

Are You Looking for Some New Thing? (Part 2) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

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The Relationship Between Truth, Hope, Faith, and Certainty

Martin G. Collins

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Last time I spoke I asked, "Why are people constantly looking for something new?" We looked at the Apostle Paul's observation when he traveled to Athens, of this obsession, by the Athenians, to hear something new and his reaction to them regarding it.

We saw that the same tendencies of human nature, and uncertainty of belief, that influenced and motivated the Greeks, also influences our society today. The great humanly admired societies to which humanity has always been ready to trust eventually passed away entirely. The same influence remains because man relies on man for answers to his questions and for solutions to his problems.

What is the contrast to all this confusion and uncertainty in society? During Paul's time there was great Athens and there was the apostle Paul who they dismissed as a babler, as this society does to God's ministers today. The contrast between the Greek scholars and Paul was not one of aptitude, education or ability.

What is the difference then? It is not a matter of aptitude. The philosophers had aptitude; Paul had aptitude. Aptitude does not make a man of God. It was not formal education. Paul was taught at the feet of the very greatest intellectual minds of his day. He was just as able as any of the philosophers to discuss scholarly subjects.

They rejected God's truth, but Paul believed it. That is nothing to do with aptitude, ability or education! That is nothing to do with secular knowledge. It is something else entirely!

Acts 17:22-25 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

We see there Paul speaking on the sovereignty of God. What is the difference between

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Paul and the Athenians? The first thing we notice is Paul's 'certainty'—his 'assurance'. They spent their time either in telling or in hearing some new thing—always looking for a new theory—always ready to believe any godless theory that they thought would explain life's questions. They were uncertain, dissatisfied and discontent in their humanly reasoned answers!

The apostle Paul was standing there because he had found it—because he knew the answers. He did not go to Athens to seek and to search after truth; and he did not go there to explore new things.

Paul had found certainty in God's way of life! This certainty is seen in all of Paul's preaching. He would never have been in Athens but for his certainty. And then, from this certainty, he spoke with authority. He spoke differently than those who were in Athens because they were not speaking with authority, they were speaking to search for some new thing, the uncertain things.

The Athenians had built their temple to THE UNKNOWN GOOD. They were worshipping Him in ignorance in a spirit of fear—fear of the unknown! They were leery of this "unknown God" because they had a feeling that He could affect their lives for better or for worse—and so they built their temple to THE UNKNOWN GOOD just in case. So Paul addresses them saying, "the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you".

Today, mainstream Christians worship Christ without knowing Him. They know of Him. They know about His existence, but they do not understand His teaching—His doctrine—His truth! Paul is teaching these people for the first time—the TRUTH!—the truth about the sovereignty of God—the truth about His plan and purpose—the truth about how Christ lived and why He died. This is what Paul was preaching to those Athenians who supposedly were the experts on truth.

Acts 17:26-29 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

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Notice there "something shaped by art and man's devising". Our daughter Kristy is attending Winthrop University and majoring in Art. She is taking an art history class right now and the instructor was explaining some details about Michelangelo. She told the class that Michelangelo was a homosexual and that he had fashioned all of those images of the different people and God after his homosexual lovers. There we see the world's view and vision of Jesus Christ and the apostles, and all of those that Michelangelo had painted. Here again, we see this continuous influence and false impression of people who do not understand who this unknown God is.

Acts 17:30-32 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."

We will get into that in more detail a little later. God revealed the truth to Paul. He used Paul to reveal the truth to others. Not because Paul was a better philosopher than the others. Paul originally began to receive the truth when he was fighting against it!

He 'received it'—it was 'given' to him! A commission was given to him when he 'met' Christ on the road to Damascus, so he declared the truth to them! It is not 'reason'—it is the message that is given by God Himself.

I Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

It is not something that man can come up through his own reasoning. It is spiritually discerned with the help of God's Holy Spirit. The unconverted Gentiles preferred this system of error and delusion to the clear and uncontaminated gospel of truth, by which they could have been saved. Just as the Athenians did not welcome the truth, neither do most people of this society today because the truth is spiritually discerned.

