

Hope

Romans 15:13: "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Hebrews 10:23: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful."

Let's pray:

Father, we do look to You today. We look to You for Your opening the Word to us and speaking to us. Lord, anything we do today is no good unless You are not speaking, unless You are not working. So we come and beseech You and ask that You would speak to us from Your Word that we would know what is on Your heart and what is in Your mind, and You could tell us the things that You want us to know. Lord, we are looking to You. Our eyes are upturned, our hands are empty. We come to You and we ask for You to fill us. We give this time to You and Your Holy Spirit to open the Word to us. We pray that Your Word would come pure, unadulterated, straight from the throne. And we ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I guess you can tell from the verses I read that the subject I would like to approach is hope. I noticed that a number of people in their prayers this morning mentioned hope. I really do not want to say that I am going to tell you what hope is, but I am, at least in seed anyway. The Greek word in these verses is "elpis". That means it is a favorable and confident expectation. It is not a wishful thinking; it is a favorable and confident expectation. It is not myopic which means near-sighted. We do not usually hope for something that is near or going to happen. It has to do with the future and what at the moment is unseen. It is kind of like when February comes around, it is the beginning of spring training for baseball, and every team comes with the idea that they are going to win the pennant. In other words, they are looking forward; their hope is forward; they have that confident expectation. But that confident expectation is from themselves. They are thinking, "Yeah, we are going to do it; we are going to have a good year."

But a Christian's hope is given to us by God, and this is what I want to bring before us today. It is an expectation that God gives me concerning His plan and His purpose for my life. It gives purpose to my life. It gives me a higher perspective to why He saved me. Our hope is something given by God to us. It is not something that we just dreamed up on our own. I want to be this; I want this to happen. No, it is given to us by God. That is why when we read in Genesis about Jacob's dream of the ladder stretching from earth to heaven, that was given to him by God for a purpose that he would have a hope.

When Joseph had those dreams of his brothers bowing down to him or his mother and father bowing down to him, that was given to him from God so that he might have a hope and endure into the purpose that God had called him for.

It is the same way for us. This hope that God gives us is for us. He gives it to us for a purpose, which enhances our perspective of why He has called us, of why He has saved us. God gives it to me, but it is my hope. He gives it, but it is mine. It is something that I possess in my very spirit and soul. I take possession of it; it is mine. I see it from where I am now, and that is an important

thing because when Jacob had his dream, he was not in a good place. He was fleeing from his brother, Esau. It just seems like things were not good, and yet God gave him a hope. It did not matter what was going on in Jacob's life, but that was an opportunity for God to say, "Look, I am stepping into your life, and I am giving you this."

For Joseph it was just the opposite. Everything was hunky-dory for him, and God gave him that hope, which was then tried. It was put before him, and he was tried. In other words, I see that hope from where I am now. It does not matter what my circumstances are, it does not matter what lack I have, it does not matter what blessings I am experiencing now. Neither our circumstances nor ourselves matter because it is God who gives it. Isn't it wonderful that God first reaches out to us while we are yet sinners!? That is a great thing and gives us a hope.

So hope does not depend on who we are, on what we have, on where we are or even on what we know. It is a gift from the Sovereign God, and He calls us into the hope that He has given us, and that is basically what hope is. That is the definition I am going to give you for hope, and I am sure you might have others.

The Hope of a Christian

Now this is really the crux of the matter. So what is the hope of a Christian? A Christian has a hope that people in the world do not have. The hope that people have in the world is like spring training. "Yeah, I have a hope that we are going to win the pennant." It is drummed up from within our own hearts. "I am going to be the champion of the world." However, we as Christians have a hope.

Where do we look to find our hope? Let's state the obvious. Where do we look for hope? Jesus! As Christians the pat answer for every Sunday School question, every Sunday School lesson is Jesus. I am not making fun of it because it is true. We look to Christ; after all, He is our hope, and that is true. But let's consider the hope of Jesus Christ because He had hope. When He came down in the form of Man and *laid aside all of His deity, God gave Him a hope. He then becomes the sign of what our hope is. John gives us signs in his Gospel that tell about who Jesus is. Well, He gives us signs of what hope is in His own being, in His own life, and in His followers. It is in Him that I see hope, and when I see what His hope is, then I realize it is my hope as well.

I want to consider two things in the life of Jesus Christ of the hope that was given to Him by God. And the two things that I want to bring up, and I am not saying these are the only two things. I am just saying as I was thinking and praying about these things that these are the things that came to me.

