian is one who carries his shrine with him. His sanctuary is in his heart. And whether he is traveling somewhere to see relatives out in the mountains for a rest wherever it is, he should never be out of his sanctuary. He should be in the holy place because the Holy God is with him and living in his heart. Lo, I'm with you always, even unto the end of the world. How's it been with you this last week? Have you lived soberly? How's it been with you and your neighbor? Have you lived righteously or have you had a tiff with somebody two doors away? If you have, don't take communion this morning. How has it been with you and God? Have you kept up your prayer life and your devotional life and your Bible loving life? I don't say you haven't and I don't ask those questions in a tone of voice tending to accuse. I'm just inquiring.

Now our friends, the brethren will meet us and we will have the Lord's Supper. We take it once a month in this church, every first Sunday. It's not for members of this church, but members of the church of Christ. And if you qualify-sober, godly, righteous living and confident faith in our Savior-you join with us because you're a member of our church anyway, whether we ever saw you before or not. Let's gather.

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