

Hope in Death



Hope (Part 7)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again sharing with you precious insights out of the Scripture that have made the difference between success and failure in my life and can do the same in yours. This week I'm continuing with the theme I commenced last week: Hope, a theme that can revolutionize your whole outlook on life and I trust that it will do that.

In my talk yesterday I spoke about hope in this life, that is, within the time framework of life on this earth. And I shared the great scriptural basis for never failing hope for this life found in Romans 8:28:

> "...we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

That's a basis for never failing optimism. No matter what happens, no matter what the appearances, no matter what the situation, if we love God and if we are walking in accordance with His purpose and calling in our life, then everything that happens He causes to work together for good for us. It may not appear so at the time, but it will work out that way. And so we can say as David said in Psalm 27:13:

> "I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

Well, in my talk today I'm going to take this theme of hope one step further. I'm going to be speaking about hope in death. First of all, we all need to face the fact that sometime we are going to die unless we are believers and the Lord Jesus returns first. But if we are realistic, we will face the fact that death is an appointment for all of us that we cannot fail to keep. This is stated very clearly in Hebrews 9:27:

> "It is appointed for me to die once, and after this comes judgment..."

Notice that word "appointed," it's an appointment. You may miss every appointment you make on earth, you may never turn up at the right time or the right place, but this appointment you will keep. It's an appointment with death. And bear in mind, too, that death is not the end. We do not just cease to exist, we simply pass out of this world into

another mode of existence and there is something beyond death: it is the judgment of God. "It is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment." We all are going to have to answer to Almighty God for the lives we've led and one thing primarily we'll have to answer about is how we have responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ, if we've heard it.

Religion that offers hope only for this life cannot meet man's deepest needs and to my understanding, the Christian faith is the only faith that has a real and positive answer to man's need concerning death. The Christian life offers hope beyond the grave. This is stated by Paul in very vivid terms in 1 Corinthians 15:19:

> "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men."

If our Christian faith were only for this life, then we would be the most pitiful of all people on the earth. We would be self deluded, we'd be walking in a dream, in a fantasy. The truth of the matter is that faith in Christ takes us through death, through the portals of the grave and into an eternal life with Christ in the next world. You see, the Bible specifically offers hope in death and this is not merely in the New Testament. I meet quite a number of people who say, "Well, the Old Testament doesn't say anything about life after death." That's a complete mistake. I can't take time now but there are many passages in the Old Testament that specifically speak about life after death and even portray the kind of experience that some people will have in the next world. They are to be found in the prophet Ezekiel and elsewhere. But let's just take two statements from the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 11:4:

> "Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death."

You can pile up all the money and all the wealth but, as everybody knows, you can't take it with you. Death is the end of all that. It does you no good whatever in the day of death. But on the other hand, righteousness delivers from death. Righteousness is a way of escape from the bitterness and the crushing burden of death. This is stated again also in Proverbs 14:32:

> "When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous have a refuge."

Or, another translation says: "have confidence," or "have hope." Notice that again. "When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down…" They have no answer for calamity, it snuffs them out, it finishes them off as far as this life is concerned. That's the Old Testament, not the New. In just a moment we'll look on to the New Testament and see what that has to say about the refuge that the righteous have in their death. What the Old Testament states briefly concerning hope in death is brought fully out into the open and into the light in the New Testament. For example, in 2 Timothy 1:9-10 Paul speaks about the grace that we receive through faith in Jesus Christ and he points out to us that this grace didn't begin in time, that it's eternal, it was in the mind of God before the creation ever took place. This is what he says, very vivid and beautiful words:

> "This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time…"

You see, you're not an accident looking for somewhere to happen. You're part of God's eternal plan. Before the world was created He knew you, He knew your name, He had a plan for your life. And, having chosen you in Christ He gave you that grace that would be needed for you to fulfill that plan. But it wasn't revealed until Jesus came. So, the next verse says:

> "But it [that's the grace] has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Isn't that a beautiful phrase? Jesus, by His own death and resurrection, had destroyed death and He has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. You know, the word gospel means good news. That surely is good news, that someone on our behalf, Jesus Christ, has destroyed death and in place of death He's made life and immortality available to everyone who believes. This is more fully unfolded by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 and following. I'll read these verses, they're so beautiful.

