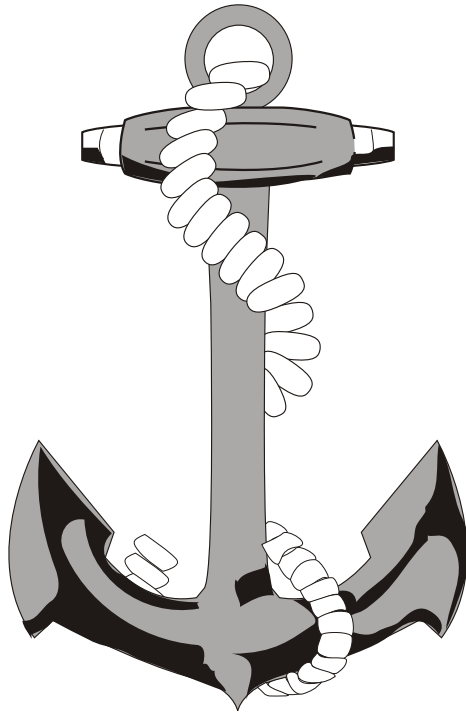


Abiding
HOPE



—**an anchor of our soul**—

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Hope is not Wishful Thinking

We Christians understand the importance of faith. We cannot be saved apart from faith in the Person of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, in His atoning death and the cleansing power of His shed blood. We believe in our hearts what God's word declares, and we confess our faith by the words of our mouth, leading to salvation.

God's word declares that there are three things which abide, or remain. These are faith, hope and love, with love being the greatest (1 Corinthians 13:13). Salvation began as a result of God's love for us, a love that sent His Son to die for our sins. His love for us will never pass away!

What is the significance of abiding hope? Men hope for many things such as success, good health, prosperity, etc. Multitudes of unsaved people hope to go to heaven when they die. Such hope is only wishful thinking when it is not united with saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith and hope abide together.

Faith and Hope

Although they are related, there is an important distinction between faith and hope. The Greek word for faith, PISTIS, is derived from a root word meaning "to persuade" of "to have confidence." Faith is a firm inner conviction based on hearing and believing what is recorded in the word of God. Saving faith is believing *what Christ has done for us* (Romans 10:9-10).

Hope on the other hand, is believing what scripture declares that *Christ is doing, or will do, for us*. Hope refers to those things that we will receive in the future. The

Greek word for hope, ELPIS, expresses an expectation or anticipation of good from God (2 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Timothy 4:10). Christ is the object of our hope, the One upon whom our hope is fixed. He is the God of hope.

Both the past as well as the future are important to the children of God. The past is all that Christ has achieved for us in His death, burial and resurrection. The future are the rewards and inheritance that God has promised to His children.

A mature believer has both faith in the atonement of Christ, as well as personal hope that is anchored in the promised glories that are to come as the purpose of God is fulfilled in the church.

Everything in salvation begins and ends with faith. We are saved by faith, and we have faith for the future fulfillment of all that we are promised in salvation.

Now faith is the assurance (or substance) of things hoped for, the conviction (or reality) of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

Our hope is fixed on these future promises that are yet to be fulfilled. Hope only concerns the invisible unfulfilled reality of our faith. If we can see that which we hope for, then we don't have Biblical hope.

For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? (Romans 8:24)

It is the process that is between the "start" and the "finish" of one's faith where hope becomes important. Abiding hope is our strength for enduring and our abil-

ity to stand firm in the promises of God for those things which we cannot yet experience.

For example, we look forward to the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus (Titus 2:13). When Christ, who is our life, is revealed then we also will be revealed with Him in glory. The gospel promises us that we can gain the glory of our Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:14). This promise lies ahead of us. When the Lord returns in glory, we will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and He will transform the body of our present humble state into conformity with the body of His glory. We shall receive glorified bodies that are like His! This will prepare us to rule and reign with Him in His kingdom; a glorious hope of our salvation.

How does hope sustain and help us to endure so that we can inherit the wonderful promises of salvation that pertain to the future? There are two important answers to this question.

1. All the promises will be fulfilled by Christ. Therefore we are to fix our hope completely on the grace of God that is extended to us in these future revelations of Christ. We must keep our eyes on Him.

*Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, **fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** (1 Peter 2:13)*

2. We are to recognize and cultivate the “first fruit” of what we have already received of our future promises. Whatever we are yet to receive will be based on the

presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. He is our hope of glory!

*. . . God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, **which is Christ in you the hope of glory.** (Colossians 1:27)*

We have been born again to a *living hope* because of His presence and life within us. Hope is more than simply believing God's word; it is also an inner spiritual foretaste and expectation of the glorious life we will ultimately have in God. Hope provides strength to endure until we are glorified. We can exult in hope of the glory of God. The key focus is Jesus Himself and His life within us. Consider the following ordered development of hope as expressed by Paul in his epistle to Rome (Romans 5:1-5).

- Justification by faith, leading to peace with God
- Introduction to divine grace
- Tribulation develops perseverance
- Perseverance leads to proven character
- Proven character gives rise to hope, a hope that does not disappoint because God's love is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit

Thus, faith, hope and love abide together.

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

The following scripture is an excellent expression of hope.

And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. (1 Peter 1:8)

The reality of our hope will endorse our witness for Christ to the unsaved; they must desire what they see in us.