Number one: Jesus had the hope of His resurrection. That was one hope He had throughout His life as we read in the Bible. Then we look at John chapter 17 and His prayer

* This is the interpretation of the brother who gave the message which is not always agreed on by others.

which people call “the high priestly prayer.” He had the hope of bringing not only His disciples but all who would believe afterward of bringing them into glory that they may have a place with Him. That is what He prayed to the Father—“that they may share My glory. Let’s look at these two things. Jesus, as a Man, had a hope for the resurrection. In the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the resurrection is mentioned specifically eleven times—three in Matthew, two in Mark, two in John, and three in Luke. He specifically said to His disciples: “The Son Man will be given up to the Gentiles, and they are going to crucify Him, but on the third day He will rise again.” Eleven times that is recorded in the Gospels.

Then there is another three or four times where it is recorded: “I will give you no sign but the sign of Jonah who was three days in the belly of the whale, the Son of Man will be three days in the belly of the earth” (see Matthew 12:39-40). He had that in His conscious as a Man, and that is the thing about hope. Hope is in our conscious, so we are conscious of the hope that God has given us. That is why a lot of times when we are going through a hard time, how often we cling to that hope! We go back to that hope and lay hold of it to see us through, to bring us through to the place where God wants to bring us.

Then He made that wonderful statement in John 11:25a: “I am the resurrection.” So we see in Jesus that He had the hope of the resurrection. He lived His life in the light of that hope. Hope gives us a light by which to live by, that we can go through things that without this hope we would fold. So He lived His life in the light of this hope.

How was this hope manifested? How could you see this hope in Him? Just a couple of things. You know when you look at the Gospels, and brothers and sisters, it is always good to read the Gospels. The epistles are good, but it is in the Gospels that we see the Lord Jesus as that Man. That really gives us encouragement because He became like us. He did not fear men. How is that the hope of the resurrection? He did not fear what men would do to Him, could do to Him, wanted to do to Him—even if it was good. For example, in John chapter 6, they wanted to make Him King. They wanted to take Him by force and make Him King, and He was not going to bow to that. He was not going to bow to their wishes because He had this hope of resurrection. He did not bow for acceptance to men. For example, when the Pharisees wanted Him to tow the line of the traditions of men, of the traditions of the elders, He was not afraid of them. He was not afraid of what they could do to Him. He was not afraid of what men thought of Him because He had this hope. He did not fear the power of the Roman government which was *the* power in that part of the world at that time. But He did not fear its power to crucify Him. He did not fear its power to release Him and give Him clemency. Instead, He stood as one who was of another kingdom, who was not of this world, was not of the kingdoms of these worlds. He did not fear death. Isn’t that a wonderful thing?

For us we often think of getting a disease that might kill us, and we will not finish our life the way we would like to. He had no fear of that. He was in His thirty’s when He was crucified. If we were facing death in our thirty’s, we would probably be very fearful. He did not fear death, and He did not fear death on the cross. In other words, He did not fear so much that He would die the death of a sinner, not just that He died, but He would die the death of a sinner, an ignoble death. It was the kind of death that when people looked at Him would say, “He is cursed of God.” As a matter of fact, I think it was one of the reasons why Paul had trouble believing Jesus was the

Christ because He hung on the cross, and it says that those who hang on a cross are cursed (see Deuteronomy 21:23). They did not realize that Jesus became the curse for us. So He did not fear even the death on the cross because He could commit Himself to God who would raise Him from the dead—and He did. This was His hope.

How does this hope of resurrection transfer to me? What does that mean to me? Jesus is already raised from the dead, what does this mean for me? What does that mean to all Christians? Why this hope of resurrection? The resurrection puts us on an eternal plane. It puts us in eternity, and this is an important thing because what that means to us is that this world has not the final say in our lives. When they crucified Jesus, they said, “It’s done! It’s over!” But it was not over because He was raised from the dead. So this is not the final say in our lives. We see things now through the lens of eternity, and history shows us how transient this world is.

Let’s take first the big things. Look at all of the greatest empires in the world: the Han Dynasty in China, 400 years, one of the greatest dynasties in China. It only lasted 400 years. The Gopala Dynasty was in India a few hundred years. Egypt, Greece, Rome, Persia, the British Empire, and should I say, the United States? How long is the shelf life of an empire. It is not eternal. They go and they come.

Let us bring it down to our own ideas. There are the fads of fashion; how long do they last? Remember the bell bottoms? They lasted a long time, didn’t they? Then there was the long hair for guys. So as we look at fashions, we see how they change. There are trends in literature, in philosophy, in politics, and they are all transient. But since we see life through the lens of eternity, it changes our whole perspective on what life is all about and what things are lasting.

