

The Christians Hope

By: Don Wright

I have often pointed out that living the life of a Christian is not always easy. We are always endangered by the assaults of Satan. Peter said, "...the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Furthermore, we are always under the pressure of giving in to materialism and the carnal ways of this world. We are also encompassed by enemies of the cross, who dislike us simply because of who we are and for that which we stand (1 John 3:13). No wonder Jesus exhorted His disciples to count the cost of discipleship. He knew that the life of a Christian would sometimes be tough. He proclaimed to His followers "...In the world ye shall have tribulation..." (John 16:33). He understood very well that the lot of all Christians would be to suffer to a certain extent (2 Timothy 3:12).

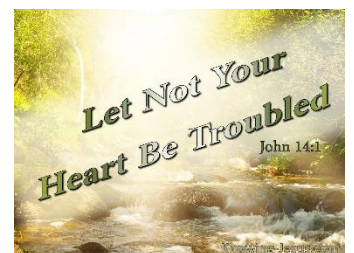
Still, as Christians we do not have to lose heart. While things may not always be the way we want them to be here on earth, we have something that can help us through all our struggles - hope. Let's observe some things about biblical hope.

The word hope as used today has lost much of its original meaning and force. It is used now to indicate a desire that is still in the stage of doubt. Biblical hope, however, is completely void of doubt. It consists of two essential ingredients: Desire and Confident Expectation. Biblical hope, then, is having total and complete confidence in a desired thing. Now, what is the hope that we have as Christians? What is the hope that can carry us through our trials and tribulations?

1. Heaven: The where of our hope. As Christians, we do not have an earthly hope. Our hope is higher and greater than that. We look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, which figuratively describes our heavenly home. Peter left no doubt about the where of our hope: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4). And did not Jesus extend to us the hope of heaven in John 14? "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3). Clearly, we can see that heaven is the where of our hope.

2. A Glorified Body: The what of our hope. As Christians we are hoping for a new and improved body. Our bodies will be new from the standpoint of characteristic. It will be the same body (Romans 8:24; Philippians 3:21), but it will be changed. And make no mistake about it, the change will be for the better. Our present bodies were suited for this temporal life; thus, they were made corruptible. But when our bodies are changed, they will be suited for heaven, and will therefore be glorious, incorruptible, and immortal. Listen to Paul: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:42-49).

Our hope is one of our greatest possessions. In Romans 8:24 Paul affirms that we are saved by hope. It is not the only factor involved in salvation, but it does help us regarding salvation. This makes hope more valuable than the riches of this earth. It makes hope more valuable than power and prestige. It even rises hope above spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28-31; 13:13). Notice what hope can do for us:



a. It sustains us. When we keep our eyes on the goal of heaven, the problems of life do not seem so devastating. Even though his life was constantly in danger, Paul was faithful to his Lord. He was able to overcome the difficulties he faced because he kept his eyes on the goal of heaven (2 Corinthians 4:8-18). Hope is an anchor for our soul (Hebrews 6:18-20).

b. It gives us boldness to preach. When we truly believe the gospel message of salvation and eternal life through and by the blood of Christ, we will not be able to keep that message to ourselves. We will spread it at every opportunity we have (2 Corinthians 4:13; Philippians 1:20).

c. It helps us to prioritize our lives. Materialism is one of the great devices of the Devil. He knows that he cannot get too many of us to forsake God altogether, but he can ruin our chances of making it to heaven by captivating us with the carnal things of this world. Satan knows he can steal our attention and time by the riches of this world easier than he can get us to quit serving God altogether. But we do not have to allow Satan to be successful in this area. If we keep our eye on heaven, constantly filling our minds with the thoughts of our eternal reward, we can properly prioritize our lives (Matthew 6:19; Colossians 3:1, 2).

d. It motivates us to live pure lives. Finally, hope can help us live our lives the way our heavenly Father wants. When we think often of our hope of heaven and the everlasting bliss that will accompany it, we will do all we can to make that hope become a reality. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

There is but one hope. It is the hope which is grounded and rooted in Christ Jesus. Yes, we shall suffer in this life. It is inescapable and inevitable. But as Paul said, "The suffering of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).