The political races of this nation are a prime example of this lack of desire for truth. The main philosophy of these races for public offices (especially the one for President) is: tell a lie long enough and eventually it will be believed as true. That should be the banner that flies over both the Democratic and the Republican conventions. We know that the

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father of lies is Satan!

II Thessalonians 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

This is the great difference between God's church and society. Truth does not start with human beings—it starts with GOOD! God's people find pleasure in righteousness and the world finds pleasure in unrighteousness. The elect of God like overcoming sin and enjoy living virtuous lives. We like overcoming sin because it frees us from society, Satan and our own human nature. But the world, the society is totally blinded to this fact.

Today, people do not want to know and understand truth, and their minds have not been opened to it because of their enmity toward God. They do not understand themselves and why they behave as they do. They do not understand why highly sophisticated and educated 21st Century scholars, educators and leaders continue to try to destroy each other off the face of the earth either verbally or by atomic or nuclear weapons.

And in spite of all the seeking, the searching, and all the talking of the clever specialists and politically correct philosophers, they are as far away from an explanation as they have ever been. So people are turning to Scientism and Transcendental Meditation and these other New Age type of beliefs looking for the answers.

People in this society do not understand because they do not submit to GOOD as their center of reference! They do not understand the world. They cannot understand history and what has transpired and so they are doomed to repeat history and they are doomed to repeat living the lies that have been affecting man since Adam and Eve.

There is organization and purpose in the creation of the world because the great eternal God made the world and everything in it. The biblical message is that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and God made man in His own image and likeness for the specific purpose of creating, developing, shaping and molding potential future children for His kingdom!

Paul explained that though the Athenians lived and moved and had their being thanks to

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God's creation—they did not know Him. They should have looked to God for answers, but instead of doing that they became fools. They looked to stone, gold, silver and wood.

A survey of the facts of history easily shows the exact opposite of what is taught in society on the foundation of the great deception of evolution. Society wants people to believe that the world is getting better—human beings are smarter and much improved over what they had been in past ages.

But the factual statistics and true science show a degeneration of human beings today in all areas of life—mentally, physically and spiritually. We are dropping below the degeneration level of society in Greece at the time of the apostle Paul. This is the end of the age and all the sins of mankind have been building up to this point and the effects that it has had on this earth and on human beings.

This society is as it is because of the rebellion of humanity against God! And it began to happen with Adam and Eve. And so we see a repetition of the same sins, the same excuses, the same foolishness, the same poor diets, the same diseases, the same false beliefs, and the same renamed false gods. This is why, according to King Solomon, there is nothing new under the sun. Man does not have originality of thought; he has human reasoning that is very heavily influenced by Satan and his goal for mankind which is the ultimate destruction and genocide of humanity.

But, God did not abandon the world, as Paul explained in Acts 17:26. He very clearly stated that God is still in control of the world.

Acts 17:26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

That does not sound like a God that has left man totally to his own devising. There is control there. The history of mankind is one of man going his own way, always contrary to God; only submitting to His will when forced to. The Old Testament is a chronicle of the rise and fall of nations—of societies that refused to submit to God. That is the legacy of man's history.

God's purpose and plan is the only hope for the world. There is NO other! All that man has tried to build is coming to nothing and his human reasoning is failing him. But the message of the Bible gives truth, hope, faith and certainty.

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God's plan is organized and so He has put a limit on the evil that people can commit. Job speaks of life's woes and how God limits the length of a man's days as well as his efforts.

Job 13:27 ...you put my feet in the stocks, And watch closely all my paths.
You set a limit for the soles of my feet.

Job 14:5 Since his days are determined, The number of his months is with
You; You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass.

It is God who orders life and who taught man to keep order. Adam was told to tend and keep the Garden of Eden because God wants order. If He did not, the whole world would have deteriorated into chaos. That is why there must be government and order.

Mankind did not have a bright idea and think of having judges and courts. God taught man to do this and man perverted it into such things as Communism, Socialism, Fascism, and Democracy. Yes, I do say Democracy because it is a perversion of God's government and it puts the power in the hands of the people rather than in God's Ten Commandments, His principles, statutes and His Laws.