When we go through struggles, even suffering, severe trials, persecution, because we see through lens of eternity, these things can be counted as momentary light afflictions because we have a different perspective. We might be undone to the place where we give ourselves up to God again, but we are not wholly undone. We are cast down but not done in.

What is death in the light of eternity? Without eternity in view, it is final separation from life and all that life is thought to be by those without God. It is that final separation. No wonder it is feared. To be finally cut off with no hope, no hope of anything beyond. That was the thing that the Lord used to drive me to seek for eternity. Just the idea that there was nothing beyond. That was so disheartening which is not a good word. But to a martyr, to one who assuredly knows that he is in Christ, when he faces death, he has no fear of men. He has no fear of governments. He has no fear of death. One of the books my wife got me was “Christian History in a Year.” It was the stories of all different people, and a lot of these stories were about martyrs, and a lot of them were from Scotland. We do not think of the English martyring people for their faith. We think of cutting off their heads for politics but not for faith. There were thousands who died in England over their faith. And the thing that struck me about this is that in every one of them there was no fear at all whether they were going to be burned at the stake or whether they were going to be hanged, whatever it was, they had no fear. As a matter of fact, a lot of these guys went with encouragement to their families, to encourage them to go on in the race, to hold fast to the faith as they went to die. But you never saw in any of them any fear of dying because they were all

saying, “I am going to be with the Lord.” That was so real to them; that was their hope and soon to be their reality.

So when you think of this whole idea about resurrection, we have no fear of men, of government, even of death. As a matter of fact, death has lost its sting because we do not fear it in that way anymore. I am not saying we may not tremble at it, but we do not think about it. I know great saints who on their sick beds were dying, and they might have trembling moments, but there was that hope of resurrection, and there was no fear of death. How free we are! How free we are to practice Christ, to walk with Christ in the world! How free we are because we have no fear! That is what the hope of the resurrection is all about; we have no fear. I do not fear men. I do not care if someone berates me for giving out a track. Brother David Yao was sharing with us that they were going to arrest him for giving out tracks in Florida. He thought about that twice, you know. But you come to the place of saying, “Even if that happens, I am with it because I am doing what God would have me do.” And in that there is no fear.

The Hope of Glory for His Followers

The second hope is the hope of glory for His followers. Jesus had this hope in Himself.

In Ephesians 1:18 Paul prays for the believers there, and his first request is that their eyes would be opened to see the hope of their calling. What is the hope of His calling? Where is this calling leading us. What is the goal of this calling?

John Bunyan was in prison for preaching in England in 1600. He wrote a book called “Pilgrim’s Progress” while he was in prison, and it begins with a fellow named Christian. He entered through the wicked gate because he was fleeing from the city of Destruction. And the character called Evangelist pointed him to the wicked gate and said, “Flee and go through the Wicked Gate.” Evangelist pointed to the gate, but getting inside of the gate was not the end of the story. Really, getting inside of the gate was the beginning. His goal was to reach the Celestial City, the heavenly city, which is our end as well.

Hebrews 12:22: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, (the Celestial City) and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood which speaks better than the blood of Abel.”

Romans 8:29-30: “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren, and whom He predestined, these He also called, whom He called, these He also justified, and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

We get the idea of being predestined is that we are called. We revel in the thought of being justified, but how many of us dwell on being glorified? That’s like a million miles from me; I do not know about you. It is not a glory of our own or being glorified in Christ. This is the whole idea. This is hope for His followers; it is the hope of glory. When we think about this, Jesus had the hope of glory. That hope was realized on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was glorified before

His three disciples, and He could have walked right into heaven glorified, and He could have left. Because He had the testimony that He was pleasing to God, a Man pleasing to God, but He refused to do that. Was He out of His mind? He refused to go into that glory alone because God the Father gave Him the hope that doing His Father's will He might lead many sons into glory with Him. That was His hope of bringing many sons to glory. That was His prayer in John 17 that they may be with Me where I am." That is what He wanted.

What is glory? It is one of those words that the Bible commentators and theologians do not have a grip on. So I went to an English dictionary, and here are some of the definitions the dictionary gave as glory. Honor, majesty, splendor, exaltation, adulation, distinction, and I want to hold it on that word distinction. I think some of us think of glory as Jesus being transfigured, clothes getting really bright, or for us maybe we have a halo and that is glory. But take this word "distinction," and the root word is distinct. What does distinct mean? It means one who stands out from or above others because of who they are or what they have done. With that in mind as one who stands out from others, the God of glory appeared to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees. In a city full of gods and idols, a God distinct from all others appeared to Abraham. How was He distinct from all others? He was alive! He spoke. He was a God distinct from all others.

