

Hope's Link with Faith



Part 2/5
Hope
By Derek Prince

One powerful word in the English language can give you a completely new outlook on life. That word is "hope". I can hardly think of anything sadder than to be hopeless. Yet that is the condition of millions of people in the world today, including Christians. The good news from the Word of God is this: hope triumphs over hopelessness! That is why I have chosen this theme for our five-part Teaching Letter series: *Hope*.

Many years ago, I found myself in desperate need of hope. In that condition, the Holy Spirit took me directly to the Scriptures—and there He met my need. If that is your situation today, this series is for you. You can once again experience genuine hope. I trust these messages will help you understand how important hope is, and most of all, how you may obtain it.

Three Abiding Realities

In Part 1 of this series we began our discussion by examining three eternal realities. Much of what we experience in this life may come and go, but there are three spiritual realities that remain forever—faith, hope, and love. Paul refers to them in 1 Corinthians 13:13:

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

We also discovered certain characteristics of each of these virtues. Faith should produce work, or action, because without action, it is a dead faith. The primary characteristic of faith is that it acts. Love produces labor: hard, sacrificial, self-giving work on behalf of others. Love does not just use polite religious clichés; love rolls up its sleeves and gets to work where the work is hardest. When we think of hope's main characteristics, we can use three words for hope: steadfastness, endurance, and perseverance.

Faith produces action. Love produces labor. Hope produces steadfastness, endurance, and perseverance. Actually, if you don't have the perseverance hope supplies, you are very liable to lose the benefits of the other two—faith and love.

The Nature of Hope

In our previous lesson we also considered two other aspects of hope. First, we asked this question: How does

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hope come to us? Peter gives us the answer in 1 Peter 1:3 (niv):

> 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.

Hope is the direct outcome of being born again through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the new birth which brings us into a living hope. We are not born again into some dead theology or theory, but into a living, vibrating anticipation based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When Jesus rose from the dead, it was the ultimate victory of hope over hopelessness!

Second, we learned that our hope must have a target—it must be focused on something. We read this in 1 Peter 1:13:

> 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. (nasb1977)

We are all in a process—the process of salvation—but it is not yet complete. It will be consummated by the revelation of Jesus Christ. In the meanwhile, our mandate is to fix our hope completely on His appearing.

So, in our previous teaching letter, we learned that hope is essential—it is living and vibrant—and that the focus of our hope is the revelation or appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith and Hope

In this installment on the theme of hope, we are going to explore the relationship between faith and hope. Through the years, as I have ministered to many thousands of Christians, I have seen a consistent tendency emerge. I have discovered from my own experience that many believers confuse faith with hope and hope with faith.

To introduce this segment on the relationship between faith and hope, let me begin by pointing out an important distinction: faith is in the present, hope is in the future. If you have a faith which is only in the future, you really don't have faith. What you have is hope. For example, when people would ask me to pray for them, my first question would be: "Do you believe God can do this?" Many times they would answer, "I believe He will." But something in their voice told me they were really ***hoping*** God would do what they were asking of Him. We must understand that the results promised to faith do not flow from hope. Each is important, but neither is a substitute for the other.

The Substance of Faith

Let's look at the biblical definition of faith (which, by the way, also includes the word **hope**) in Hebrews 11:1–3:

> Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. [That is, the Old Testament saints.] By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. (nasb1977)

These verses contain many important statements. First, we notice that faith is a substance. It's not just a theory; it's not just theology; it's not just doctrine. You can have all those without having faith. Truly, faith has to be a "substance" for us. The Greek word for substance means "the underlying basis or foundation of something." Verse 1 tells us: "faith is the substance of things hoped for." In order to be real, **hope** has to be built on **faith**.

We should also notice that faith is based on that which is not seen. Ultimately, faith is based on God's Word. Consequently, faith lays hold of the fact that the whole universe was brought into being by the invisible Word of God. In other words, what we see was created out of that which cannot be seen. Our faith is based in the unseen, eternal reality of God's Word. Hope, in turn, is based on faith.