Morality is left up to perverse leaders rather than the ministers of God, under Jesus Christ, as Head of the church. Paul says God has been guiding throughout man's history and allowing humanity a certain amount of flexibility and freedom. Human beings are God-given freewill agents. Man can only do what God allows Him to do, because God is in total control. That is the sovereignty of God and more.

Paul stressed to the Athenians that human beings are responsible before God—that our actions will be judged! God said, in Psalm 50:23, "...to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God." God does want order in our lives. He rewards those who do. But, the opposite also holds true. Ezekiel 18:20 is very clear that, "The soul who sins shall die."

Look at the great ancient civilizations that were once in the Middle East, in the Far East, and in Europe more recently. They have all gone and it is all because God is over all! Paul tells the Athenians, "I tell you the truth! There is to be a final judgment!"

Acts 17:30-31 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has

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ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

Even in the Greeks' collapsing society it was not the end—another one would rise and fall, but beyond it the whole world is moving in the direction of this Final Judgment!

We believe that there is judgment looming on the horizon. It could be within several months or it could be within several years, we just do not know. We do know that it is close because we can see the signs in society. We know that there is something beyond the mere failure of politicians and the men who are trying to control our lives. There is to be a great judgment of all of the nations and of every individual one of us! We will all stand before God!

In Acts 17, Paul was preaching to philosophers, stoics and epicureans, he was not preaching in a small meeting to people regarded as babblers. He was addressing the greatest intellects of the ancient world and he preached the 'judgment' of God to them. Very probably this will be a similar message to what the two witnesses will be preaching to the world very shortly.

We know that presidents and prime ministers, kings, and princes, politicians and all others are going to stand before God and give an account of the conduct of their lives, whether good or bad. It is an absolute certainty! Paul had this certainty, but those Athenians did not.

Paul says that we have a certainty, we have an assurance about this, because there is One who has been raised from the dead! Paul preached this positive message of hope. When the Athenians first heard him they said, "Let us find out about this new thing—this new teaching."

Acts 17:20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean."

Why did they say this? Because he preached to them about Jesus and the resurrection. In Him we live and move and have our being. That was Paul's message of hope! What does this message do for the world? It gives truth, hope, faith and certainty! Something that we already have being in God's church.

Webster's Dictionary defines "hope" this way:

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"Hope is a desire accompanied by the expectation or belief that it will be fulfilled. To hope means to look forward to with confidence of fulfillment, to expect with desire."

This defines the word "hope", but does not explain what true hope is. We know that human beings can have hope in the world and we can have hope in the church, but they must be two different things. One has a certainty to it and the other one does not. In everyday conversation, people often say hope when they mean wish. When we say, "Let us hope it all works out for the best," it sometimes means we are afraid it will not.

When we are given the opportunity to know God's truth, but we fail to act on this hope, we become like the individual described in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:25, who refused to produce with the one talent given to him. In an attempt to justify his failure, he replied, "I was afraid." He had no vision for the future. He had no hope!

It has been said that as human beings, "We hope vaguely, but dread precisely." It seems we put more effort into dreading than hoping, because so many of us in this society suffer from anxiety and many times depression or discouragement.

Though we realize that God's kingdom will be set up on earth and we desire to be part of it, still there are times when we worry about it with fear and self-doubt. These hopeless attitudes come from Satan who knows God's kingdom is coming and he has no hope and he wants us to share in that hopelessness that he feels.

What is true hope? Speaking generically of hope, a man named O.S. Marden observed that, "The hopeful man sees success where others see failure, sunshine where others see shadows and storm." Hope puts us in a positive state of mind.

In our own observation of hopeful people we can say that they are optimistic. They look at the good that will eventually come from the object of their desire.

But, even an optimistic attitude is not enough. True Godly hope is confident, powerful, and bold. It is not afraid and actually casts out fear and doubt. It is positively and assuredly looking ahead to the future. True hope sees God's plan at work, and sees He and His son Jesus Christ at the center of it all.

The essential quality of hope is that it is oriented to something in the future that one expects, but does not yet have. Paul goes so far as to say, we were saved in this hope.

