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Hope

*Therefore, get your minds ready for action by
being fully sober, and set your hope completely
on the grace that will be brought to you
when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

- 1 Peter 1:13

Christian hope is fully trusting in the biblical promises of God. Hope is one of the supreme Christian virtues along with love and faith. It focuses our attention on the proper person—namely God; it helps us prioritize our daily lives properly; it equips us for purposeful service.

We see examples of people exercising great hope throughout the Bible. In the New Testament, believers' hope was what comforted and motivated them even as they were being chased around the known world, being beaten, imprisoned, deprived of their physical needs, and at times murdered. Hope in God and their future with Him is what they clung to. And it seems this hope was the fuel that kept them going through the roughest of times. Biblical hope continues to encourage, embolden, and motivate Christians around the world just as it did in the first century.

In my life, I realized hope was missing from many days of my life after I had known the Lord for many years. But while sitting in a class in seminary, I was given a “Hope Handout.” Dr. Micheal Svigel passed out an outline that

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contrasted worldly hope and biblical hope.¹² It refreshed my hope in the Lord and His work in the world. Svigel included many Scriptures, and through them I was reminded of the benefits of godly hope. These passages challenged me to direct my hope from the earthly and common toward God in Heaven again. I have renewed my remembrance of the passages many times now and have shared the passages with many others. Following Dr. Svigel's lead, I have included many passages of Scripture here in the latter part of this chapter to share with you. After you read the passages, my wish is that you come away with a renewed hope toward God.

Enlarged Vision

Paul's earthly life looked plain pitiful—from a secular standpoint. He articulates just some of his challenges in 2 Corinthians 11:25b-27:

“Three times I suffered shipwreck. A night and a day I spent adrift in the open sea. ²⁶ I have been on journeys many times, in dangers from rivers, in dangers from robbers, in dangers from my own countrymen, in dangers from Gentiles, in dangers in the city, in dangers in the wilderness, in dangers at sea, in dangers from false brothers, ²⁷ in hard work and toil, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, many times without food, in cold and without enough clothing.”

But through all of this Paul was driven by his hopeful future. Hopeful promises have been revealed to all of us through the work of the Spirit and His Scriptures. Paul explicitly taught that God has allowed us to “see” (i.e., revealed) what He has prepared for us through the ministry of the Spirit. Paul wrote about some of these future realities when he wrote 1 Corinthians 2:9-10a, “But just as it is written, ‘Things that no eye has seen, or ear heard, or mind imagined, are the things God has prepared for those who love him.’ God has revealed these to

¹² Micheal Svigel, “Hope Handout,” Dallas Theological Seminary. I have used his outline for the section headings for this chapter.

us by the Spirit.” To illustrate: a lost person could stand on the moon while listening to the most moving music they have ever heard, but they still couldn’t understand what God has prepared for those that love Him. Our future would make a trip to the moon mundane. We are headed to things that—apart from God—we would never hear, would never see, or would never contemplate. These verses should motivate the Christian to live actively in hope’s promises in tangible and assured ways.¹³ We are headed to an unimaginable future.

False Sources of Hope

Idolatry is blatant in many parts of the world. People often carve and cast their gods with their own hands only to turn back and worship the very things they created. Ancient idolatry looked this way as well. But an idol is *anything in which we place our hope*. The world’s hopes are in money, armies, politics, the stock market, assets, houses, even “lucky shirts,” as well as numerous other things. We as Christians have fallen into these *hope traps* ourselves. As we live our daily lives, we are susceptible to placing our hope and trust in the exact same things the world places their hope in. This should not be said of us; our “help comes from the LORD, the Creator of heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:2b)

Material things can become chief sources of idolatry for Christians. When we are out of step with the Spirit, we find 401ks, homes, bank accounts, careers, goods and services are easy to hope in. We can go online and see how the 401k is going. We can go and look at past returns of our choices and predict the future—we hope. We take hope in what our company thinks of us and so on.

We may choose to have things in our lives, but we must not allow the pull of

¹³ Paul did not have in mind that all these things he spoke of had been fully realized—to the contrary of some. For Paul wrote in the same letter, “For if only in this life we have hope in Christ, we should be pitied more than anyone” (1 Corinthians 15:19). Therefore, it is clear, that some have misinterpreted this passage by thinking that the unimaginable to the lost has been *fully possessed by the saved*. How does one then correlate Paul’s 1 Corinthians 15:19 to this idea? Some commentators have missed the *implied teaching* of Paul. See Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*, (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 460. Also, Thomas Constable, “1 Corinthians,” accessed Sept. 30, 2019, <https://www.planbiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/html/nt/1corinthians/1corinthians.htm>.

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their false securities to take root in our lives. It would be easy to overgeneralize here, but most Christians would admit to placing too much trust in material wealth, homes, careers, and other things at some time in our walk with the Lord. Unfortunately, with that said, some have allowed materialism to *steal their hearts away from God*. Some are so caught up in materialism that it may be difficult for them to see the theft! Paul wrote: “For the love of money is the root of all evils. Some people in reaching for it have strayed from the faith and stabbed themselves with many pains” (1 Timothy 6:10). Who wants to stab their bodies? Apparently Christians. We are supposed to instead take the wisdom from Paul to Timothy: “if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content” (1 Timothy 6:8b, ESV).

Human expectations can be an idol. Ask middle-aged people if their life turned out as they hoped. Some would say “exactly,” but many would say “no.” Life has brought us much disappointment. These disappointments cause many Christians much depression. But these frustrations, anxieties, and depression are caused by misplaced hope. We shouldn’t be surprised when life does not turn out the way we planned. We live in a fallen world; our hope is not here. God has called us to obedience through the power of love, faith, and hope and not to a “successful life” that a fallen world would define for us. For Christians, as well as the lost, placing our hope in what the world esteems will lead to absolute frustration. The Bible reads from Proverbs 11:7, “When a wicked person dies, his expectation perishes, and the hope of his strength perishes.”