As I said already (but it never does any harm to say it again because it's so important)—faith is here and now. Faith is a substance, something which we really have right now. But hope, based on that faith, looks to the future. Don't confuse the two, because God has promised results to faith which are not promised to hope. It is very important to realize that hope is only valid when it is based on faith. Faith, in turn, is based on God's Word. So the ultimate basis of both faith and hope is the Word of God.

Hope Defined

A lot of people think they have **hope**. They may justifiably use that word, but their use of the term "hope" is not

actually in line with the scriptural meaning of the word. You and I are only entitled to say we have **hope** when our hope is based on the real and present substance of faith. Then we are talking about having hope along scriptural lines. Any other kind of hope is mere wishful thinking. It is possible that such hope may be fulfilled, but there is no guarantee. The only hope which is guaranteed its fulfillment is a hope based on genuine faith.

So again, bear in mind that faith is in the present. Faith is a substance. Faith is here and now. Faith is based on the unseen reality of the Word of God. Hope, in turn, is based on that faith. The kind of hope which is based on genuine faith is guaranteed fulfillment. However, any other kind of hope is no better than wishful thinking.

Let me just add a personal definition of hope. This is how I understand hope as it is used in the Bible: *Hope is a serene, confident expectation of good.* Let me say that again: *Hope is a serene, confident expectation of good.* Hope is both serene and confident.

Looking For Hope

There is an aspect of hope which I have already mentioned, but because it is so important I would like to examine it more closely. Let me summarize that aspect of hope here: The ultimate focus of all true hope is the return of Jesus Christ in glory. Paul affirms this truth in Titus 2:11–13:

> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and in a godly manner in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus ... (nasb)

This last verse, verse 13, is what you might call "the punch line" for the rest of the passage—the explanation of all that goes before. What does it say? Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. We are to look for that ultimate hope of all Christians which stretches beyond time and out into eternity. What is that blessed hope? It is the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. (Notice that Paul calls Jesus "... our great God.")

How does looking for the blessed hope of Jesus' appearing affect our lives? To answer that question, let's return to the words Paul began with in verse 11: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, instructing us ..." (nasb)

Please notice that grace instructs us; grace has that authority in our lives. What does it instruct us to do? "To deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and in a godly manner in the present age." Why do we live that way? Because we are looking forward to a new age; we are looking forward to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We want to be ready when He comes, and we don't want to be ashamed before His presence.

So we see that the hope of Jesus' appearing motivates us to godly living. It is the greatest single motivator in the New Testament. In his first epistle the apostle John says, "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself even as He [Jesus Christ] is pure" (1 John 3:3). This kind of hope leads to self-purifying. If it is real hope, based on the substance of real faith, it will affect the way we live.

Time and Eternity

We can see then that there will be evidence in the life of every person who really has this hope. Such a person is purifying himself—denying ungodliness and worldly desires. That person is living sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age. Such behavior is the first effect of this hope that is focused on the appearing of the glory of Jesus Christ.

The second effect is related to the first one: having this hope releases us from the bondage of time. We are no longer slaves of just a few years of life. We are looking forward to eternity. We don't get anxious about the disasters and the troubles of living "in time" as other people do because they have nowhere else to look. They are constrained; they are shut up in just the few years that God gives them in this life.

For those of us who have this glorious hope, these few years are just a period of preparation for eternity. Having this hope in the revelation of Jesus Christ will have a tremendous effect on the way we live. In fact, when we look at people who say they have this hope, we should see this same evidence in the way they live.

Hope For You

What about you? If someone were to ask you if you have this kind of hope, what would you say? Does your life say yes or no? Do you feel constrained by time, or are you looking beyond time to eternity?

Perhaps you are uncertain how to answer those questions, but you know you want to move forward into this kind of blessed hope. You know you want the joy and freedom it can bring. If that is truly your desire, let's conclude this section by praying the following prayer together, asking the Lord to let hope come to us.

Lord, I'm not certain I have the kind of hope I've been reading about in this letter. I need Your help to receive genuine hope, so that I will be motivated to focus on You, pursue a godly life and have freedom from the bondage of time. Right now, I put my faith in Your Word. Lord, I ask You to let hope come to me—and I thank You in advance for answering my prayer. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

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