*But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone **who asks you to give an account of the hope that is in you** (1 Peter 3:13)*

We are challenged to hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering (Hebrews 10:23).

Guardians of Our Heart and Mind

We are fearfully and wonderfully made. The Lord created man with three component parts, or building blocks, to his being. These are body, soul and spirit¹. At man's creation, God breathed spirit, the essence of His own being, into the earthen body, and man was created as a living soul. The soul contains the will, mind and emotions. It is alive because of the presence of spirit (or heart) which is where Christ dwells once the person has been born of the Spirit. It is also the place where character is developed.

Faith and hope play important roles in protecting the sanctity of a believer's mind and heart. For example,

the armor that God provides for His people includes the breastplate of faith and love to cover and protect our heart from unbelief, unrighteous thoughts, as well as accusations and condemnation from Satan. In addition, the armor includes a helmet, the hope of salvation, to protect one's mind from evil and carnal thoughts, false teaching and human reasonings.

*But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the **breastplate of faith and love**, and as a **helmet, the hope of salvation**. (1 Thessalonians 5:8)*

The foremost act in putting on these two pieces of armor is to be devoted to reading and meditating on the word of God. Scriptures that are made alive to us, if possible, should be committed to memory. The helmet that covers our mind is effective when we focus on these scriptures that pertain to the future; not on the chronology of events, but on the substance of what Christ has promised to us. We are to confess our hope in these promises, share them with others, speak often to one another; they should always be in our thoughts. John expressed this emphasis as follows:

*Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. **We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him**, because we shall see Him just as He is. **And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him, purifies himself just as He is pure**. (1 John 3:2-3)*

The Hope of Our Calling

We are called to fulfill the purpose of God in our generation. As we seek to know and fulfill the hope of our calling, we must recognize that it will be anchored in God's purpose for the end of this age. Again, hope points us to the future as we prepare our hearts to serve Him.

There is a twofold emphasis to our call; diversity and dependence. We are not lone-rangers and we are not clones. Each of us is unique in our service, but we serve in the unity of a spiritual body where we need and depend upon one another. Every believer is called to walk and serve within this relational identity.

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord **entreat you to walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called**, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **There is one body and one Spirit, just as you are called in one hope of your calling.** (Ephesians 4:1-4)*

The reality of "one body" will only take place when believers recognize and submit to Christ as the head over all things to the church. He must become the supreme center of emphasis!

To walk worthy of our call requires personal humility, gentleness and patience. We can no longer put down or speak disparagingly about others in the body of Christ. We will love and pray for them, we will seek for the peace of God in our mutual witness for Christ.

Even when we don't find believers with faith for such unity, we are to keep our hope fixed on God's purpose for the church. He is going to renew and restore His body. Christ is going to be manifest as head over His church. The emphasis of organization will be replaced by the organism of divine life in the body of Christ. This is our hope!

Through the glory that He will bring forth on His people, He will gather in a great harvest of souls from all the nations (Isaiah 60:1-7). Jesus has prayed that this will take place. Since His prayer is certain to be answered, we can look forward to its future fulfillment as a promise from God. Our expectation is to see the glory of God shine forth and bring unity to His people.

The glory which You have given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. (John 17:22-23)

When God created the earth and made man in His image, He declared that what He had accomplished was good. However, when Adam sinned, he broke fellowship with God and lost the glory with which he had been clothed. In addition, creation, which had been under Adam's oversight, came under Satan's evil influence.

Nevertheless, there was hope. God subjected creation to futility (emptiness) in the hope that one day it would be set free from corruption and regain the glory of God's children. Creation's freedom from sin and corruption is linked to man's freedom from sin. Restora-

tion is what the purpose of God for the end of this age is all about. A restored church, the bride, followed by a restored creation; what a wonderful hope!

*For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, **in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God** Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. . . . **But if we hope for what we do not see; with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.** (Romans 8:19-21, 23, 25)*

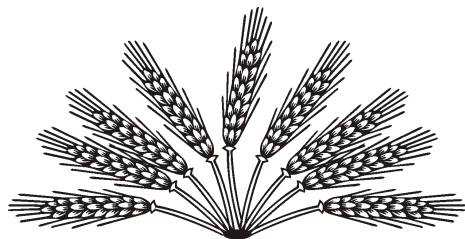
There is great need for hope in the days ahead. The purpose of God will be accomplished in times of great darkness and spiritual warfare in the world. Lawlessness, terrorism and deception will increase in a God ordained environment for maturity, for the church will face tribulation, persecution and martyrdom (Romans 8:17-18; 2 Corinthians 4:17).

Hopelessness will mark those in the world, while glory will rise upon the church, upon those who have laid hold of the hope set before them.

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil (i.e. into the presence of God). (Hebrews 6:19)

The harvest will be gathered in, Satan will be cast out of heaven², the tares will be removed, and the righteous will shine with the glory of God as the Lord returns for His bride.

This is the hope of our calling!



End Notes

1. Dale Rumble, "BODY, SOUL & SPIRIT—GOD'S BUILDING BLOCKS," (Selah Publishing Group, LLC 800-917-2665, 2003) pp 11-36.

2. Dale Rumble, "BEHOLD THE HARVEST," (Revival Press, Shippensburg PA; 1998) pp 163-168.

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