

**The Christian Hope**  
**by**  
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**The Nature Of Christian Hope**

What does the word "hope" mean to you? Very likely, it means "wistful desire; a feeling that what is wanted will happen." We use the term in statements like, "I hope it doesn't rain today." Thus "hope" has come to mean little more than "wish" in modern usage.

The Bible makes many references to "hope" in relation to the people of God. The Greek term translated "hope" (**elpis**) occurs no less than eighty three times in the New Testament. There is no specific word in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament which is used for "hope," but translators have found that meaning in the use of fifteen different words. Therefore, we can say without hesitation that "hope" is a Bible doctrine, set forth in Old Testament and in New.

It is at this point that a problem arises. The word "hope" is used in the Bible with a different meaning from the way it is used today. Hope is not a mere wish, a personal preference, a desire that some favored thing might occur. It is a strong word in the Bible. That is why I have chosen to share with you a study on "The Christian's

Hope." An understanding of the Bible teaching on Christian hope is a cause for rejoicing.

I wish to introduce the subject by reading I Peter 1:3-6, "*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. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.*" Notice the statement that God has "*begotten us again unto a living hope.*" It is in view of that "*living hope*" that the passage must be interpreted.

What is the nature of the "*living hope*" of the Christian? Look at the terms used in the Bible to suggest the idea. The fifteen Hebrew words used in the Old Testament bear the meaning of "trust; unshakable confidence." It is more than a wish, more than a preference. The Old Testament concept of hope is firm assurance.

The New Testament term translated "*hope*" means confident expectation; firm trust that God will, at the time appointed fulfill his promises. It is not a wish, it is a certain and obvious fact. That term does not occur as an adjective nor an adverb, for it is not applied to subjective feelings. No one is ever spoken of "hopeful" or "hoping." That would make it in the nature of a wish. No! There is assurance, positive expectation, in the New Testament concept of "*hope.*"

The certainty expressed in "*hope*" causes it to be associated with rejoicing, boldness, freedom, peace, love, and kindred graces. It is because we have hope that we can rejoice, be bold about the future, be free from fear, have peace deep in the heart. Hope casts a light of assured victory upon all of life's circumstances.

How is hope related to faith? In spite of the seeming contradiction, they are the same and yet they differ. Consider these passages from the New Testament where faith and hope are related. "*Now abideth faith, hope, charity.*" (I Cor. 13:13). Paul spoke of having hope, when your faith is increased (II Cor. 10:15). The Thessalonians Christians were marked by "*...work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*" (I Thess. 1:3). Paul rejoiced in the Colossian Christians, "*Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope that is laid up for you in heaven...*" (Col. 1:4, 5). You notice that faith and hope are spoken of as if they were distinct each from the other. And so they are. Yet, the two terms are used almost interchangeably in the Bible. In fact, the King James Version of the Bible often translates the word for "hope" (elpis) by "*trust*" in our text. What is the answer?"

Faith and hope refer to the same attitude of confident expectation (trust). Faith is confident expression in the present tense. Hope is confident expectation in the future tense. In other words, I have faith in God concerning this present, things of today. I have hope in God concerning things future, things of all the tomorrows. Hope is the

future tense of faith. I look up to God for the present in faith; I look up to God for the future in hope, Does that sound weak and indefinite to say we have "faith" for the present "hope" for the future ? If so, it is because we are thinking of hope in the weak sense of "wish." Remember, that is not the Bible meaning of hope. In the Bible, hope is as strong and certain and safe and sure as faith. They both mean "trust, confident expectation."

The validity of hope depends upon the object (or the person) to whom the hope is directed. That is why the Bible repeatedly relates Christian hope to God.

The verb "to hope" is used in the New Testament with three prepositions. **(1)** One preposition (*epis*) means "in" and expresses direction. To trust "in" God means hope is directed to and centered in Him personally. **(2)** Another preposition (*epi*) means "on" and expresses ground or foundation. To trust "on" God means all anticipation of good and expectation of spiritual benefit rests on God himself, not any other person or thing. **(3)** A third preposition (*en*) means "in" and expresses sphere and element. It expresses the idea that the one who so "hopes" (or, "trusts") actually enters into Christ and shares personal relationship with Him. The three-fold application of the term, as indicated in those three prepositions, show the full scope and joy of hope in the life of the Christian.