> "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope."

You remember that last week we spoke about those who have no hope, those who are without Christ. What a tragic phrase that is. The Bible only speaks about death as falling asleep if it's the death of a believer because he's falling asleep but he's going to awaken. And then Paul gives the reason why we don't need to grieve like the rest who have no hope.

> "We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have

fallen asleep in him."

The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of our resurrection if we are believers in him. We are identified with Him in death, in burial and in glorious resurrection. Paul continues:

> "According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep."

In other words, those believers who are in earth when the Lord returns will not meet the Lord any sooner than those who have died because those who have died will be resurrected first and then the living will be caught up. This is what Paul goes on to explain:

> "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God..."

Three glorious sounds are going to be heard at that instant. The Lord's command, the command of the Lord Jesus to the believing dead to come out of their graves. You see, when he gave that one command to Lazarus, Lazarus came out but He had to name him. He said, "Lazarus, come out." Because if He hadn't named him, all the dead would have come out. But now He's going to call forth out of the dead all those who've died for Him. That's His loud command. At the same time, there'll be the voice of the archangel calling the whole creation to attend to what God is doing and the trumpet call of God. One of the purposes of a trumpet call in the Bible is to gather God's people together for a solemn meeting. So, there's the command of the Lord, the voice of the archangel, the trumpet call of God and then:

> "...the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

I like that word "forever." No more parting. If you stand at the deathbed of a loved one who knows the Lord, there is a parting, there is a sadness, there is grief. I've experienced that in my own life but it's not a final parting, it's only for a time. There'll be a reunion, we'll be reunited with the Lord and being reunited with the Lord we'll be reunited with one another. You see, there's such awful heaviness, such awful bitterness in the death of those who do not know the Lord but such wonderful assurance and peace in the death and passing of those who do. So Paul says:

> "Therefore encourage each other with these words."

These are days in which we need encouraging words. Let me encourage you with those words as I close. If you know Jesus, death is not the end, it's really the doorway into a new and glorious eternity. You'll not forever be separated from the loved ones who know Him. We shall all be reunited with the Lord and with one another.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. In my talk tomorrow I'll broaden the scope of my theme still further. I'll speak about hope for creation.

Radio Program

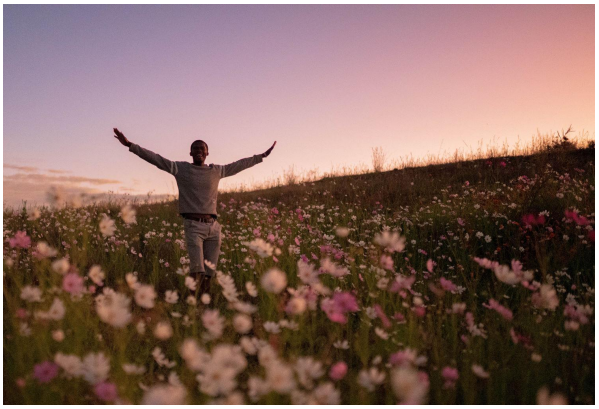
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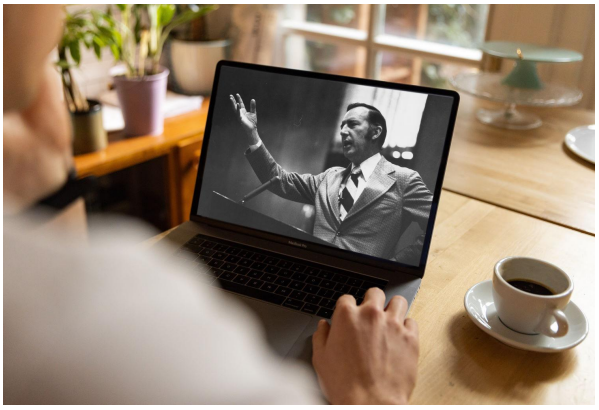
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