

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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The Power for Christian Living: The Power of Hope

In this talk, we will see that the Biblical hope is not the same as hope today. We will then go on to briefly consider:

- The God of Hope;
- The Hope of Israel;
- The Hope of Righteousness;
- The Hope of His Calling;
- The Hope of Salvation;
- The Hope of Eternal Life;
- The Blessed Hope; and
- The Living Hope.

Hope Defined.

In Romans 8:24-25, we find a simple definition of hope. *For we have been saved in hope; but hope seen is not hope; for what any one sees, why does he also hope? But if what we see not we hope, we expect in patience.* Sounds confusing doesn't it? Christians are saved in hope. In other words, as those who are saved by grace we anticipate the certainty of the glory promised by God. Our bodies are to be redeemed one day. The ones we have now will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. Our new bodies will be immortal, heavenly, powerful, spiritual, incorruptible and glorious. The bodies of those who have died will be raised. We patiently expect this to happen. We do not have any doubt that it will. *Our hope is sure and steadfast.* It is not a mere wish like today's use of the word hope. It is a sure thing! The problem is, we don't know when we will be taken to glory. Therefore, we must anticipate the coming of the Lord, day by day.

The God of Hope.

In Romans 15:13 we read, *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that ye should abound in hope by [the] power of [the] Holy Spirit.* Most Christians in Rome were Gentiles. Paul is writing to them. Previously, they had not known the one and only living God as Israel did. Therefore, they had been without God and without hope in the world. Upon believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, they came under the blessing of a God who is the Source of all hope. He was able to give them joy and peace along with all the certainties of Christian hope, and those – in abundance!

The Hope of Israel.

Upon his arrival at Rome, the apostle Paul called together the chief men of the Jewish community and explained to them that he had no wish to be an accuser of his nation, but that his supposed offence was in relation to the hope of Israel. He said, *For this cause therefore I have called you to [me] to see and to speak to you; for on account of the hope of Israel I have this chain about me.* Acts 28:20.

The hope of Israel is none other than the Messiah, the Chosen One of God. The Jews believed that the Messiah would come and deliver them from their earthly enemies and set up an everlasting kingdom. The fact that He came to deal with the question of sin first obscured the faith of the Jews. The One they expected to come as a mighty warrior, came as the meek and lowly Nazarene who was executed as a criminal.

Nevertheless, the Messiah will set up a kingdom in the future. The resurrected Christ will one day appear as the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will put down His enemies. They will be made the footstool of His feet. He is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands listed in the book of Daniel. Every remnant of previous world empires will be destroyed completely. The kingdom will be extensive – from sea to sea. He will reign for a thousand years. No other kingdom will supersede His. All nations will bow down to Him. Those who oppose Him will be judged immediately. Any oppressors will be put down. Yet, the character of His rule is one great blessing. It will be marked by peace among men and among animals. Nature will cease her groaning and burst forth fruitfully. Even the desert will blossom as the rose. His rule will be righteous. Blessing will abound for the widow, the fatherless and the poor.

The hymn writer, J Montgomery, had this in mind when he wrote:

*Hail to the Lord's Anointed, Great David's greater Son,
Who to the time appointed the rolling years have run.
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free,
To take away transgression, and rule in equity.*

*The heavens which now conceal Him, in counsels deep and wise,
In glory shall reveal Him to our rejoicing eyes,
He, who with hands uplifted, went from this earth below,
Shall come again all gifted, His blessing to bestow.*

*Kings shall fall down before Him, and gold and incense bring:
All nations shall adore Him, His praise all peoples sing.
Outstretched His wide dominion o'er river, sea and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion, or dove's light wing can soar.*

And why is He the hope of Israel? Isaiah 62:1-4 answer: *For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.*

The Hope of Righteousness.

The Jew under the law was always going about to establish his own righteousness. An impossibility! Only Christ has successfully fulfilled the law. Our righteousness comes through Him. God made Him to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We read: *For we, by [the] Spirit, on the principle of faith, await the hope of righteousness.* The hope of righteousness is glory!

The Hope of His Calling.

The Hope of His Calling is found in Ephesians 1:18: *Being enlightened in the eyes of your heart, so that ye should know what is the hope of his calling, [and] what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.*

The calling is revealed in Ephesians 1:3-7. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Furthermore, He has predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself. God has made us accepted in the beloved in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. We are therefore assured of heavenly glory. What a hope!

The Hope of Salvation.

Isn't it wonderful to know that we have been saved from sin and judgement, but there are three aspects of salvation. They are past, present and future salvation. Faith in Christ delivers us from sin and death and separates us to God. Through faith in Him and taking God at His word, we are saved daily from harmful circumstances. We read of a future salvation in 1 Thessalonians 5:8: *But we being of [the] day, let us be sober, putting on [the] breastplate of faith and love, and as helmet [the] hope of salvation.*

This is salvation completed – body, soul and spirit! It is the final deliverance from all that connects us with this earth at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have an all-the-way-home Saviour who carries us on both His shoulders. The destination, His Father's house on high.

The Hope of Eternal Life

The Hope of Eternal Life is mentioned in Titus 1:2. We read, *"in [the] hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the ages of time."*

Eternal life is both a quality of life and a length of life. We see the quality of life in 1 John 5:20 where we find that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life. When we look to the life of Christ, then we see eternal life

displayed. A life lived in the will of God. A life that displays God the Father. On the other hand, He is also the Source of that life. As He, Himself, lives after the power of an endless life, then we know that eternal life is perpetual.