Three adjectives are used in the New Testament to describe Christian hope. It is called "*good hope*" II Thess. 2:16, "*blessed hope*" in Titus 2:13, and "*living hope*" in I Peter 1:3. To those may be added the term "*better hope*" in Heb. 7:19. That is the blessed inheritance of those who have "*fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us*" Heb. 6:18).

God is spoken of in Romans 15:13 as "*the God of hope.*" That means He is the Author of all Christian hope. The Christian has hope (confident expectation for all the future) because he has met God in Jesus Christ, because he knows God. Apart from Him, there is no hope. Ephesians 2:12 describes those who are not trusting Jesus Christ personally as being "*without Christ .... having no hope, and without God in the world.*" All faith and hope must be in God (I Peter 1:21).

Whom do you trust? Are you trying to live depending on yourself alone? or on your friends? or on the wish that circumstances will turn out favorable for you? If that is your basis of hope for the future, you must be very miserable.

Set your faith in God. Come to Him in confidence that He will receive you because of what Jesus Christ did for you in His crucifixion and His resurrection. Ask Him to receive you, forgive you, make you His child. You can be sure He will because He has promised to do so. Turning confidence from every other person and thing, center it on Jesus Christ alone, and then you can live in Christian faith and hope. Oh, what a way to live!

"Father, thank you for being so faithful. We are confident that it is safe to trust you for all circumstances and in all conditions, present and future. May many who share

these words be moved in heart to trust you, because you are so trustworthy. Thank you for the blessing of Christian hope. In Jesus' name. Amen."

### **The Source Of Christian Hope**

Christians look up to God in faith for things present and look up to God in understanding only when we remember that to act is in the Bible, hope means more than wishful thinking. Hope is the future tense of faith. "Hope is simply faith directed towards the future, and no sharp distinction between faith and hope is attainable" (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 1420:2).

How does a person come to exercise Christian faith and hope? What is its source? The answer to those questions will encourage the confidence of the Christian who is trusting Jesus Christ and will magnify the God whom he trusts.

I. Christian Faith is the Gift of God. Take a familiar passage like Eph. 2:8-9, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*" What a beautiful passage! Three words are of great importance in it: grace, saved, faith. Paul wrote the Ephesians' believers: (1) you have been saved; (2) your salvation was by grace; and (3) your salvation was through faith. But there is a problem in the text. To what did Paul refer when he wrote, "*and THAT not of yourselves*"? What is the antecedent of "*that*"? What is it that is "*not of yourselves*"? Is it "grace is not of yourselves"? Is it "salvation is not of yourselves"? Is it "faith is not of yourselves"? Or is it, "Neither grace, nor salvation, nor faith is of yourselves"? I prefer the last interpretation. Nothing about salvation grace which gave it, nor the saving deed, nor faith to receive it is of man; it is all of God.

Salvation is God's gift, not man's accomplishment. No man can be anything, nor do anything, nor become anything which merits salvation. Christian faith (and thus Christian hope) is inspired in the human heart by the Holy Spirit who draws him to Jesus Christ.

God himself is the source of Christian hope, for hope is founded on what God has revealed concerning himself.

II. Christian Faith and Hope is a Response to the Grace of God. First Peter 1:3 reads in part, "*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....*" "*According to his abundant mercy*" means "*by his mercy, in his mercy, because of his mercy.*" The teaching evidently is that the living hope of the Christian is a result of the prior mercy of God.

Hear Eph. 2:8 again, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*" How are you saved? "*By grace you are saved.*" Apart from God's grace, faith would be meaningless and salvation impossible. God moved in grace before man responded in faith. It is correct to say,

therefore, that the Christian's hope is a response to the grace of God.

Salvation was no sudden decision, no capricious favor, on the part of God. He had planned Calvary's cross before He ever created Calvary's hill. "*Before the foundation of the world*" is the expression the Bible uses to describe the beginning of God's redemptive plan and purpose. That is why Eph. 2:8 says you are saved "by grace." In reality, one is saved by the atoning deed of Jesus Christ. But it was the grace of God which gave Him as the substitute for sinners. Salvation is by grace; therefore, the Christian's hope arises from God's grace.