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Romans 8:24-25 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

But, in order for us to hope for that thing in the future that we desire, it has to have a positive effect on our lives. We have to have the certainty that it will happen otherwise why should we have the perseverance to pursue it?

Moffatt translates this phrase in verse 24, "For we were saved in this hope" as, "We were saved with this hope ahead."

We have hope that is ahead, because of anticipation of our resurrection into the Kingdom of God. Meanwhile we are steadfast and persistent through our trials, in this hope. Hope sustains us in the midst of trials and enables us to bear them without complaining. The world hopes for things, and complains all of the way, because they do not have the patience to wait for that hope. The hope that they have they think is fleeting and will not be there, is not eternal.

Moffatt renders this phrase, "but hope that is seen is not hope" as, "Now when an object of hope is seen, there is no further need to hope."

Hope is a complex emotion, made up of an earnest desire, and an expectation of obtaining something. It refers to something anticipated in the future, as yet unseen. But, when the object is seen, or actually in our possession, it is no longer an object of hope. I repeat this, so that we can understand very easily what hope is, and what hope is not.

For example: We may hope that we get a job, but once we get the job we no longer have the need to hope and we would be silly to continue to.

Paul says here in verse 25, "if we hope for what we do not see, then we eagerly wait for it with perseverance." Conybeare, author of "The Life and Epistles of Paul" puts it this way:

"But if we hope for things not seen, we steadfastly endure the present, and long earnestly for the future."

This Godly hope gives us not just a hope of a desire, but it gives us a hope based on fact. That fact is, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our hope for resurrection is based on

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fact, because it already has come true for one individual.

If verse 25 is read with God's promise of eternal life as the emphasis, then "patiently" is appropriate, but if our future hardships and sufferings are the emphasis, then "endurance" is appropriate.

The context of this section of scripture emphasizes suffering and future glory, therefore, the intended meaning seems to be, "we wait with patient endurance," which means we "persevere."

Hope is not watered down faith! Faith is the perceiving, and hope the anticipation.

Hebrews 11:1-3 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

By "understand" the author, probably Paul, means we receive and comprehend the idea. Our knowledge of this fact results only from faith and the revelation of Jesus Christ, and not from our own reasoning.

The first case of the power of faith that the apostle refers to, is the faith that enables us to believe God's inspired written Word about the creation of the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them.

The author probably chose this example first because it is the first thing that happens in the Bible that is related to the exercise of faith.

He does not point to any specific situation where it was necessary to exercise this faith, but he refers to it as an illustration of the character of faith that every one may be able to see in himself.

The faith that is exercised in this situation is confidence in the truth of the statement by God about the creation. Our knowledge and understanding about creation is a matter of faith in God's own statement. We have to believe God, because God tells us nothing but the truth—He does not lie. If that is not the basis for our faith, then our faith is just the secular worldly faith.

This knowledge and understanding about creation is not something that we can

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humanly reason out; it is not that secular history has records back 6,000 years; it is primarily that God has told us the truth in His Word.

There may be no greater exercise of faith than to have confidence and assurance that God, the author of Creation, has told us the truth that this vast universe has been brought into existence by a word! The Word, Jesus Christ, through whom God created all things, spoke and it was so! God the Father is the author of creation, and Jesus Christ, as the instrument through which God the Father created things.

The Athenian Greeks, to whom Paul witnessed, were looking to visible and tangible idols as creators of the material things they saw around them. But, Paul pointed them toward the invisible God—UNKNOWN to them—who made things that are visible.

Faith and hope, though distinct, are vitally united. They come from the same source, are sustained by the same evidence, and are exercised by the same works.

In Titus 1:2 and 3:7 Paul speaks of the "hope of eternal life."

We have a strong desire and hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ. But, man has a false hope that he can solve his own problems without God, and extend his own life through medical means such as drugs and cloning for spare body parts. Man's hope is misdirected, therefore, it is not satisfying hope. It is a hope without substance.

- Faith is the perceiving; hope the anticipation.
- Faith comes by hearing; hope comes by experience.
- Faith has respect to the truth of the Word; hope has respect to the truth's fulfillment.

So we see this direct relationship between truth, hope and faith.