Another side to human expectations is living life to satisfy earthly goals. We must work to pay our bills, but many Christians are addicted to making more and more money. Some are choosing to live every day to reach worldly, temporary goals and amassing stuff that will be left on this planet. These are the workaholics. These are folks that may prioritize their life in secular ways while just tipping their hats to the spiritual things. No one is immune from this. Watch yourself.

Methods can be an idol. This even happens in churches. The name of this idol is “my program.” When this is the case, some might hear, “We have never done it that way around here,” or “We always do it this way.” Methods change.

THE WAY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Don't idolize them.

The war horse may be an idol. The Bible reads, "Those who go down to Egypt for help are as good as dead, those who rely on war horses, and trust in Egypt's many chariots and in their many, many horsemen. But they do not rely on the Holy One of Israel and do not seek help from the Lord" (Isaiah 31:1). Whether it is in politicians or the armies they command, Christians are not to place their hope in worldly power and militaries. God gives us governments; it is the way God administers justice (cf., Romans 13:1-7), but we place our hope in Him alone.

True Source of Hope

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit are our hope. Christians know this, but how often would our lives testify against us in this matter? Many find it difficult to trust in God fully. Yet, Jesus, our Lord, led the way on how to trust. He trusted the Father to His death. Would we? When we have hope in God—no matter what we might face in life—in the end, we will not be disappointed. We then will see and realize that all outcomes, from our God of Hope are for the benefit of His people. "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28b). Therefore our hope is fully "anchored in our identity: God's truth about us, reinforced through our relationships"¹⁴ with Him.

Psalm 39:7

But now, O Lord, upon what am I relying?

You are my only hope!

Devices of Hope

God uses many events, devices, and plans to produce hope in His people.

¹⁴ Rick Franklin, Arrow Leadership Session, Compelled Conference (Denton, Texas), Sept. 25, 2019.

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Suffering produces hope. Romans 5:3-4, “Not only this, but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance, character, and character, hope.” A caution here: suffering may produce hope in God if one is walking with God, but it may produce bitterness toward God if one is not walking with Him. Pray for the former.

We become less focused on suffering and discomfort as our priorities change to what God’s are. When this happen, our discomfort begins to fade as a priority and our expectations of God change to the mature doctrines of the faith. The following diagram illustrates this truth.



Reproduced Slide, GACX Compelled Conference, Denton, TX, Sept. 25, 2019

God gave us the **Scriptures for hope**, “For everything that was written in former times was written for our instruction, so that through endurance and through encouragement of the Scriptures we may have hope” (Romans 15:4). Notice we must have “endurance” for hope to fruit. This life works against biblical hope; it looks to continually undermine it. If we endure, we will continue to hope. Don’t give up; hope must endure through trials to be hope!

The promise of **Christ’s return is a device of hope**. Paul wrote, “As we wait

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for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Peter taught that Christians should, “Therefore, get your minds ready for action by being fully sober, and set your hope completely on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Peter 1:13).

The hope of the **resurrections of our bodies** has not received the attention it used to. Some are very confused about the what, when and how of it all. *Our greatest hope* is that we will be with Jesus and we will be like Jesus. These hopes will be completely fulfilled after the resurrection of our bodies. Read 1 Corinthians 15 for a summary of this hope. Paul wrote,

Romans 8:23-25

“Not only this, but we ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with endurance.”

The Result of Hope

The results of hope are numerous:

Hope thwarts depression.

Psalm 42:5

“Why are you depressed, O my soul?

Why are you upset?

Wait for God!

For I will again give thanks to my God for his saving intervention.”

Hope focuses on God as the proper and only object.

Psalm 39:7

“But now, O Lord, upon what am I relying?

You are my only hope!”

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Hope brings us joy.

Proverbs 10:28

“The hope of the righteous is joy, but the expectation of the wicked will remain unfulfilled.”

There are two types of joy from hope: earthly fulfilled and heavenly fulfilled. The first is joy we experience even in the most challenging times on earth. This type was available to Paul and Silas after being severely beaten for sharing the gospel. (Acts 16) . The other is when our hope is fulfilled as we know it, in Heaven.

Hope produces sanctification.

1 John 3:2-3

“Dear friends, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that whenever it is revealed we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is. And everyone who has this hope focused on him purifies himself, just as Jesus is pure).”

Hope ensures boldness.

2 Corinthians 3:12

“Therefore, since we have such a hope, we behave with great boldness.”

Hope produces evangelistic answers.

1 Peter 3:15

“But set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts and always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess.”

Hope can endure persecution

Acts 23:6

“Then when Paul noticed that part of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, he shouted out in the council, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead!”

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The Bible is full of passages about where, who, and in what our hope should lie. It teaches that our future hope far outweighs even the beautiful, spiritual, earthly fulfilled hope we experience. In Heaven with God; that is where our greatest hope will be fulfilled.

Scripture Passage

Jeremiah 17:5-8

Questions

- 1) Honestly, what are you hoping in right now?
- 2) What insecurities are keeping you from placing full hope in God?

Aim Point

1) Suffering may diminish our hope at times. Taking the time to study the word “suffer” in the Bible is one of the best actions we can take to realign our thinking with God’s. So if you are going through a difficult time that includes suffering, I invite you to go to biblegateway.com and search the word “suffer.” The verses on suffering are numerous and the doctrine is rich. God does many things through suffering. Check it out.

2) Are you struggling to find hope in God? Go to biblegateway.com and search the word “hope.” Read the Scriptures, study them, reread them. Place them around your home, car, and workplace.