III. Christian Faith and Hope is Related to Spiritual Life. First Peter 1:3 teaches that God has "*begotten us again unto a living hope.*" Note that word "*begotten.*" It means to be born; to receive life. You see the word clearly demonstrated in the genealogy of Joseph in Matt. 1, "*Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren*" (verse 2). "*Begat*" means "to be the father of; to give life to." It is in that same sense that I Peter 1:3 reports that the believer is "*begotten*" of God to a living hope. God gives life, eternal life, to the believer in Jesus Christ. The presence of spiritual, eternal life within the human spirit is the basis of Christian hope. That is why Jesus said, "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God .... Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God .... Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again*" (John 3:3, 5, 7). Three times in that conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus said a person must be "*born again; born anew; born from above.*" Peter simply applied the principle spoken of as no hope apart from salvation in Jesus Christ, and knowing that one enters into a "*lively hope*" of spirit knowing that all those who are in Christ by spiritual birth have a living hope, Peter wrote that God had "*begotten (borned) us unto a living hope.*" Apart from Christ there is no hope; in Christ there is living hope. What a difference Jesus makes!

IV. Christian Faith and Hope is Dependent Upon the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. The emphasis of the Bible is not that Jesus Christ "gives" us hope, nor that He "shows us where to find" hope. The teaching of Holy Scripture is that He "is" our hope. First Timothy 1:1 makes specific reference to Jesus Christ as being himself "*our hope.*" Colossians 1:27 is a little more specific, reading in part, "*...Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" J. B. Phillips translates that expression, "Christ in you, the hope of all the glorious things to come." Christian hope is not based on God's blessings, but upon God himself who has revealed himself best in Jesus Christ. On the other side of the issue, the Bible teaches there is no hope apart from Jesus Christ. The finest expression of that truth is Eph. 2:12, 13, "*That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*" There is no **hope without God**; no one can come to God apart from Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Therefore, he who does not have the Lord Jesus Christ

as **personal Saviour has no hope** either in this world nor in the world to come. Therefore, he is "*of all men most miserable*" (I Cor. 15:19). In Rom. 15:13, God is called "*the God of hope*" who fills you "*with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.*" Think about that! When a person "believes" (trusts) Jesus Christ, God fills him with "joy and peace." From that moment, on the basis of what God has done for him in conversation, he "*abounds in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.*" That is what God does for the believer. Do you want joy, peace, and overflowing hope? You can have it through repentance toward God and personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,

The source of Christian hope, with all its attendant blessings, is the gift of God by which eternal life is given in grace to the person who trusts Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. The offer is made to all who are afar off. Thank God!

"Father, we rejoice in your grace by which you have provided joy, and peace, and overflowing hope through Jesus Christ. Thank you for the confidence we have in You right now. Thank you for the assurance we have in You for all future time. Give that blessed assurance to many who turn to you in faith today. For Jesus' sake. Amen."

### **The Basis Of Christian Hope**

The basis of all Christian hope is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That was the thought of Peter's inspired writing, "*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*" (I Peter 1:3). Ask some questions of that verse of Holy Scripture. (1) Who has acted? "*God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (2) What was His motive? "*According to his abundant mercy.*" (3) What has He done? "*Begotten us.*" (4) What was the result? "*Living hope.*" (5) How was that accomplished? "*By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*" What a blessed basis for Christian hope is given in I Peter 1:3. Jesus Christ is alive. He was dead, but now is alive for ever more (Rev. 1: 18). The fact that He is alive beyond death is the heart of the Christian's hope. Romans 5: 10 expresses it this way, "*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*" Two great things are mentioned in that verse: reconciliation and salvation. Reconciliation is said to be provided through the death of Jesus; salvation is said to be provided through the life of Jesus. What does that mean? It was His death in the place of sinners which made it possible for them to be forgiven, for God to be just and yet justify the ungodly. But such justification is available because He lives beyond death to be the Savior of those who respond in repentance and faith. It is the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ which is the foundation of the faith of the Christian.

