

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Hope: The Anchor of the Soul

By Mike Willis

“Hope” is the happy combination of desire plus expectation. Many of us desire things we never expect and most of us expect things we never desire. Hope, however, is the combination of desire and expectation. The Lord has given his people **“one hope”** (Eph. 4:4) which is described as the **“anchor of the soul”** (Heb. 6:19). Here is the beautiful passage from Hebrews:

“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:17-20).

This sure and steadfast hope enables us to persevere in the midst of adversity.

Hope: Based on God’s Word

The author of Hebrews reminds us that the Christian's hope is based on **“two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie.”** When God gave the promises to Abraham, he promised to bless all nations through his seed; to give greater certainty to the promise, God swore with an oath saying, **“By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord”** (Gen. 22:16). God’s oath was a condescension to men to whom **“an oath for the confirmation is to them an end of all strife”** (Heb. 6:17). **“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath”** (Heb. 6:18).

We who are Christians are heirs of that promise – a promise from God confirmed by an oath. The certainty of its being fulfilled rests on two immutable things: **(a)** God’s promise and **(b)** God’s oath. God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2). Hence, we have grounds for our hope – the immutable word of God.

Parents were exhorted to teach their children the Lord’s commandments **“that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments”** (Psa. 78:7). God is described as the **“hope of Israel”** (Jer. 14:8; 17:13). In the midst of life’s uncertainties, there is only one fixed, immutable thing to which we can tie our hopes – God! All else may fail us before life is over.

Hope: an Anchor to the Soul

The Hebrews passage describes hope as the anchor of the soul. The metaphor compares the Christian to a boat on the sea; the Christian is on the sea of life. There are storms which threaten to drive his ship from its port – the storms of persecution, adversity, doubt, death, etc. Just as the boat’s anchor reaches down to the bottom of the ocean and out of sight, the Christian’s anchor ascends out of sight into heaven where it is there fixed.

To serve any purpose, an anchor must hold. It must be **“sure and steadfast.”** When sailors cast out an anchor, they want it to take hold on the bottom of the sea to prevent drifting, to keep them from being driven upon rocks which might destroy their ship. The Christian’s hope also must be **“sure and steadfast.”** It must hold.

A Christian’s hope serves to give him stability in the midst of the storm. During the storm, his ship may drift a little, but the fixed anchor will bring him back to his moorings. I have witnessed *hope* sustaining a Christian during the storm. In the midst of conflict, a Christian with fixed and rooted hope will stay faithful to God. A friend of mine experienced adversity when his child became deathly sick; for several weeks she lay in coma while her parents

prayed. Not once did their faith waver as did Job's wife who advised her husband to "*curse God and die.*" Not once did they quit. Rather, their hope sustained them through the storm.

Will Your Anchor Hold?

There are other hopes that men have. Job describes those who make gold their hope (Job 31:24). Others make power and strength their hope. These are the wicked concerning whom the wise man said, "*The hope of the unjust men perisheth*" (Prov. 11:7).

Because some anchor their soul with the wrong hope, Priscilla J. Owens wrote the song "**We Have An Anchor.**"

*Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?*

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.*

The Christian's hope will anchor the soul, bringing him safely through every trial and temptation of life.

The Christian's Hope

The Christian's hope is a hope which the gospel gives. It is "*the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel*" (Col. 1:5). The only means of attaining this hope is through Christ – "*hrist in you (is) the hope of glory*" (Col. 1:27). What is this hope?

1. It is the hope of the resurrection. Paul described it as "*the hope and resurrection of the dead*" (Acts 23:6). In the resurrection chapter (1 Cor. 15), he pointed men to the resurrection of the body. As he spoke of the death and resurrection of the body, he said, "*It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body*" (15:42-43). Earlier he said, "*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable*" (15:19). Indeed, "*the righteous hath hope in his death*" (Prov. 14:32).

As we lay our loved ones in the tomb, we do not despair, although we sorrow.

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:14-18).

The hope of the gospel is the hope of resurrection. Indeed, the Lord brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:10).

2. It is the hope of eternal life in heaven. Our resurrection is not to another period of earth life. It is a resurrection to eternal life with God in heaven – "*to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*" (1 Pet. 1:3-5). It is resurrection to abide forever in the presence of the Lord (Rev. 21:3) where "*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain*" (Rev. 21:4). It is a resurrection to "*rest from their labors*" (Rev. 14:13). It is a resurrection to drink the water of life (Rev. 21:6) and to eat of the tree of life (Rev. 22:2).

Those Who Have No Hope

The Scriptures tell us of those "*which have no hope*" (1 Thess. 4:13; Eph. 2:12). Hope is given to us through Christ

Jesus when we obey the gospel. Those who have never obeyed that gospel are without hope. Let us not lose sight of this truth.

Funerals for the dead are difficult to conduct at best. Some who preach funerals appear to give little thought to the impression they leave on the living; when a preacher leaves the impression that those who have never obeyed the gospel have reason to hope for eternal life, he does the living an injustice. In a moment when every mind is concentrated on the frailty of man and thinking of the eternal destiny of man, a preacher should be careful not to leave the impression that a person can live the life of the wicked and have the hope of a Christian! The hope of eternal life is reserved for Christians – those who have trusted in Jesus for salvation.

Those who have lived their lives without regard to their obligations to God, who never had time to attend worship services, who rarely ever contributed a dollar to the church for the spread of the gospel, who ***“have their portion in this life”*** (Psa. 17:14), who are so consumed ***“getting all the gusto they can out of life,”*** and who have died are those whom the Bible describes as ***“having no hope”*** (1 Thess. 4:13). Let us not deceive the living by leaving an impression at their funeral that there is reason to hope for eternal life for these people. There is no hope!

