

HOPE

Introduction – Charles Dickens, the English novelist, wrote a book entitled “Great Expectations” about a young boy named Pip. This child goes through much turmoil and difficulties in his life but with great expectations. We as Christians have the greatest of expectations, though now our life may be filled with toil, turmoil and trouble. Our end though is beyond all our expectations in bliss and glory. The word translated as 'hope' in both the Old Testament and the New Testament means 'expectation'. In this study we Christians look ahead to what is guaranteed by the concrete reality of Christ and His victory, even though now at times we may be beset as Pip was with situations beyond his control. Of course for us nothing is beyond God's control and ultimate giving of good to us. The Communists mock the Christians about their 'Pie in the sky when you die.' Our adversaries will be so disappointed in the end but we will not be gaining all that was promised and more than we can comprehend.

My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand. TLH 370 st. 1

Love

“Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His steadfast love.” Ps. 33:18 Our expectation is based on what great love our God has for us. His love does not diminish over time, nor should our hope. There is no rust that covers it over and obscures it. There is no mildew and mold that distorts how it looks in our faith view. As a matter of fact, the longer we are a Christian and steadily approach our end, the greater does it shine in our mind's eye.

“For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” Rom. 8:24-25 We cannot see completely what is in store for us in heaven, but we can through the Scriptures see the concrete reality of Jesus on the cross and arisen from the grave. This we can understand from the divine record, while what is awaiting us in heaven is delightfully beyond our ken. Just as we see God's love for us on the cross, so we know He will not fail us with what awaits us in heaven.

“Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Art Thou not He, O Lord our God? We set our hope on Thee, for Thou doest all these things.” Jer. 14:22 As Jeremiah also says elsewhere, God's mercies are new every morning even in the midst of judgments falling on this earth. In the little things of everyday life we see God's hand of love protecting, giving, guiding. As with the little, so with the great He does all things well. Here we in our weakness want a bird in the hand which the saying goes is worth more than two in the bush. Ah, but hope tells us what is unseen and awaiting you in heaven is worth far more than what you have now. In our weakness we like to see, feel, touch, hold and possess. Faith in the unseen God means based on His love we anticipate what is laid up for us in heaven. When we refocus on heaven in hope we find we are far better able to cope here. When we focus on this earth things begin to fall apart and crumble. How much better to live in hope looking back to the cross and forward to eternity with Him!

It is in the Word of God that we read that our hope is laid up in heaven. Col. 1:5 This is why we need to read and study the Word of truth day after day to keep our focus and to treasure and enjoy our life now in anticipation of greater treasure and joy there, the riches of the glory of the mystery. Col. 1:27 And now when we have Christ Jesus in our heart, we have that hope of glory. What a joy it is to be a

Christian!

When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on his unchanging grace;
 In ev'ry high and stormy gale My anchor holds within the veil.
 On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
 All other ground is sinking sand. 370 st. 2

Joy

Everybody wants to be happy, but so few know how to be. For us even in the face of toil, trouble and turmoil our anchor holds and we rejoice. "...we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, know that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." Rom. 5:2-5 As we contemplate what awaits us in heaven, the difficulties we face here pale and diminish in comparison and in importance.

"Happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God..." Ps. 146:5 Our Lord taught about the two men; one who built his house on the rock, and one who built his house on the sand. What a difference in results: blessing or disaster, joy or sorrow. "The hope of the righteous ends in gladness, but the expectation of the wicked comes to nought." Prov. 10:28 Some gladden their heart with wine and food. Some gladden their heart with the accumulation of wealth and property. We gladden our heart knowing the treasure in heaven cannot be affected by anything on this earth. Crop failure can affect wine and food. Economic downturns can affect property value. But our treasure is in heaven where moth and rust cannot consume and where thieves cannot break in and steal.

Do people see us as ones whose anchor holds in storm and gale? Can people see we are different from the worldling? You are those "having eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints..." Eph. 1:18 Let us keep our eyes open to the Word that details our treasure in heaven that we expect though it will surpass what human words can only partially describe.

