

The Difference Between Faith and Hope



Faith (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again today, as we continue to explore together the exciting and limitless potential that's contained in that one brief and familiar word of five letters: faith.

Yesterday I explained the difference between faith and sight, or more generally, between faith and our physical senses. Our senses relate us to the visible, material, time/space world, but faith relates us to the invisible, eternal world.

In this invisible, eternal world there are two primary objects of faith: first, God Himself: second, God's Word. Faith apprehends that the creative power behind the entire universe is the Word of God. Something invisible that's behind all that's invisible.

Today, I'm going to explain a very important distinction which many people do not clearly understand. The distinction between faith and hope. Failure to understand this distinction often leads to frustration in the lives of God's people. Many people think they have faith, but in reality they have hope. And the results that God has promised to Faith are not promised to hope. So, it's very important for each of us to get a clear grasp of the difference between faith and hope.

First of all, I think I need to define hope—at least briefly. Hope, in the Scripture, in a good sense, is a steady, continuing expectation of good from God. Hope, in the Scripture, in a good sense, can never be divorced from God. It's a steady, continuing expectation of good from God. It's not just wishful thinking. There's a lot of hopes that people entertain that don't answer to that definition I've given, so, we need to understand the nature of hope as well as the nature of faith.

In 1 Corinthians 13:13, Paul says:

> "But now abide faith, hope, love; these three." (NAS)

So, the three abiding realities of the Christian life are faith, hope and love. We see that faith and hope are linked closely together; and in a certain sense, we could say their product in living is love.

Faith and hope are also closely linked in that first verse of Hebrews, chapter 11, which we looked at yesterday. Yesterday, we looked mainly at the second half of the verse; today, we're going to focus mainly on the first half of the verse. I'll read the entire verse again:

> "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (NAS)

You see there, in the first half of the verse, the link between faith and hope. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. An alternative translation which, I believer would be preferable would be "Faith is the substance of things hoped for," or "the underlying basis of things hoped for." The same Greek word is used at the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews with that meaning of substance or underlying basis.

So, faith is the substance, the underlying basis of things hoped for. This shows us that faith and hope are related, but also that they are distinct. And it tells us something very important about hope. All genuine hope is based on faith. Hopes that are not based on faith are just wishful thinking. But true hope, in the Biblical sense, is based on true faith; and yet, they are different. What are the differences? I'll suggest to you two main differences:

First of all, faith is in the present. Hope is in the future. Secondly, faith is in the heart. Hope is in the mind. You see, the writer of Hebrews ways, "Faith is the substance," (or the underlying reality). So, faith is a substance—it's something real; it's something that we have here and now in our hearts. But hope, essentially, looks toward the future. So, that's the first basic difference. Faith is in the present. Hope looks to the future. Each is valid. but neither is a substitute for the other.

And then again, faith is located in the heart. Hope in the mind. This is very clear, very important. In Romans 10:10, Paul says:

> "For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness..." (NAS)

So, the heart is the place we believe with. That's the kind of faith that results in righteousness. A lot of people have intellectual opinions and give intellectual assent to doctrine, but it isn't in their heart, and it does not change the way they live. Heart faith produces righteousness. That's one of the way we know whether a person in believing with his heart, or just with his mind. You see, the trouble is, we tend to switch these things and get them in the wrong place. Faith in the mind will not do what God promises. It's faith in the heart that produces the results God has promised. Then, Paul goes on to say, in 1 Thessalonians 5:8:

> "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." (NAS)

Paul is talking here about the Christian's armor. Then, he talks about two specific items of armor; the breastplate and the helmet. Obviously, the breastplate relates to the heart, and the breastplate is faith and love.

Equally obviously, the helmet relates to the head—that is the mind. And the helmet is hope. So, again, we have comfirmation from Scripture that faith is in the realm of the heart, the breast; hope is in the realm of the head, the mind.