Paul wrote of Jesus in these words, ".... *His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*" (Rom. 1:3, 4). The witness is this: the proof that the human Jesus was and is the Son of God lies in His resurrection. He was decisively declared and miraculously designed as the Son of God by the mighty act in which He was raised from among the dead. Yes, "*we are saved by His life.*"

The preaching of the early Christians, as recorded in the book of Acts, placed great emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus. Here are typical statements. "*This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we **all are witnesses***" (2:32). "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole" (4: 10). "*The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins*" (5:30, 31). "*We are witnesses of all things which he did .... whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen **before of God, even to us.***" (10: 39-41). Yes, **each and all of the early Christians witnesses stressed** the fact that Jesus Christ is alive, risen up from death. The Apostle Paul entered into an extended discussion of the fact and significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He wrote, "*If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ .... then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished .... But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept*" (I Cor. 15:15, 18, 20). The alternative is terrifying, if Christ is not alive. Preaching would be meaningless, faith would be empty, the gospel would be untrue, sins would remain unforgiven, and all the Christian dead would have perished! Thank God, Jesus Christ is alive!

I cannot stress that point strongly enough. In the words of one of our great Christian hymns, "I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today; I know that He is living, whatever men may say; I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer, And just the time I need Him, He's always near. He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way. He lives, He lives, salvation to impart! You ask me how I know He lives: He lives within my heart." - Alfred H. Ackley.

And yet, the theme of this study is not resurrection. It is Christian hope. Do you ask how the two relate? Follow this line of thought. (1) Apart from resurrection, Jesus would still be dead. (2) If Jesus were still dead, He could not be our Savior. (3) If Jesus were not our Savior, we could have no hope in time or eternity. Therefore, Simon Peter was right when he wrote that God has "*begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*" (I Peter 1: 3). Resurrection

and hope are bound together.

Consider this statement concerning Jesus Christ: "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (II Cor. 1: 20). The Twentieth Century New Testament translates that verse, "For, as many as were the promises of God, in Christ is the Yes that fulfills them. Therefore, through Christ again, let the Amen rise, through us, to the glory of God." That is to say, God's promises are confirmed and made certain by Jesus Christ.

What is the basis of the Christian's hope concerning the future? His hope is based upon the faithfulness of God who has given him promises. What does the Lord Jesus do concerning those promises? He guarantees them to be true in fact and certain in fulfillment,

Consider Heb. 6:13-20, "*For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong **consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.***" Christian hope is based on the faithfulness of God. **God's faithfulness** is confirmed by His promise and His oath. Jesus has come to earth and returned to heaven to confirm beyond question the fulfillment of every promise God ever made. Our hope is centered in Jesus, so when He returned to heaven our hope accompanied Him there. So here we Christians are, living on earth with our hope centered in heaven. Such a hope serves like the anchor of a ship, keeping us from drifting. That for which we hope is so certain it is as if we had already received it.

The basis of Christian hope is Jesus Christ, the once-dead-but-now-living Savior. Therefore, our hope is sure!

"Father, we thank you and praise you for the assurance we have in our hearts. Oh, what a difference Jesus has made. Thank you for calling us, saving us, assuring us by your infallible promises. May many who share these words turn in personal faith to Jesus Christ, yielding to Him as Lord and trusting Him as Savior. And may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, fill them with strong consolation and good hope through grace. For Jesus' sake. Amen."

### **The Content Of The Christian Hope**



When we remember that hope is the future tense of faith, I Peter 1:3-6 takes on a larger meaning than before: "*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. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.*" Hear it again: The ultimate content of our hope is to receive "*an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God....*"

Faith is present tense. Hope is future tense. Faith looks up to God now and says, "God is...." Faith looks up to God for tomorrow and says with equal conviction, "God will .....

Since hope always applies to things yet future, as faith always applies to things now present, hope looks toward eternity. Its ultimate end is the eternal inheritance God has reserved for His dear children in heaven.

The Christian has been "born to an estate" because he is an "*heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ.*" Romans 8:16, 17, expresses it this way: "*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*" That is the inheritance of which Peter wrote - an inheritance "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God."

I. Consider the Nature of That **incorruptible Inheritance Which is the End of Our Hope**. Peter chose three great words to describe it.

A. It is "**Incorruptible**." That means it is imperishable. It is beyond the reach of change or decay. The Bible makes reference to "the glory of the incorruptible God" (Rom. 1:23). That is the same word used to describe the inheritance of those who are children of God. The same term is used to describe the glorified body of believers at the resurrection (I Cor. 15:42, 50, 53, 54). It suggests a condition associated with glory and honor and life. It is that which is pure, free from possible stain, and which will never diminish so as to be less than it was at the beginning. Such an "incorruptible" inheritance is the goal of the Christian's hope.