Romans 8:19-23 tells us that all creation is waiting for, looking for the revealing of the sons of God. How will we recognize them? They will be distinct from all other men. What will they look like? The spirits of just men made perfect. The spirits that live within men, not the flesh but the Spirit who is ruling within them. That spirit that was born again by God is made perfect. What does that mean? Spirits of men, not just alive but awake to God, alert, vibrant, intuitive to the will of God, willing and eager to do His will, presenting themselves fully and giving themselves fully to God as instruments of His good pleasure and purpose. One commentator put it this way: "All creation will recognize their real substance." The spirits of just men made perfect is the real substance. This is it. The weight will register. This is just one facet of glory meant for us that is in Christ. But is that not what we see in the Lord Jesus Christ when He walked on earth, the spirit of a just Man made perfect, alive to God, vibrant, intuitive to His will, ready, willing, eager to do His Father's will? Isn't this what we see in the Lord Jesus?

In Pilgrim's Progress there is a character called "the muck raker." Now when I got Pilgrim's Progress which was an illustrated copy in old English; it was like reading King James, which made it more endearing to me. But they were illustrations done in the 1800's and they were glorious. Some of them were even in color. But the muck raker was an older guy like me, who had a rake, and he was raking muck. Muck is just junk, muddy, straw, and all he is doing is raking muck, and right behind him there is an angelic being like Christ, and Christ was holding a crown. The muck raker never lifted his head so he never saw the crown. He was so busy raking the muck that all of his attention was focused on the muck, and he never saw the crown that was being offered him. Bunyan said something to the fact that here this crown was being offered, but he just did not see it because he was content to rake the muck. When I think about that, the question I asked myself is, "Do I see the crown?" That is why I said that when we talk about glory, we do not phantom glory, we do not even look to it. I know for myself that I am too busy trying to clean myself up, and I do not see fully what God has called me to because I am trying to clean myself up. If I saw what He is doing I would forget trying to clean myself up because I would realize that I have

already been cleansed. It has already been taken care of, and I can set my heart on higher things—if I would only look up. Do I see the crown? Why is it so hard for me to see it? Maybe it is because I do not believe that He would actually give it to me.

Jesus Christ secured glory for us. We sit here at the table, and we revel that we have been redeemed. We revel in how much the Lord paid for us to have our sins forgiven, but that is the wicked gate. *That is the wicked gate.* He has paid our way to the Celestial City, not just to get there but to dwell there. And not just to dwell there but to dwell there in His glory, dressed in His glory, not having a glory of our own but having His glory. Paul said, “I do not want to have a righteousness of my own, but I want the righteousness that comes through faith.” I do not want to have a glory of my own; I cannot see having a glory of my own; I am too steeped in the muck. I want the glory that He has for me. I want the glory that is His, that He says, “I want to share this glory that is mine with you, and I paid for it. I paid the price for Me to do this for you. Is that too high for us? Is that too hard to believe? How wonderful is the grace of God! Why limit it? Why limit it to the idea that it is just for the forgiveness of sin and maybe I can live a moral life. How puny that is in comparison to sharing the glory of the Son of God!

J. N. Darby wrote the hymn 862. The titles in this section are all about “Forever With Christ.” Generally, I do not like Darby, but I like what he wrote in this hymn.

1) “And is it so—I shall be like Thy Son?

Is this the grace which He for me has won?

Father of glory—thought beyond all thought!—

In glory, to His own blest likeness brought!

2) Oh, Jesus Lord, who loved me like to Thee?

Fruit of Thy work, with Thee, too, there to see

Thy glory, Lord, while endless ages roll,

Myself the prize and travail of Thy soul.

3) Yet it must be: Thy love had not its rest

Were Thy redeemed not with Thee fully blest;

That love that gives not as the world, but shares

All it possesses with its loved co-heirs.

4) Nor I alone; Thy loved ones, all complete

In glory, round Thee there with joy shall meet;

All like Thee, for Thy glory like Thee, Lord,

Object supreme of all, by all adored.”

I look at that second stanza that says, “Myself the prize and travail of thy soul.” I think what Darby is saying is that he sees himself in that place of glory, and Jesus seeing him in that place of glory is the joy set before Him that allows Him to endure the cross and despise the shame. I always thought despising the shame is our shame; it is the shame of Him becoming sin. He could despise that because He saw the fruit of His labor. There is another hymn 31, “Father To Thee, A Joyful Song We Raise” and verse 3 says, “How precious, too, to Thee—how near, how dear are those He brings to share His place: twas thus that Thou didst plan.”

You know, in eternity past when God was thinking of redeeming man, He was not thinking of just forgiving His sins; He was thinking of restoring Him to the place that was meant for him to be in His glory, sharing that glory because he was made in that image.