His oath, His covenant, and blood support me in the whelming flood;
 When ev'ry earthly prop gives way, He then is all my Hope and Stay.
 On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
 All other ground is sinking sand. 370 st. 3

Promise

"His oath, His covenant and blood," are three witnesses that testify to the truth of our hope. The oath and covenant remind us that the Word is rock solid in its assurance to us. "So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us." Heb. 6:17-18 And then there is the cross that testifies indelibly on our heart.

Think of the example of Abraham who received the promise of a son. This was against all odds due to Sarah and Abraham's age. But he hoped against hope, expecting that God would do what He said. Then think how the father was commanded to sacrifice his son. Still he proceeded, knowing that God could

raise Isaac from the dead. Abraham expected God's earthly promises to come true no matter what. So we all trust His heavenly promises fully expecting what He guaranteed in His Word.

Think of earthly examples of our expectations.

- You are told a letter was sent to you. You expect to receive it because the person who told you is trustworthy. So with our God even more so. There can be no interference in what He ultimately delivers to us.
- You are told that money has been deposited in your account. You don't have to see the money because the bank account record shows it is there. So the Word of God assures us the treasures are in heaven awaiting us. There are no mistakes in bookkeeping that can interfere. God knows, God does.
- You have a check in your hand that tells you that if you deposit that check you will receive the amount of money listed there. The check is as good as money. Though you do not see the money, you know you will get the cash amount listed. With our God there can never be a case of an overdrawn account with no treasure to be given as was promised. God is faithful.

Some people read the words of Scripture and because they have no faith the words are simply dead letters to them. We have the Holy Spirit within our heart who is the guarantee of what we shall receive. "In Him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it..." Eph. 1:13-14 Of course this is God Himself who works within us. He is the Living Spirit. He lives within our heart in a mysterious union and work. Through His work "we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you..." 1Pet. 1:3-4 So then the words we have in God's promises are not empty and lifeless, but full of assured fulfillment. Stay in God's Word and you will not doubt this. Our future is bright and resplendent with His glory.

A brief glimpse into heaven - "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night within His temple and He who sits upon the throne will shelter them with His presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Rev.7:15-17

When He shall come with trumpet sound, Oh, may I then in Him be found,
Clothed in his righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand. 370 st. 4

Patience

It will all come about. Read the passages which are words our God is speaking to you to hold out.

- "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." Heb. 10:23 It is not upon our strength that we hold out, but upon His faithfulness that we persevere.
- We are "awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of His own..." Titus 2:13 Just as certainly as Jesus died and rose again and has called us

to Himself, so our hope will be fulfilled.

- Ps. 78:7 “so that they should set their hope in God, and nor forget the works of God...” Look at creation as it came about in six days and remember this is the God who speaks and it is done.

Are you patient as you await His second coming and your transfer to glory? Remember the example of Paul, “...I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own...forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded...” Phil. 3:12-15 Are you forgetting what lies behind? Let the evil of the day be sufficient thereof; don't carry worry over to tomorrow. Are you pressing on toward the prize? Those in a race are not distracted, but set their sights on the finish line. Think how the prize is laid up for you. Your name is on it so you can claim it and no other can snatch it. It is a sure thing.

Today on this earth some people have money put in pension funds so that when they finish their labors they might retire with some nest egg to spend as they see fit. Sadly, through poor investments or some chicanery of siphoning off funds the amount is not what it was supposed to be. It is much diminished from what the person thought he was to get. For us the treasure is laid up in heaven and cannot be lessened. We have bliss – the absence of all that saddens and sorrows on earth replaced with happiness that never ends. We have glory – our attention is on the throne of God and His perfection which then reflects upon us even to that of a glorified body free from all that assailed our body on this earth. Jesus has gone ahead to prepare a place for us that where He is we might also be. I wait patiently for that day with great expectations.

What though the tempest rage, Heav'n is my home;
Short is my pilgrimage, Heav'n is my home;
And time's wild wintry blast, Soon shall be overpast;
I shall reach home at last, Heav'n is my home.

There at my Savior's side Heav'n is my home;
I shall be glorified, Heav'n is my home.
There are the good and blest, Those I love most and best;
And there I, too, shall rest, Heav'n is my home. 660 st. 1-2