

Foundation of Our Hope (Heb 6:13-20; John 14:15-19; Col 1:26-27)



A. Introduction

1. We are suffering from the pandemic of hopelessness.
 - CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) reports there is a 30% increase in drug overdose in the USA over the 12 months ending in April 2021 – i.e., 100,000+ drug overdose death.
 - OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) also reports there is a sharp increase in depression among adults from the pre-pandemic times to the present times in 2021. E.g., Sweden: 11%→30%, Mexico: 3%→28%, Australia: 10%→28%, the USA: 7%→25%, South Korea: ~37% (no available data point for the pre-pandemic era).
2. Christ has given us the ultimate antidote against the inescapable despair - the certainty of death. *'It is appointed for a man to die once and after this is the judgment.'* (Heb 9:27) No one will miss these two appointments, death and judgement afterward. But Christ has set us free from the fear of death and the certainty of punishment after this life. Although we live one day at a time, we live with real hope, peering into eternity with Christ. We are eternal beings destined for eternal life. Knowing this gives us a completely different quality to our lives on earth. *'When the times will have reached their fulfilment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.'* (Eph 1:10, NIV)
3. But what about the life in this world, that is so plagued with problems and injustice? How can we have hope, living in a world that is getting more chaotic? Our hope is founded on:
 - a) The permanence of God's throne and the indestructibility of His truth
 - b) The presence of God and the hope of glory
 - c) God's biased love to redeem our life

B. The Permanence of God's Throne and the Indestructibility of His Truth

1. How can we maintain hope and optimism when we face the pain of disorder and injustice in this life? When we see people getting away with cheating and manipulating their way through life? When people seeking to live uprightly suffer? There seems to be very little justice. Lawlessness and propaganda are everywhere. Truth is often buried. The law of the land is against unborn children. Taxation disfavours marriage. Medical procedures are coerced upon the population. And we suffer injuries in our relationships.

How can Christians have the courage to live righteously in a world where lies and injustice go on unpunished?
2. *'God is firmly on the throne, and God's throne is righteousness and justice.'* (Ps 89:14) It is said 'truth is the first casualty of war', and 'history is written by those who won the war.' Sometimes truth looks like the most vulnerable thing in the world. But truth cannot be killed or stopped. Truth is the Person of Jesus Christ. They thought they killed the truth when they crucified Jesus. They were wrong. Jesus rose from the dead and He sits on heaven's throne to judge those who deny the truth.

History is 'His Story'. God has written our history ahead of time. *'Ultimately nothing that is right in this life can ever come out wrong and nothing that is wrong in this life can come out right.'* That is why godly people can live upright lives because lives lived right cannot come out wrong, and the life lived wrong cannot come out right. Justice will be served absolutely to the tee for everyone in the end.

C. The Horns of the Altar and the Anchor in the Sea

Heb 6:13-20 gives two beautiful pictures of hope.

1. Horns of the altar - In the old covenant, if a man *accidentally* commits manslaughter, he could run to one of the cities of refuge and seek protection from those who seek revenge. In the same way, if a man was falsely accused, he could run to the altar of God and lay hold of the horns of the altar. If he was innocent,

no one could pull him away from the altar and harm him. We who are living in increasingly perilous days are to find the city of refuge, and lay hold of the horns of the altar that absolutely guarantees our safety.

What are the four horns of the altar? It is hope. The altar points to the cross of Jesus Christ where the perfect sacrifice was offered up on our behalf. Let's take hold of the horns of the altar and not let go.

2. Anchor in the sea – Why does a ship need an anchor? It floats on the unstable element - water. For a boat to have stability, its anchor must pass through the water and securely fasten itself onto a stable element on the seafloor or a rock. We are living in a constantly changing, unstable, temporal world. We can never find security by attaching ourselves to anything in this world. We must have our anchor that passes through this unstable transient world and out of time, and fasten onto the eternal throne of God.

What is this anchor? It is the hope we have in Jesus Christ. It is not fastened on the material things and the systems of this world, but directly onto the two immutable things: God's word and God's oath. It passes out of this world through the second veil into the immediate presence of God. The second veil was what separated between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Jesus Christ the forerunner has passed through that way and has entered the Holy of Holies as our high priest.