A hope that is not realistically founded on truth will have its expectation cut off; and then the result will be humiliation and confusion. But, our hope is different. It is founded on the goodness and truth of God. Our experience in living God's way of life shows us that our faith has lead us to the right kind of hope.

Romans 5:1-3 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that

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tribulation produces perseverance;

Remember Romans 8:5, which we read just a few minutes ago, says "if we hope for what we do not see then we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."

Romans 5:4-5 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Disciples of mainstream Christianity hope that they will go to heaven. But, this hope is fruitless because it is not based on truth and has not been imparted through the Holy Spirit. So, there is no Godly hope. It is only superficial hope, based on false teachings. Real hope cannot be based on a lie, it must be based on truth!

People who have not accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins are living the lie perpetrated by Satan. Paul says that anyone without the blood of Christ to cover his sins at repentance has no hope.

Ephesians 2:12-13 ...that at that time you 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 you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

This was not to say that they did not value any hope, since almost all human beings want some kind of hope, but that they were without any appropriate foundation of hope. Most people value some hope of future happiness. But, the foundation on which they attempt to place their hope is not understood by themselves, because it must be revealed by God.

They do not even know where, or how, to search for real hope. Some rely on their own morality, some on false religious beliefs, and some on the accumulation of wealth. There are many physical sources of hope. Everyone in society thinks they do not *deserve* death, and so they hope they will not receive it. Hopes such as these have no basis in truth. So my emphasis here has been how important truth is to the aspect of real godly hope.

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Biblical hope is something far greater than the superficial hope of the world, because it is "stored up for you in heaven." Paul made the connection between truth, hope, faith and love when he praised the Colossians for their faith and love. We see here in Colossians Paul's praise of these Colossian Christians

Colossians 1:3-5 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,

Paul is telling the Colossians that he gives thanks that there is such a hope laid up for them. He saw evidence that this hope was theirs, because of their obvious faith in Christ and love for all the saints that he had heard they had demonstrated, and in visiting them he could see for himself.

He believed that because of their faith and love, which came founded on the truth of God, they had stored up God's promise of eternal life.

Hope is something that is set before us as an encouragement. In I Timothy 1:1, Paul refers to Jesus Christ as "our hope." He is called our hope in a similar way to how He is called our life, our peace, and our righteousness. From Jesus Christ hope, life, peace, righteousness, and all our other blessings come.

Here, in Colossians 1, Paul calls Christ "the hope of glory." This was the great truth that so energized the heart and fired the zeal of the apostle Paul.

He proclaimed Christ as being in us; because the intent of the Gospel is to put us in possession of the Spirit and power of Christ, to make us partakers of the divine nature, and in this way prepare us for an eternal union with Christ. He is in us to enlighten, purify, and refine us. And, He cannot do this without dwelling in us.

Colossians 1:26-28 ...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

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Paul preached this present and indwelling Christ as the hope of glory because no one could rationally hope for glory who had not had his sins forgiven, and whose nature was not being purified. And no one could have forgiveness but through the blood of Christ; and no one could have glorification except through the indwelling, sanctifying Spirit of Christ.

God confirmed the unchanging nature of His purpose and promise with an oath so that we who have fled the influences of society may take hold of the hope offered to us and be greatly encouraged by it.

Hebrews 6:17-20 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, (*that is another reason our hope is assured*) we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Adam Clarke's Commentary describes the imagery of this "hope we have as an anchor of the soul" in this way:

"The apostle here changes the allusion; he represents the state of the followers of God in this lower world as resembling that of a vessel striving to perform her voyage through a troublesome, tempestuous, dangerous sea. At last she gets near the port; but the tempest continues, the water is shallow, broken, and dangerous, and she cannot get in: in order to prevent her being driven to sea again she heaves out her sheet anchor, which she has been able to get within the pier head by means of her boat, though she could not herself get in; then, swinging at the length of her cable, she rides out the storm in confidence, knowing that her anchor is sound, the ground good in which it is fastened, and the cable strong. Though agitated, she is safe; though buffeted by wind and tide, she does not drive; by and by the storm ceases, the tide flows in, her sailors take to the capstan, wear the ship against the anchor, which still keeps its bite or hold, and she gets safely into port.

