

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Broadcast Date: 2 February 2014

No. T0818

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Some Important Bible Couplets: Faith and Hope

Good morning and welcome to *Truth for Today*, on this dark February morning. We pray that discussing God's word together will brighten the day, especially as we recall again the overwhelming love of God that is revealed to us through the Lord Jesus. Our talk this morning is the final one in a series of four, which one of my colleagues has called "Some Important Bible Couplets". Previously in this series we have discussed "Repentance and Faith"; "Grace and Truth" and "Righteousness and Peace". Today we are dealing with "Faith and Hope", which are linked together in 1 Peter 1:21, which I quote now from the Authorised or King James Version of the Scriptures: *"Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."*

I trust you noticed in my introduction that we have already had a talk in this series that included faith coupled with repentance. I wish to emphasise the necessity of faith, in a continuing sense, as we progress through life with one another and the Lord.

I once heard a preacher use a chair as an example of faith, stating that we do not examine it before we sit on it; we take it on trust that it will bear our weight and not collapse leaving us in a heap upon the floor. This, to me, is not an example of faith, in the biblical sense, as our eyes tell us that the chair has four legs of a reasonable thickness. We know by experience that wood is a material that will take our weight so, therefore, we do not sit on it by faith, but rather through experience. Hebrews 11:6 says: *"But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

This is the kind of faith that the Bible is looking for, which is much different than a demand for proof before we believe something. It is the same with the thought of creation and the Creator God, for however long we discuss the whys and wherefores we must sooner, rather than later, come to the conclusion that is stated in the same chapter of Hebrews that we have just quoted from, *"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear"* (Hebrews 11:3).

This, then, is the point I wish to make at the outset of our time together, namely, that faith in the biblical sense is taking God on trust, which is the pathway to a knowledge of Him now, so that those who trust can vouch that He is and that Christianity is not only "pie in the sky when we die."

If we return again to our main verse in 1 Peter 1:21, we remind ourselves that Peter has written: *"Who by [Jesus] do believe in God, who raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God."*

The context of 1 Peter 1:21 is the incarnation and death of the Lord Jesus, as the Lamb of God offered without blemish, or spot, for our redemption (1 Peter 1:18-19). Notice how our faith in God is established through the work of Jesus on the cross. Before I elaborate on the resurrection and the glory of the risen Christ as the basis of our faith and hope, I want to highlight two aspects of the work of the Lord Jesus that are hinted about in this verse.

1. The manifestation of the Lord Jesus into this world has revealed the Father, and
2. That He is the way of reconciliation which makes a relationship with God possible.

From 1 Peter 1:17, we learn that Christians can call God "Father". Amongst the many other references in the New Testament that inform us of the same truth, I quote just one from John 1:18 where we read: *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."*

There is no argument with such a statement which tells us, categorically, that Jesus has revealed the Father. Perhaps we do not always appreciate the dignity and wonder of the immortal, invisible, almighty God being revealed to us as the "Father".

The second point, regarding our relationship with God depending upon the work of the Lord Jesus, is found in 2 Corinthians 5:19-20: *"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we beg you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God."*

What a marvellous truth is stated in these verses, for reconciliation to God is not some kindly ignoring, or reduced hostility, by God against sin, but rather its total and objective removal. Notice also that God is the reconciler and that it is mankind that He reconciled unto Himself. Further to this, we learn that reconciliation involves the non-imputation of trespasses, that is, our sins are no longer charged against us. The salient point this morning for each one of us is, "Have we been reconciled to God through the death of the Lord Jesus?"

We must return now to our primary theme which is based upon 1 Peter 1:21 and, in order to refresh our memories, I will read it again, but this time from the New International Version and I will include the preceding verse: *"He [Jesus] was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God."* (1 Peter 1:20-21)

Notice here that God's action in raising the Lord Jesus from among the dead is mentioned, along with His glorification. The resurrection, which is a cardinal point of the Christian Gospel, is the foundation of our faith and His glorification is an aspect of the believer's hope.

We have already emphasised the crucial necessity for faith in our approach to God for, I repeat again, that *"without faith it is impossible to please God"* (Hebrews 11:6). This being so, we must spend the next few minutes on the subject of faith. The first action that the Bible cites as an example of faith is Abel's offering which we can read about in Genesis 4:1-15. Though Abel's faith is not directly mentioned in the Genesis passage, the writer of Hebrews draws our attention to it in Hebrews 11:4: *"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."*

Commentators and expositors have given various reasons why Abel's gifts were acceptable to God and Cain's weren't. For me, an acceptable answer would be that Abel offered his gift because he believed in God, therefore it was accompanied by faith. Enoch is mentioned in the following verses as one who pleased God because he had faith (see Hebrews 11:5-6). If we had the time to read the verses concerning Enoch, in Hebrews 11, we would learn that the writer lays great stress upon the necessity for faith and trust. There is no substitute for faith. It is not that without faith it is difficult to please God, but that *"without faith it is impossible to please God"* (see Hebrews 11:5-6).

Perhaps I ought, at this point, to welcome any who have just tuned in and, also, to inform you that you are listening to a talk from *Truth for Today* about faith and hope. I have just stated that without faith it is impossible to please God when I emphasised the word "impossible". Having said that, I must modify it by quoting from a commentary on the Hebrew letter by Leon Morris: 'We must believe that God exists. That is basic ... But that is not enough in itself. After all, the demons can know that sort of faith (James 2:19). There must also be a conviction about God's moral character, belief that he rewards those who earnestly seek him...' (Morris L; *Hebrews Bible Study Commentary* ISBN: 9780310451839). We must believe, not only that God exists, but also that God cares. Without that deep conviction, faith in the biblical sense is not a possibility.'