B. It is "**Undefiled**." That means it is stainless, clean, unpolluted, or unspoiled and Holy. The opposite word is used in secular speech to mean "stain, tinge with dye, to make another color." Applied in the moral and spiritual areas, it would mean "to pollute, contaminate, soil, defile." The inheritance is exactly opposite all that. It is so pure it is incapable of being defiled. That is the inheritance toward which the Christian is headed.

C. It is "**Unfading**." That means it is never to lose its luster. The word used in the Greek language and translated "*fadeth not away*" in the King James Version, came to

be used as the name of a flower. The Amaranth flower, an unfading flower, came to be the symbol of perpetuity. Such is the word used to describe the blessed inheritance toward which the Christian moves in hope. That inheritance will never be worn out so that it loses its luster. Never! It is "unfading."

II. Consider the Certainty of Receiving That Inheritance. It is reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God." At this point, a little 'word' study is in order. Consider the word." The inheritance is "reserved in heaven for you. " It means to guard, to keep safe, to preserve, to give heed to," and is sometimes translated to reserve." The inheritance for the Christian is "reserved" in that watch is kept over it to guarantee the believer's inheritance of it. No specific reference is made as to who keeps the watch, but reference to the power of God suggests that God is watching and preserving the inheritance for His children.

Consider that word "kept." Christians are "kept" by the power of God. It means to be kept With a military guard. It means to be protected by a strong guard. The word means there is some person or power who is protecting, affording safe conduct, to the child of God until he receives his heavenly inheritance.

Consider that phrase "*power of God*." That is what keeps the believer safe. He is "*kept by the power of God*." That term means "power in action." it occurs 118 times in the New Testament where it repeatedly speaks of the force by which God reforms His work on earth.

Look at the picture as the Holy Spirit caused Peter to draw it with his pen. The child of God is headed toward an inheritance which is glorious beyond description ("incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading"). He is certain to receive that inheritance at the end of his way, because it is guarded and kept reserved for him there. On his journey, he has nothing to fear, for he is personally and continually surrounded and guarded and protected by the power of God which marches around him as soldiers on guard duty at a military base, keeping him safe.

It is future. Not one of us has entered upon his full inheritance as yet. Therefore, we look forward with hope (the future tense of faith, remember?) to the time when we will enjoy it. Meanwhile, it is reserved in heaven awaiting us.

The inheritance is ready, "*ready to be revealed in the last time*." When the Lord comes and it is suddenly unveiled before our eyes, what glory that will be! No wonder the coming of Jesus is "the blessed hope" of the believer.

III. Consider the Reservation of That **Blessed Inheritance**. Jesus spoke of the believer's inheritance as "*my Father's house*" in which there are "*many mansions*" (John 14: 1). He said He would go there and prepare a place for each of us. Having prepared that place, He promised to come again and receive us to himself, that we might be where He is (John 14:1-3). He asked the Father, "*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedest me before the foundation of the world*" (John 17:24). So there it is, the inheritance of the saints. It is in heaven. It

is there. It is kept there as the climax of salvation that is already there, ready to be revealed. It will be revealed at the last time. The Christian looks to God with an anticipation of hope.

What a difference Jesus has made. From a dark and foreboding future from which one wanted to draw back in terror, God has given the Christian a future full of the bright prospects of a glorious inheritance. Praise God for such grace!

"Father, what joy to realize it is not all of life to live here. Thank you for the blessed promise of life in the most excellent glory of heaven. How we anticipate that inheritance which awaits us. And in the full assurance of hope, we enter into it and enjoy it even now in absentia. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **The Expression of Christian Hope**

Hope in the heart puts a light in the life For it is impossible to hide the victory which assured Christian hope puts within the life.

The Apostle Peter wrote "*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. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations*" (I Peter 1:3-6).

Our study of these verses has uncovered many wonderful truths. But now I want us to consider what the passage teaches concerning the Christian's expression of his hope. (It will be very important to continue to remind ourselves that we do not use "hope" in the sense of "wish" or "desire," but as the future tense of faith. Hope is as strong as faith. Faith is trust in the present tense; hope is trust in the future tense. There is nothing weak about it.) The truths of Holy Scripture under gird and strengthen our faith and hope.