The hope of eternal life is here represented as the soul's anchor; the world is the boisterous, dangerous sea; the Christian course, the voyage; the port, everlasting felicity; and the veil or inner road, the royal dock in which that anchor was cast. The

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storms of life continue but a short time; the anchor, hope, if fixed by faith in the eternal world, will infallibly prevent all shipwreck; the soul may be strongly tossed by various temptations, but will not drive, because the anchor is in sure ground, and itself is steadfast; it does not drag, and it does not break; faith, like the cable, is the connecting medium between the ship and the anchor,"

There he gives this one element of how hope works using a physical example. We can see in this imagery how important it is to have our hope, our anchor, connected to the right, good, permanent, everlasting Christ.

The apostle John describes what knowing the glory of our future should do in giving us hope and inspiring us to overcome. John briefly mentions a relationship between hope and purifying one self.

I John 3:2-3 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

With the strength of this hope of being like Jesus Christ, we are motivated to make the effort to resist sin. We make the necessary effort to overcome our spiritual problems to make ourselves pure. In order to successfully accomplish this we must have the help of the Holy Spirit. We must be in the right attitude and we must have Jesus Christ in us.

The hope of being like Christ, and of being permitted to dwell with him, leads us to intense efforts to become holy, this in turn will produce the desired result, the hope that we look to.

The tendency of this hope is to make us holy, though we are imperfect now; the effect will be to make us "perfectly" holy in the future Kingdom of God. Those who have this hope in them aspire to the same purity, and will ultimately obtain it. But the apostle does not say that the perfection is attained in this life.

True hope fills us with zeal and purpose. It makes us feel alive with spiritual energy. It drives us to keep overcoming and growing no matter what negative factors and influences are at work to discourage and frustrate our progress toward God's kingdom.

To live in sin, disobedient to God's commands is the same as abandoning any hope in Him. If we have our hope in being like Jesus Christ we will also be committed to keeping

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ourselves from sin. Our aim is to be like Him in purity and righteousness. He has been the righteous standard.

True hope means looking forward confidently with faith to the fulfillment of God's glorious plan for all mankind. This hope is received through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:5 For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

This is the difference between the world's hope and ours. We are not waiting for salvation as if it is delayed, but we are waiting for salvation with expectation. The world hopes for things as if it is being delayed and prevented from them getting it. We have that hope in that we are waiting for salvation with expectation, with assurance, we know that it is going to happen. We have no other hope of salvation than by faith in Jesus Christ. We do not earn salvation by our own works or by conformity to the Law. But, we have no hope of being considered for salvation, unless we meet at least the minimum requirements of the spirit of the law. Paul's desire is to show us the true nature of the true hope of eternal life.

Hope serves to purify us in righteousness. It is the pure in heart who will see God!

We know that the only hope for the world is Jesus Christ! Or, for any of us for that matter!

This is what the apostle Paul was expressing to those Athenians who represented the best intellects of society at that time. Paul was not a babbler. And he spoke with authority because he had that assurance!

Paul spoke the truth in faith; he had hope and that hope purified him. It gave him the confidence and assurance he needed to be a true witness of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

It was God Himself who sent His own Son into the world. But we took Him; we condemned Him; we crucified Him; He died; they buried His body in a grave; they rolled a stone over it and sealed it up and put soldiers to guard it; God raised Him from the dead! This was part of God's purpose and plan; and it served to provide hope to an uncertain, dissatisfied world.

Acts 17:31 ...because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the

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world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

Those are the words that Paul spoke to those Athenians. Paul would never have been in Athens, but for the fact that Christ rose from the dead! There would be no church of God, but for this fact! This is where we see that certainty differs so essentially from society, from mainstream Christianity.

In effect, Paul said to the Athenians, "You think that what you need is to hear something new. THAT is not your need! What you need is to be 'made' new. Not some thing. Not some new idea. Not some fad. Not some new idol. You need to be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Then you will not be looking for something 'new' all the time. You will have 'gotten it'. You will be related to God. You will know how to live and you will know how to die and you will know how to face eternity!"