Things of this world will all pass away. But our hope moves beyond the veil of this present life, and enters the presence of God on His eternal throne. Jesus Christ as our High Priest ever lives to make intercession for us in the immediate presence of God. He lives forever. *'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.'* That eternal Rock of Ages is where my hope is anchored. What is why when worldly hope dies, our hope marches on. Worldly hope puts down its anchor into the sea of trouble and finds nothing. But believers in Jesus Christ put down our anchor in eternity onto the throne of God. And God's throne is never assailed or disturbed (Rev 4:6).

D. The Promise of God's Presence and the Hope of Glory

1. Jesus comforted His disciples before He faced the cross, *'I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.'* (John 14:15-19) In the Person of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Triune God, Jesus has come to us, to abide with us forever. The Holy Spirit, the greatest creative power in the universe, resides within each person's spirit to overcome any fear, discouragement, and despair this life brings. Jesus introduced the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth, and as our Helper, Comforter, Advocate (Defence Lawyer), and Intercessor. The Holy Spirit is within you and you can turn to Him any time. We can turn to the Holy Spirit in times of anger, temptation, and discouragement.
2. *'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.'* (Col 1:26-27) The mystery is something only believers can come to know. Christian faith contains a mystery that even wise men and kings and philosophers cannot access. But it was revealed to us the saints. What is *'the riches of the glory of this mystery'* that God wants to make known to the Gentiles? (Apostle Paul stretches the limits of language here, trying to articulate something too glorious to express in words.) What is the essence of this mystery? It is *'Christ in you.'* Christ the eternal son of God is living IN US through the Holy Spirit. This is the hope of glory.

There is going to be the revealing of Christ who is within you! This is the hope of glory and the hope of the world. If you have Christ dwelling within you, you have the hope of glory.

3. How about those who do not have Christ living within them?

'Therefore, remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh – who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands – that is 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.' (Eph 2:11-12)

Apostle Paul lists:- (i) without Christ; (ii) being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel (excluded from the citizenship of Israel, NIV); (iii) strangers from the covenants (or foreigners who do not belong); (iv) without hope; (v) without God.

What terrible words! If you do not have Christ, you have no hope and no glory. Only the judgment of God in the future. There are only two alternatives. Either without Christ and without hope, or with Christ and with the hope of glory. This hope of glory makes confident and radiant Christians in the present world.

4. King David lived with this hope of glory. Although he lived under the old covenant, he had a glimpse of this revelation by the Holy Spirit. *'As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.'* (Ps 17:15) What powerful words of confession! *I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.* Is this also your hope in life and in death? That frees you and me from our concerns and worries, from our weaknesses and frustrations.
5. This world is full of lonely people who live alone and die alone. *'For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.'* *'We do not live or die to ourselves alone.'* (Rom 14:7-8 – NIV)

To live to ourselves and to die to ourselves is to live a life of selfish preoccupation. To live this way is to be alone, and to die alone. Countless people are chronically lonely because they are living in the prison of themselves, locked in the cell of preoccupation with selfish life. But we who hope in Christ are never alone because we live unto Jesus, and we die in Jesus. And he will be there to receive us. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are never alone because we belong to the Lord.

E. Questions

1. Do you agree with the statement that we are living in an era of a pandemic of hopelessness? How does having hope in Christ make a difference in life and death?
2. How do the fact of the permanence of God's throne and the indestructibility of His truth provide the foundation for our hope in the world of growing injustice and corruption?
3. Hebrews 6:13-20 gives two beautiful pictures of our hope in Christ: (a) the horns of the altar; (b) the anchor in the sea. Can you describe how they relate to our hope in God? How are they different from worldly hope?
4. Apostle Paul spoke of the riches of the glory of the mystery: 'Christ in you hope of glory' (Col 1:26-27). What does the hope of glory mean to you? How does it compare to those who are not in Christ? (Eph 2:11-12)
5. Why did Paul say, *'For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself'* (Rom 14:7-8)? What does it mean to live to himself and die to himself? How is this attitude different from the believer's attitude of living and dying in the Lord?
6. Can you say with David, *'As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness,'* (Ps 17:15)? How does this hope produce confident and radiant Christians?