Conclusion

A faithful Christian has full assurance in the hour of his death based on his hope. This is demonstrated by the words which Paul wrote when his death was imminent. He wrote, ***“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”*** (2 Tim. 4:6-8). His confidence, serenity and peace of mind in the face of his death are evidences of his hope, for he knew that ***“to die is gain”*** (Phil. 1:21). To die was to ***“be with Christ, which is far better”*** (Phil. 1:23).

Do you have this hope? – *Truth Magazine, October 19, 1989.* ■

Hell Ought To Scare You

By Donnie V. Rader

The young man I was talking to had been a Christian for several years. He had sinned a year or so before our discussion and had repented. Then about four months prior to our talk he had again yielded to the temptation that Joseph would not (Gen. 39). This time there was no repentance and seemingly no concern. Perhaps, no cessation of the sin either.

One question kept coming to my mind before we had any discussion, ***“Does he ever think about hell?”*** I wondered if he understood that if he died in this condition that he would spend eternity in hell. So, I ask if he was afraid of hell. His answer: “I guess not as much as I ought to be.” I suggested that he wasn’t afraid at all! Why? I’m not certain. But one thing is sure: when one can lay his head down at night knowing that he is in sin and will go to hell if he dies and not be afraid, there is little hope.

The above story could be duplicated time and again. Perhaps because we have neglected the old hell fire and brimstone preaching. Let's revisit this old subject that may be somewhat “new” to some. It oughta scare ya!

Hell Is Real

Hell is not a fictitious story or myth. It is not a condition or state of mind. It is a real place. Luke 16, which speaks of the realm of departed spirits (Hades and not the eternal abode), is a foretaste of greater things to come. The rich man spoke of this ***“place”*** of torment (vv. 23, 28). He was in a real place. It is merely a foretaste of worse to come.

Hell is just as real as heaven. They are often put on an equality as far as their nature goes (cf. Matt. 25:46). If Heaven is real, so is hell. If hell is a state of mind, so is heaven.

Jesus said we ought to fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28). In this we learn that **(1)** Hell should be feared. **(2)** It is beyond the grave. **(3)** It should motivate us to live so as to go to heaven. All of these point to the reality of hell.

Hell Is Terrible

It may be that some of those who believe in hell think that the biblical descriptions of it are overstated. Surely it could not be as bad as the old fashion preachers used to say it would be. The following points tell us how terrible hell really is.

1. Gehenna. The word hell (when referring to the eternal abode of the wicked) is from the Greek word Gehenna. When we understand how that word came to be used to describe the eternal damnation, we will appreciate how tragic hell is.

a. Gehenna points back to the Valley of Hinnom. *“Originally the Valley of Hinnom, near Jerus, Gehenna became among the Jews the synonym for the place of torment in the future life” (ISBE 1371).* *“Gehenna is a transliteration from the Aram. form of the Heb ge-hinnom, ‘valley of Hinnom’” (ISBE 1183).* This valley was to the southwest of Jerusalem.

b. This valley was the seat of worship to the idol Molech. *“That ‘the valley of Hinnom’ became the technical designation for the place of final punishment was due to two causes. In the first place the valley had been the seat of the idolatrous worship to Molech, to whom children were immolated by fire (2 Ch. 28:3; 33:6). Secondly, on account of these practices the place was defiled by King Josiah (2 K 23:10), and became in consequence associated in prophecy with the judgment to be visited upon the people (Jer 7:32)” (ISBE 1183).*

The sacrifice that was made to Molech was awful. Many texts tell of parents burning the sons and daughters to honor this idol (cf. Jer. 7:30-31; 19:5-6; 2 Kings 23:10). *“The image of Molech was a human figure with a bulls head and outstretched arms, ready to receive the children destined for sacrifice. The image of metal was heated red hot by a fire kindled within, and the children laid on its arms rolled off into the fiery pit below” (ISBE 2075).*

c. The valley came be used to burn the city’s trash and rubbish. It was the city incinerator. Jeremiah spoke of the valley of dead bodies and of ashes (Jer. 31:40). *“Into this valley dead bodies were probably cast to be consumed by the dogs...and fires were kept burning to consume the rubbish of the city. Such associations led to the Ge-Hinnom (NT ‘Gehenna’) becoming the ‘type of Hell’” (ISBE 1393).*

2. Lake of fire. Hell is described as a lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8). Imagine a literal lake that you know. Picture that every drop of water were a flammable substance (i.e. gasoline). If that were set aflame, what would it be like to be thrown into the middle of it?

Brimstone is perhaps sulfur that melts and runs in streams. It spreads and is sticky. Picture that some sticky substance is poured all over you (i.e. honey or molasses). What if that were a flammable substance set aflame? Can you imagine the intense pain, the agony and the suffering?

Other passages portray hell as a furnace of fire (Matt. 13:42, 50), a flaming fire (2 Thess. 1:7-9), a baptism of fire (Matt. 3:11-12), and an unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43).

3. Weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. Those who are cast into hell will be howling, crying aloud and grinding their teeth (cf. Matt. 8:12; 13:50; 25:30). What a picture of punishment! Hell Is Eternal! The above descriptions of hell would be bad enough if it only lasted for a day or a even an hour. However, the pain and suffering of hell is eternal. Jesus equated *“hell fire”* (Matt. 18:9) with *“everlasting fire”* (v. 8). Jesus contrasted the *“everlasting punishment”* with *“eternal life”* (Matt. 25:46). Hell is as long as heaven is. The smoke of torment ascends *“forever and ever”* (Rev. 14:10-11).

It scares me to think about hell. It oughta scare you too! ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250