That was the message Paul had been preaching everywhere. Paul reminds us about the kind of life the Ephesians once lived and the need for a clean break with the past. They were Gentiles and they had lived the life of the Gentiles. We receive warning from this not to fall back into the old self-indulgent habits we initially brought with us from society. This is what Paul is warning the Ephesians here as he is warning us.

Ephesians 4:17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

Expositor's Bible Commentary suggests that the Greek word from which the English word "futility" comes is sometimes associated with idolatry, but the primary reference here is to "good-for-nothing notions" underlying irresponsible behavior. That sounds like a definition of "society" today: "good-for-nothing notions underlying irresponsible behavior."

Ephesians 4:18 ...having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

Society is in such deep-seated ignorance and people are in a mental fog that keeps them in the dark constantly on spiritual issues, even on how to rightly live life. This condition is due to the fact that they are cut off from God because of their sin.

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This depraved state of being could be reversed, and even removed, if they accepted the truth of God, repented and accepted the blood of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. But, they harden their hearts against the truth, so that they could not recognize it if it rose up and bit them in the face.

Ephesians 4:19 ...who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

People in society have lost all sensitivity and no longer respond to moral incentive. We see this on television we see it with the gay movement in the news, and even flagrantly in our face in the cities and towns even in mainstream Christianity. Their consciences are so atrophied that sin causes no pierce of pain. This mindset of self-abandonment leads to all sorts of smutty cavorting. That is really the banner of this society today.

Ephesians 4:20-21 But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

First they heard the truth of Christ spoken by Paul; then they accepted Christ. Then as disciples remaining in Him, they received further instruction. This is the process that we have all been through.

Ephesians 4:22-23 ...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

This renewal can only take place under the power of the Holy Spirit acting on the human spirit as it affects the thought process of our minds. We must be called by God and we must have the attitude of submission to Him.

Ephesians 4:24 ...and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

The new self is not the former nature refurbished, but a totally new creation. Paul writes in Colossians 3:10 that the new self is presented as being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Or, in other words, it means "to be like God." That is what this new man is, this new man is a totally new creation in the image of God, not the physical

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image of God, but spiritually.

The general characteristics of godliness are righteousness and holiness. These are qualities in God that are produced in God's spiritual children: His love of right and His repugnance of sin. Righteousness often stands for the uprightness of those who are made right with God.

The Greek word for the English word "holiness" in verse 24 is not the usual word for holiness found elsewhere. In fact, this word here is only used in one other place. This Greek word that is translated into the English word holiness means "free from contamination."

When we come out of the world, when we stop trusting society, we begin to become free from the contamination of sin. We begin to become free of this society and its influence.

Here is a very practical question for us! In **what**, do we trust? We are trusting in one or the other! Do we trust man and his reason, his philosophy, his sociology and his education? If we are, then we are going to end up in the same situation as Greece and Rome and many other great dynasties and every individual who has trusted in them. It will all eventually come to nothing!

OR...

Are we trusting the true message that God is over all, and that in spite of our foolishness, He has sent His own Son to deliver us, to give us a new life?—To renew the spirit of our mind? Some mocked Paul over this very message.

Acts 17:32-34 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter." So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Just as the Athenians had a choice, so does this society today. But it is not interested in the truth! It has no faith that Jesus was raised from the dead even though there were eye witnesses and history records it in various areas.

Are you looking for some new thing? Jesus Christ's second coming will be "a new

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thing." It will be something new and wonderful and full of hope that will bring certainty to humanity. Nothing like it has ever happened before. But, we have the assurance that it will, because Christ has already risen from the dead. We have that assurance from God the Father that He created all things and that He is sovereign.

I Thessalonians 4:16-18 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Paul commands that we encourage one another with this hope. We already have the certainty that comes from having this true hope—the assurance God has given us by raising Jesus Christ from the dead. Paul's words to the Thessalonians are a fitting end to this sermon.

I Thessalonians 1:2-4 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.

We have that guarantee, we have that certainty, and we have that assurance. So, we have nothing but encouragement to look to and a wonderful future, with no discouragement and no depression and no dissatisfaction.