So, those are the two basic points of distinction between faith and hope. Faith is now. Hope is in the future. Faith is in the heart. Hope is in the mind. I've been saying that faith is in the now, it's a substance. Someone has rather well expressed it by saying there are three "F's." Fact, Faith and Feeling. They have to go in that order. The facts are in the Word of God. Faith is based on those facts. Feeling falls into line with faith. But if we put them in the wrong order, and start with feeling, our feelings are very variable. They change from day to day and from hour to hour. They're like our senses. They don't relate us to something that is permanent. So, people who live by their feelings are unstable people. They're up and down; in and out. The only basis for faith if Fact. The facts of God's Word. These are already stated. They are already established. They are what faith is built on. So, faith is in the now. Faith relates us to the facts, and the Acts of God as we know them from God's Word. It's built on a historical basis. It's important to realize that Christianity is a historical religion. It's not just a theory. It's not just a philosophy, but it's a religion that's based on events that have happened in human history. And faith relates to those events; it relates to the facts, and the acts of God.

In Hebrews 12:2, Jesus is called two things: the Author and the Perfector of our faith. As the Author, Jesus laid the basis for our faith. As the Perfector, He's the One Who's going to complete it and finish off what He began. Elsewhere in Hebrews 3:1, Jesus is called that Apostle and High Priest of our confession. That's the same truth in another way. As Apostle, He's the One Who came from God and did what needed to be done, to give us the basis for our faith. As our

High Priest, He is the One Who's gone back to God and in God's presence. He now represents us, and thus will complete the work that He began as our Apostle.

So, faith relates us to Jesus, in the capacity of Author and Apostle. The One Who began our faith, the One Who laid the foundation, the One Who did what needed to be done to provide salvation.

But hope relates us to Jesus as the Perfecter of our faith, and as our High Priest. The One Who, by His prayer and intercessory ministry in heaven will now complete in us that which He began by His apostolic work on our behalf on earth.

So, faith is based on what Jesus has done. Hope looks forward to what Jesus will do.

But, before I close this talk today, I just want to emphasize that we are not in any sense belittling hope. We're just distinguishing it from faith. Hope is very, very important in the Christian life; it's the helmet of the mind. It's that which protects our minds from depression, anxiety and fear.

You see, hope has to have a solid scriptural base. Otherwise, it's just wishful thinking. There's really one sufficient scriptural base for all hope and that's Romans 8:28:

> "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God; to those who are the called according to His purpose." (NAS)

Now provided we meet those conditions, that we love God and that we are walking in His calling and His purpose for our lives, then we know that everything that happens, God causes it to work together. So, there never is any basis for pessimism. Always, this is the basis of our hope. It's our faith in God's goodness; and this hope protects our mind. It keeps us from depression, from moodiness, from being up and down.

So, we see then, each has its function. Faith is in the heart; it's the breastplate. Hope is in the mind—it's the helmet.

Well, our time is up for today. but I'll he back with you again tomorrow at this time.

Tomorrow, I'll be sharing with you another main reason why faith is so important. It's the only basis for righteous living.

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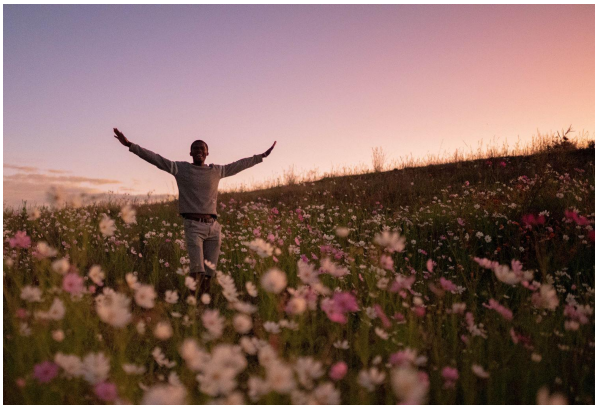

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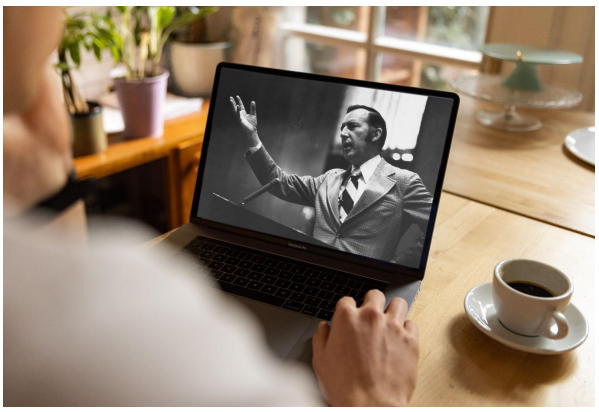

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