

Three Abiding Realities



Hope (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with You Keys to Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

The theme for my talks this week is expressed in just one word: "Hope." It's a theme which can give you a completely new outlook on life.

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk, we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please, take time to write, even if it's only a brief personal note. Now, back to our theme, "Hope."

By way of introduction to this theme, we'll turn to 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, verse 13, where Paul says this:

> "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

So in that verse Paul presents us with the three great abiding spiritual realities of the Christian faith. Other things may come and go, other things may be important or significant for a certain period or a certain situation, but the things that abide forever are these three: faith, hope and love.

Now, many Christians have heard much preaching about faith and a good deal about love but, in many cases, they've heard comparatively little about hope. I know that that was my condition many years ago when I was in desperate need of help from God I'd heard a lot of messages on faith, I'd heard some preaching on love, but the thing that I needed in that particular situation was hope and the Holy Spirit had to take me directly to the Scripture because there was no sermon that I knew of about hope. And there the Holy Spirit met my need. So, for that reason, I have a particular concern that people understand the importance of hope. And I trust that these messages of mine this week, and next week also, will help you to grasp what hope is and how important it is and

how you may have it.

Hope is necessary to maintain both faith and love. I'll show you in various ways in due course that unless we have hope, our faith will leak out and our love will fail. So, hope is not an option; it's something that's essential to the fulness of the Christian life.

There's a saying that people often use: Where there's life, there's hope. I think there's a good deal of truth in that but let me say the opposite is also true: where's there's hope, there's life and where there is no hope, there is no life. In my opinion hopelessness is one of the saddest conditions in human experience. I can hardly think of anything sadder than to be hopeless. And yet uncounted millions in our world today are hopeless people. I sit in an airport waiting to catch a plane or I walk through the streets, or I'm in a restaurant and I look at the faces of people and most of them have that blank stare of hopelessness. But, thank God, we do not need to be hopeless.

I want to read here from 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1, verses 2-4, where Paul presents a picture of God's people, the Christians of Thessalonica, enjoying their full inheritance. They have faith, they have hope and they have love. Notice, he mentions all three as he gives thanks to God for them. This is what he says:

> "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; [And why does he give thanks? He goes on…] Constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you…"

You see, the spiritual condition of those Christians in Thessalonica convinced Paul that they were really people chosen by God. And what he saw in them was those three abiding realities: faith, love and hope. And he uses a characteristic word to describe what's special about each of those realities. He speaks about the work of faith, the labor of love, and the steadfastness of hope. Let's just pick out each of those phrases for a moment and meditate on it.

First of all, faith must be expressed by works or by actions. Faith that doesn't act is dead faith. Listen to what Paul says in Galatians 5:6:

> "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."

Notice, faith working through love. And then in James, chapter 2, verse 26, James says the same thing in another way:

> "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."

So, the characteristic expression of faith is works; it's action; it's doing something that's the outcome of our faith and expresses our faith. Faith without works is a dead faith.

And then, in the same passage, Paul speaks about your "labor of love." And that word "labor" means real hard work. And that is so characteristic of true love. True love does not just sit around and sympathize. True love gets in where the action is, rolls up its sleeves, and does something; at the cost of labor; at the cost, maybe, of weariness and sleeplessness; love labors. It's not just a passive emotion, it's an active, driving force that drives people to sacrificial labor on behalf of others.

And then, we come to the phrase about hope. Paul says to those Thessalonican Christians, "the steadfastness of [your] hope." So hope produces steadfastness, endurance, perseverance. You can use three words: steadfastness, endurance, perseverance. Without having this, we may easily lose the benefits of the first two; that is, faith and love.

How then does hope come? How may we have this kind of hope which is so blessed and so necessary? The answer is that hope is the direct outcome of the new birth; it's the direct outcome of being born again by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ. And not through just general faith in Jesus Christ but specific faith in His death, burial and resurrection. Listen to what Peter says in 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 3:

> "Blessed be 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."

Notice that very significant passage: "…new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." So, when we believe in the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf and then in His resurrection from the dead by the power of God, we are born again; we have a new birth; we're born into a living hope, not just a dead theology, but a living, vibrating hope and it's through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We must clearly understand the

ultimate historical basis for all hope, true hope, is the resurrection of Jesus. Without the resurrection of Jesus, life would be hopeless, but the resurrection of Jesus brings us into a living hope.

Now, this hope must continue complete until the consummation of our salvation. Peter says again, in the same first epistle, just a little further on in the same first chapter, in verse 13:

> "Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Peter is saying the process of salvation is not yet complete; it's going to be consummated by the revelation of Jesus Christ. In the meanwhile, you have to fix your hope completely on that. In other words, the ultimate focus of all Christian hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, His revelation. And as we make our way through this life, we need to obey that injunction of Peter to fix our hope completely on what is coming to us through the return of Jesus in glory.

Also the writer of Hebrews brings out another very important facet of hope in Hebrews 3:6:

> "But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end."

Notice again this hope must be maintained until the end. We cannot give up hoping until our hope is fulfilled by the event. And so, the writer of Hebrews says in order to be a part of the people of God, we must hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. This kind of hope is not just a passive, inner expectation; this is something very strong, very confident, that boasts, not in itself, of course, but in the Lord. And this boasting, this verbal expression of our hope, is part of what God has provided for us. It goes along with hope and hope, in turn, goes along, as I've said, with faith and love. So we have to maintain this confident boasting of our hope; this continual assertion of our expectation of the coming of the Lord Jesus firm until the end.

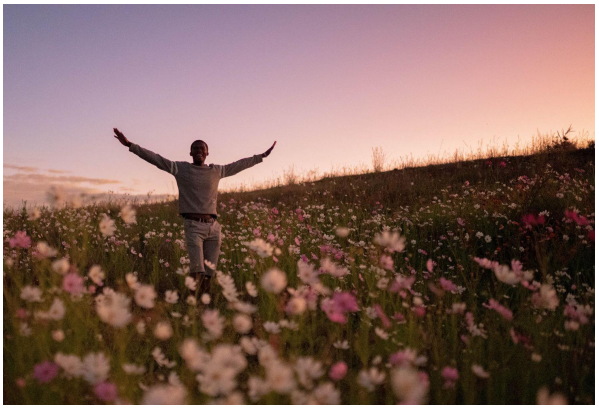
Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll be explaining the relationship between faith and hope.

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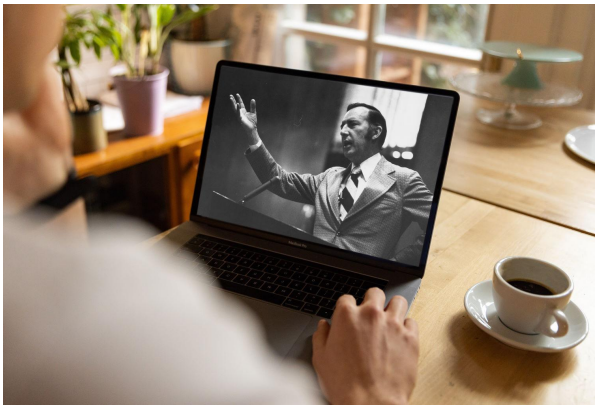
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