Philip Bliss is the one who wrote, “I Will Sing Of My Redeemer, my lost estate to save.” He did not say, “My sins to forgive; he said that in the first verse, but in the second he said, “My lost estate;” that which I lost. When Adam sinned, I lost that place with God, but that place of glory has been given back to me freely by the act of Christ, by the act of God sending His Son. It was not just to forgive my sin, but in forgiving my sin, it says that He ascended; He rose on high and sat at the right hand of the Father, and we share that place with Him. That is the finished work. The finished work is not all that was done for sin; the finished work is all that was done for sin bringing us to the place of being seated on the throne sharing His glory, and that, brothers and sisters, is the hope of a Christian. Don’t let us go lower than that. That is not what God wants for us. God wants nothing lower than that. He wants us seated with Christ in the heavenlies, and He has made it possible that that can be. Oh praise His name! How can we not worship Him? How can we not see that crown that He puts on our head! You want to see what this looks like in the mirror. No, we are going to fall down before Him, and we are going to be like those elders in Revelation who are casting down at His feet saying, Thou art worthy.” Let me not belittle God. Don’t let me belittle what You have done. How great a salvation! I know our brother says that all the time, but that is right. How great a salvation we have! Claim it; this is mine. This is my hope. God gave me this hope. By His grace I will not let it be taken away. Oh God, let me enter into this hope. Let me dwell in that place that you meant for me to have.

I want to end with this. Psalm 42 is a Psalm written by the sons of Korah, and the sons of Korah came from a bad lineage. Remember that their father was swallowed up by the earth. Many people say this Psalm was written while they were in exile, and to me I think this is a great ending for this because first of all the people in exile were there because of their sin. Then God sent them a message from Jeremiah telling them of His promise, and He gave them a hope while in exile. I think that is wonderful because in a sense here we are in exile waiting to go to our heavenly home. The sons of Korah were bemoaning their situation and saying, “God, where are You?” Then a couple of times in the Psalm it says, “Why are you cast down oh my soul?” Then he says, “Hope in God.” In other words, God gives us this hope, but our hope is not in ourselves. Our hope is in the muck; He gives us this hope so that our hope is in Him to bring it about.

Psalm 42:5 says, “Hope in God, for the help of His countenance.” In other words, His countenance is a help to us. What is His countenance towards us? Sometimes I think He is so disappointed with me, and He has that countenance that shows He is disappointed and shaking His head, “Go help your mother.” That is what my dad would say when I tried to help him; “Go

help your mother.” And the whole thing is that it is wonderful because of the wonderful grace of Jesus Christ He looks upon us with great favor. Believe that.

I gave you a definition for hope that says “a favorable and confident expectation. God looks on us with great favor because of His Son, not because of things you have done or haven’t done; it is because of His Son. Everything is in His Son; all glory to His Son! That’s it! We realize that He looks on us with favor—even Jacob. How could God look on Jacob with favor? And yet Isaiah 43:1 says, “I love you, I have redeemed you, and you are mine.” What a claim! But God claims the same for us. We are all Jacobs, and He claims the same for us. Believe that His countenance towards us is favorable because of Jesus Christ.

Because we have such a hope in Him, our countenance is transformed. But our countenance does not just have to do with our faith. Our countenance can be seen in our whole body. You know, when we are down, our whole body shows it—not just our face. Shoulders slump, heads are down, we walk slow, we mumble—that is the whole countenance of our body. However, because of the favor of God our countenance is transformed—our face, our body language, our attitude, and then our very lives. It is just not the outer man that is transformed; it is the inner man. Our very lives are transformed to the praise of His glory through Jesus Christ. Praise be to His name for such a hope that He has given us! Oh, brothers and sisters, believe in that hope, believe in the God who gives that hope because the hope that He gives will become my hope and your hope. And by His hope we can conquer and go all the way through, as Christian did in reaching the Celestial City. That is the will of God for us to also reach that glory. Praise be to His name!

Let’s pray:

Heavenly Father, forgive me that I think so small. I limit what You have done through Jesus Christ. Lord, I pray that You will lift my eyes up to see Thy Son seated on that throne, having conquered sin and conquered me. Lord, bring me to that glorious place. Fill me with Thy Holy Spirit; fill us all with Thy Holy Spirit. Let us walk with that hope in view, with that hope in mind, for that hope in heart, that we might truly drink of that wine with You new in the kingdom of heaven. Lord, You have done such a great thing, and You have such a great thing before us. Lord, don’t let us fall short. Save us to the uttermost through Jesus. How we thank You and praise You for such a hope given to us through Jesus Christ. Amen.