

The Blessed Hope (Titus 2:11-13)



1. Three Abiding Realities

'Now abide faith, hope, and love but the greatest of these is love.' (1 Cor 13:13).

- a. Hope is a very important quality in Christian life, though not a lot is said about this crucial subject. Much more is taught about faith and love. But hope is the necessary ingredient in maintaining faith and love. Without hope, faith will leak, and love will fail.
- b. *Do you live with hope when you look into the future?* If you are a child of God, you should be. 'Where there is life, there is hope.' The reverse is also true: 'Where there is no hope, there is no life.' The saddest form of existence is life without hope. The living standard of contemporary Western society is very high. Kings who lived a century ago would envy our lifestyle today. Yet the suicide rate is increasing in our affluent society, and the pandemic of mental illness and pain is on the rise. Thousands of people each year need counselling and psychiatric therapy. Mental health is one of the fast-growing professions in the western world. Why? Because people are quietly suffering inside from 'internal hemorrhage' of a different kind. What are we suffering from? A sense of hopelessness. *With all the medical and technological advancements, our polished and sophisticated society cannot produce real 'hope' in the human soul.*
- c. People who have lost hope are the weakest of all people. 'A man who has lost hope is a man who cannot endure anymore.' Victor Frankle who survived the Nazi concentration camp noted that the people who had hope and purpose defied all odds and survived it. Human beings are not like animals who are content with food for the day. Human hearts desperately need hope to go on living.

We need three reference points to our reality to exist meaningfully: (i) past (redemption); (ii) present reality (trust in God's personal presence); (iii) future (hope of glory). This is because we have been created in the image of God. 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is and is to come' (Rev 4:8). God in His mercy has provided all our needs in His Son. Without a positive outlook for the future, human beings cannot survive. This is one major area of spiritual warfare. If you suffer deep chronic pain in your mind, I suspect that you are struggling with hope. And God has provided the full remedy for you.

2. What is Hope?

The word hope is loosely used by many to express wishful thinking that has a low probability of being fulfilled. E.g., 'pie in the sky'. This is not biblical hope.

- a. Definition: 'Hope is a serene confident expectation of good.' Biblical hope is not an unsure passive wish. It is confident of its outcome. *'In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.'* (Is 30:16)
- b. What is the difference between faith and hope? Faith is in the present, but hope is in the future. Each is important, and neither is a substitute for the other. Definition of Faith: *'Now faith is the substance of the things hoped for, and the evidence of the things not seen...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.'* (Heb 11:1-3).
 - (i) Faith is the substance (underlying reality) of the invisible reality of the word of God. True faith is always based on the Word of God which is not visible to our eyes but more real than the visible world.
 - (ii) Biblical hope which looks forward to the future always comes from faith that is rooted in God's promises in His Word.

True hope always stands on true faith, and true faiths always stand on the truth of God's Word. Hope that is not based on faith and the word of God is not biblical hope, but wishful thinking. e.g., *'I bought buying a lottery ticket in the hope I will win it.'* True hope is guaranteed to be fulfilled because it is rooted in the sure word of God. That is why true hope will never disappoint you. You will never be put to shame for putting your hope in God (Rom 5:5). On the contrary, worldly hope is the most hopeless thing of all. It is so fragile, so often dashed to pieces. That is why people are afraid to hope. Often the most intelligent minds are assailed with morbid pessimism and skepticism because it is not realistic to hope any hope.

3. What Is The Hope That God Offers Us?

'For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.' (Titus 2:11-13)

- a. We can have many 'hopes' in life. But Paul calls this 'the blessed hope', the hope of all hopes. It is the glorious appearing of our great God who is our Saviour – the Lord Jesus Christ. The ultimate hope of all Christian hope is pinned on the glorious return of Jesus Christ. That day our salvation becomes complete. We receive our resurrection bodies like Jesus' glorious body, and the reward of our labour in the Lord.
- b. This hope and vision motivate us to a godly living. The grace of God not only forgives us of our past sins, but it teaches us about the present life. In what way? To deny ungodliness, worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our Saviour motivates us to live a holy life in this present age. The evidence that we really have this ultimate hope is a life of purity. They say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions and live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives today (2:12, NIV). Do you have this blessed hope as the motivating reality in your heart? *'And everyone who has this hope purifies himself, just as He is pure.'* (1 John 3:3)
- c. Having this hope releases us from the bondage of time. *'Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.'* (Heb 2:14-15) We are no longer slaves of a life of just a few years on earth. We look forward to eternity. Therefore, we are not as shaken by the disasters and troubles of this life as others are, who have all their hopes and dreams pinned on this life of just a few brief years with nothing else to look forward to beyond it. But for us who have this hope, this brief life is but a preparation for eternity. So having this hope has a tremendous impact on the way we live this present life. We have the right to question those who say they have this hope and do not live this way, but only for the things of this world.

4. How do We get This Hope?

This hope is the direct outcome of being born again. You must be born again. *'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'* (1 Peter 1:3-4, NIV)

- a. It is called living hope because it doesn't end with death. It lives on beyond the grave and extends into timeless eternity. When all other hopes are fade and die, this living hope will escort you into eternal glory in the presence of God.
- b. How do we receive this hope? By new birth leading to definite faith in the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis of our hope for eternal life. Jesus said, *'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.'* (John 11:25)
- c. Then we must continue to hold steadfastly on this hope until our faith is completed. *'Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming'* (1 Peter 1:13). The process of our salvation is not complete until the coming of Jesus Christ. We are to fix our hope completely to the coming of Jesus Christ.

5. Preview Of Christ's Coming

'But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this, we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord, Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, 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.' (1 Thess 4:13-18)

- a. The coming of the Lord will be preceded by three glorious sounds. (i) The Lord's command. (Remember Jesus called Lazarus to come forth.) (ii) The voice of the archangel. (iii) Trumpet call of God gathering His people together. This is the noisiest verse in the Bible!
- b. The dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive will be caught up in the air to be with Him forever. We will be regathered, never to be separated again. If you know Jesus, death is not the end. It is only a doorway to another life to be reunited with the Lord and with each other forever. This is our blessed hope! Amen.

6. Questions

1. How would you define biblical hope in your own words? What happens to us when we lose this hope?
2. What is 'the blessed hope' described in Titus 2:13-14? How do you distinguish between biblical hope and wishful thinking? Can you share your personal experiences?
3. How does having the blessed hope impact your life?
4. How do we receive the hope which is only found in Christ? Why is it called 'living hope'? (1 Peter 1:3-4) Do you have the living hope in your heart? (1 Theses 4:13-18)