The teaching of the apostle John, by the power of the Spirit, speaks of eternal life as a present possession for the Christian. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life* (1 John 5:13). However, the enjoyment of eternal life is limited for Christians while they await the full salvation that will accompany Christ at His coming. On the other hand, Paul's teaching generally looks at it as a future possession when it will blossom in the perfection of glory and be enjoyed by believers as it should be.

The Blessed Hope

This hope is discovered in Titus 2:13 where we read: *"...Awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ"*

The scripture speaks of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. His deity is confirmed in the words, "our great God". The Lord Jesus Christ is none other than God. This fact will be revealed when He is seen in the appearing of His glory (as it could be translated). The word "blessed" is the Greek word "makarios" which emphasises that His appearing will be "filled with richness, benefits and good things". Of course, Christians are aware that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ has two distinct purposes. The first is that He comes to take away all those who have believed in Him (1 Thessalonians 4). The unbelievers of the world will not see Him at this point. The second is His coming with His saints to set up the Kingdom on the earth. Here the population of the world will see Him. So our hope is the coming of Christ to take us to be with Himself.

Both comings are indicated in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, 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 prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

Further details are given in 1 Corinthians 15. First, we discover how Christians who have died are raised: 1 Corinthians 15:36-49: *Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*

The apostle then goes on to describe what happens to Christians who are alive at the time of the coming of Christ: *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.* So, in 1 Thessalonians 4, the coming of Christ is seen as a **strengthening** truth.

Just think of it, we shall have completely new bodies! They will be heavenly bodies. Designed for a new environment. They will be incorruptible. They will never age or deteriorate in any way. They will be glorious! That is to say, they will be beautiful and honourable. In that day, our bodies will be like Christ's glorious body. Bodies of glory, rather than bodies of humiliation. They will be powerful! Nothing will be able to harm them and they will have great strength. They will be immortal! Death will not be able to touch them. They will be spiritual – that is, they will be governed by the spirit and not the soul. No doubt, the Holy Spirit will still indwell these bodies and have full sway over them.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 the coming of Christ is a **saving** truth. We read: *For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*

Here “the wrath to come” refers to the whole wrath of God – including the wrath of God and the Lamb during the period of tribulation that will fall upon the earth. This will follow the coming of Christ for His saints.

In 2:19 His coming is a **stimulating** truth. We read: *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?* The apostle Paul counted the fact that the Thessalonian Christians, who were some of those converted under his preaching, would be his reward and joy in heaven. Surely this truth motivates us to go out boldly and witness for Christ.

In 3:12-13, the coming is a **stabilising** truth. We read: *And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.* Here, the hope of His coming establishes our faith in such a way that love abounds and our lives are purified.

In 5:23, it is a **sanctifying** truth. We read: *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* This is sanctification. That is to say that God sets us apart to Himself for His possession, pleasure and purpose. So whether we are thinking about the spirit (God-consciousness), the soul (self-consciousness) and the body (earth-consciousness) all are kept by the grace of God until that day when we will be all His at the coming of our Lord Jesus. Then we will live perfectly in His will.

1 John 3:3 tells us that every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure. So the coming of the Lord is also a **purifying** truth. May each day of our lives be lived in a way that glorifies God. If the coming of the Lord is expected at any moment, then we will be careful what we consciously look at, listen to and say. We will be careful to associate closely with fellow believers. We will be careful concerning the places we visit. But we will also be careful to do all things as unto the Lord.

The Living Hope

The Living Hope is found in 1 Peter 1:3: *Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his great mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through [the] resurrection of Jesus Christ from among [the] dead.*

FB Hole writes about this hope: “Verse 3 opens the apostle’s message in striking a note of praise to God, now revealed as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, since he has begotten us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As belonging to the commonwealth of Israel, they had formerly had national hopes which centred in a Messiah upon earth, but the light of these hopes was quenched in their hearts when He died rejected, crucified between two thieves. The story of the two going to Emmaus, as told in Luke 24, is a telling illustration of this; but, when those two had their eyes opened and beheld Him risen, a new hope dawned in their hearts which nothing on earth could quench. It was a living hope because centred in a Saviour living beyond the power of death. How aptly the very words of verse 3 would have sprung from their lips as they entered the upper room in Jerusalem to tell the news to the rest after their return journey of three-score furlongs! They were like men who had been born again into a new world of hope and expectation, in the great mercy of God.”

We conclude with a poem of James Boyd entitled “Hope”.

*The world is passing, soon it will be o'er;
The circumstances of this present life
Shall be forgotten, once the eternal door
Is reached, and man is done with selfish strife.*

*Therefore, let us be governed by the goal,
Not influenced by things that have an end;
Our faith be to the saving of our soul,
To God’s decree our stubborn natures bend.*

*And let us, like our Master, be controlled
By our divine and heavenly Father’s will,
Doing the thing that we to do are told,
And, like the hireling, our short stay fulfil.*

*Thus shall we realise that rest of heart
Found by the Saviour in His pathway here,
With whom in heaven is our eternal part,
Where glory crowns that stainless, deathless sphere.*

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