How is Christian hope manifest? What expresses its presence in the life of a believer? We will review some of the expressions mentioned in Holy Scripture.

I. What is a Proper Expression of Christian Hope. The text of our study (I Peter 1:3-6) begins and ends with expressions of joyful confidence and praise to God. It opens with and closes with "*Ye greatly rejoice*" Think about those terms.

"*Blessed*" is a common Bible term. The term in Greek means "to speak well" of a person. It means to praise, to celebrate or worship with praises by acknowledging the goodness and desiring the glory of God. Peter used it to mean "praised, honored, and blessed be God." It pictures a heart overflowing with thanksgiving, worship, and praise, and pouring it out toward God from whom all blessings flow.

Circumstances do not change the spirit of joy in the heart of the believer. Peter wrote that his first readers of the epistle were distressed by trials and suffering

temptations. Even so, he urges them to keep on expressing the tremendous joy, the full exultation at the thought of their inheritance in Christ.

"Rejoice" is enthusiastic and demonstrative joy. The Christian has reason for joy when he remembers how God foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified him (Rom. 8:29, 30). He can say, "*If God be for us, who can be against us?*" (Rom. 8:31).

II. Patience in Trouble is a Proper Expression of Christian Hope. That was why Peter could write about the Christian greatly rejoicing, even though they were in grief and sorrow in view of their many trials. Hope makes one look beyond the present pain and distress to the glory beyond.

Jesus spoke of the pain of childbirth, which the mother endured to reap the joy at the new member born into the family. Just so, the believer looks beyond the present distress and rejoices in what is beyond. That is why martyrs were able to sing on their way to execution. Their assured hope of what was ahead for them enabled them to have victory in the midst of untoward circumstances.

Trouble can cause hope to grow strong. Consider this passage of Scripture, "*...we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*" (Rom. 5:2-5). We have hope, rejoicing in the glad prospect, of entering into the glory of God. That hope keeps us from any fear or shame. We are certain that circumstances do not change the purposes of God, so our hope is certain.

III. Stability is a Proper Expression of Christian Hope. He who wavers back and forth now trusting and now doubting, is not a person filled with faith and hope. The person who is confident about the future prospects will not be tossed to and fro like a wave on the waters is moved by changing winds. Hebrews 3:6 issues a call for Christians to "*hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*"

Here is a ship lashed with the fury of winds and pulled by the strength of the waves. A great chain reaches from her hull through the water to the deep ocean floor where the storm does not rage. On the end of that chain is a heavy anchor. Let the storm rage as it will on the surface, the anchor is secured in a place of perfect calm. So it is with the Christian. He lives in a world where troubles of many sorts come to beset and buffet him. But he has an anchor of the soul. It is "*the hope that is set before us,*" and it is anchored secure where it can never slip nor break. It is anchored in the very presence of the faithful God. There are no storms raging there. The anchor holds; the Christian is safe. In the words of a religious song "Be very sure, be very sure, your anchor holds and grips the solid Rock.

IV. Purity is a Proper Expression of Christian Hope. John wrote in his First Epistle

of the blessed prospect of the return of the Lord Jesus and our being made like Him in glory. He was firmly convinced that it would happen. He made this application, "*And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure*" II John 3:3).

Many years ago, I was serving the Lord as pastor in western Oklahoma. A young couple had asked me to read the wedding vows at a private ceremony to be held in the farm home of the bride and her family. The groom lived in another city and planned to drive to our town on the day of the wedding. A terrible blizzard blew in during the day. Roads became all but impassable. The wind was so cutting and strong it was dangerous to try to walk on the slick cover of ice and snow. The bride and her family were sure the groom could not come for the wedding.

A knock came on my door that evening, and there stood the groom. Somehow, he had made it through the weather. I dressed as warm as I could, and we went out into the storm for the bride's home. We arrived there to find them sitting before the fireplace in their work clothes. No one expected us, so they were not ready. They made hurried preparations, and we had the wedding ceremony. If they had any assurance we were coming, they would have been ready.

That is why I say, the person who is filled with confident hope concerning eternal things will live in the light of them. He will be joyful, patient, stable, and pure as he waits for the coming of the Lord.

So we have come to the end of our study on "The Christian Hope." I conclude with this word from Rom. 15:13, "*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may abound in **hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.***" And that is my prayer for you.