Having emphasised, at some length, the critical nature of faith in the economy of God, we must move on.

Our primary verse, 1 Peter 1:21, mentions the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Wherever we look in the New Testament, we will soon come upon a reference to this miraculous event. Peter's first sermon, recorded for us in The Acts of the Apostles and chapter 2, has the statement: *"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be held by it"* (Acts 2:23-24).

The passage tells us, categorically, that the Lord was raised to life again by the mighty power of God, despite the worst that men could do. When Paul preached the resurrection of the Lord Jesus to the Greeks, in Athens, (Acts 17:22-31) he was mocked and scorned (Acts 17:32), a reaction that is all too common today. To the natural mind it seems impossible that one should be raised from among the dead, so what we cannot intellectually grasp we will not accept. This is why we need the Holy Spirit of God to open our hearts and minds to spiritual things.

Romans 1:3-4 draws further truth regarding the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: *"the gospel of God concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."*

Again, we must notice the link between the resurrection and the Son of God, the Lord. Later in this same letter, Romans 10:9, Paul emphasises this truth in connection with being saved: *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."*

There we have it once more as plain as could be. A believer in Jesus is a person who recognises the Lord Jesus as the Son of God and believes that He has been raised from the dead. I do not apologise that I have perhaps laboured the point that faith is essential in our dealings with God, but, and I emphasise again, that it must not be a vague faith in a vague God.

In view of the time, we must now move on to the thought of "hope" as contained in 1 Peter 1:21 which is before us this morning, and though it might seem superfluous I shall read it again, this time from the English Standard Version: *"who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."*

I suppose, by now, we all know that our verse this morning is 1 Peter 1:21. All that is left for us this morning is to discuss the Christian's hope. We must state that the biblical hope is not the type of hope that we talk about in our daily life. That is more akin to wistful longing. A young person, about to go for a driving test, might say that they hope to pass, or an older person, as they approach retiring age, might hope their pension will be enough to live on. The Christian's hope is, according to Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words (ISBN: 978-0785260202), "a favourable and confident expectation" or "the happy anticipation of good". It is rooted in a sure and certain knowledge.

The Old Testament "hope" is also the expectation of good and confidence in what God will do. Jeremiah 17:7 tells us: *"Blessed is the man that trusteth the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is"*, whereas, Job 31:24, speculates that he could have made gold his hope. Jeremiah 7:4 also warns against centring our hope in religious observances. As I understand it, "hope", for the Old Testament reader, is an understanding of the transient nature of this present life, yet being anchored in the long promised appearance of the Messiah.

When we come to the New Testament though, we find that that long promised Messiah has been manifested, yet the "hope" of the Christian is still fixed upon the Messiah, as we shall see when we examine some of the verses that appertain to "hope". The main difference of our hope from that of the Old Testament is that salvation has been accomplished in the Lord Jesus. This does not mean that we have no hope, for when we believe in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our hope still embraces an expectation and a patient waiting for the hope to be fulfilled, fuelled by our faith, as we can read in Hebrews 11:1: *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

From Romans 8:24 we learn that our hope does not rest in things which are seen, thus it is spiritual and not material. We are not upholders of the social gospel, where Christianity will supposedly change the material conditions of communal life. This is not to suggest that we do not want society to be more just, righteous and peaceful. The point of Romans 8:24 is that we do not hope for that which we can see and also that we are saved by hope. Can I hear someone saying how can this be? How are we saved by hope? The New Testament writers declare that the promise of the Lord's return is not just academic or theoretical. The Apostle John in his first letter takes up this theme: *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"* (1 John 3:2-3). Here we have the sanctifying effect of the Christian's hope in the return of the Lord.

Many years ago the young lady who eventually became my wife gave me a hymn book in which she wrote a prayer from 2 Thessalonians 3:5: *"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."* Over 53 years have passed since I received that gift, which has long since worn out, yet the hope of His coming ever remains.

Other words are used in the New Testament in conjunction with the word "hope", all of which further embellish it for the believer. In Acts 23:1-10 Paul was brought before a Jewish Council, in Jerusalem, because of his hope in the resurrection. Is our hope tinged with the breathtaking truth of the resurrection? Is the hope of resurrection part of our heritage as Christians? I trust I have made it clear that if it is absent we can hardly call ourselves believers in Jesus. In Galatians 5:5, Paul writes of the *"hope of righteousness"*, which involves the believer's complete sanctification at the coming of Christ. We have little time left, so all I can do is to briefly suggest some more aspects of the Christian's hope to add to those we have already considered.

In his letter to the Colossians, the Apostle writes of the hope of the Gospel. What can this be other than the fulfilment of all the promises set forth in the Gospel, such as *"the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel"* (Colossians 1:5) He (Paul) encouraged the Roman church with the thought of the *"hope of the glory of God"*, a theme which he mentioned to Titus, in Titus 2:13 when he brought the *"blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ"* to the attention of his younger brother in Christ.

In closing, I shall quote, using JN Darby's translation, 1 Peter 1:3, and I want you to notice the adjective which is descriptive of the Christian's hope: *"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."*

I trust that you spotted the word "living". I say again that the hope of the Christian is no vague promise with no particular relevance in today's world, for it lifts us into that realm, where the risen Christ shares the joys of the life that is beyond death, with those who believe in Him.

I finish my talk this morning by reading again the verse we started with from 1 Peter 1:21, this time from the JN Darby translation: *"Who by Him do believe on God, who has raised him from among the dead, and given him glory; that your faith and hope should be in God."*

Good morning and thank you for listening.

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