

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 186

HOPE

*“Now the God of hope fill you
with all joy and peace in believing,
that ye may abound in hope,
through the power of the
Holy Ghost.”*

Romans 15:13

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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HOPE

#186

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WHAT HOPE IS

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

HOPE is a theological grace planted in the heart by the Spirit of God, whereby a Christian is quickened to the expectation of those things that are held forth in the promise. “If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom 8:25).

A. Definitions. Aquinas¹ describes hope thus, “Hope is concerned with a good that is hard to reach, located in the future, and open to be gained.” Hope is concerned with a *good*. It looks at some good, so it differs from fear. Fear looks at evil, hope at good.

Hope is concerned with a *future* good. It looks at some good to come, so it differs from joy. Joy is exercised about something present, hope about something future.

Hope is concerned with a good that is *hard to reach*. It looks at some good that is difficult to attain, so hope differs from desire. Desire is weak and transient, [so] it is soon over. Hope is resolute and fixed; it wrestles with difficulties, and will not give up till it has the thing hoped for.

Hope is concerned with a good that is *open to be gained*. It looks at some good that is feasible and [has a] possibility of obtaining, so hope differs from despair. Despair looks on things with black spectacles and gives all up as lost. Hope is like cork to the net,² which keeps the heart from sinking in despair. Thus you have seen what hope is.

B. Hope and Faith. These two graces, faith and hope, are so alike that they have been taken one for the other. There is such a near affinity between them that, as Luther³ said, it is hard to find a difference. But, though they are placed near together like the two wings of the cherubim on the mercy seat, they are not the same. Indeed, in some things faith and hope do agree. Both feed upon the promise; both help to support the soul in trouble. Faith and hope are like two balloons put under a Christian, which keep him from sinking in the waters of affliction. Both of these graces, like medicinal

¹ **Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)** – Italian, Dominican monk, theologian, and philosopher. Though Roman Catholic, the Puritans often referred to the portions of his writings with which they agreed.

² **cork to the net** – Cork is used in fishing to float a net near the surface.

³ **Martin Luther (1483-1546)** – German leader of the Protestant Reformation.

water, comfort the fainting soul. There is joy in believing; rejoicing in hope (Rom 15:13; 5:2). Faith and hope, like those two golden pipes (Zec 4:12), empty their golden oil of joy into a Christian.

C. Differences between Hope and Faith. Though in some things these two graces agree and are alike, yet in some things they [certainly] differ. *1. Faith and hope differ in order and priority.* Faith precedes and goes before hope; it is the mother grace. Faith is the ground of things hoped for (Heb 11:1). The promises are precious. They are like the ark, which had manna laid up in it (Heb 9:4); but we must first believe the things contained in the promise, before we hope for them. Therefore, Jerome⁴ said well, “Faith lights the lamp of hope as the fire of the altar lighted the lamps of the sanctuary.” Thus these graces differ in priority: hope is the daughter of faith.

2. They differ in their nature, and that two ways. a) Hope only looks forward at things to come. Faith looks backward as well as forward; it looks at things past as well as future. Faith believes Christ’s passion and resurrection as well as His coming to glory.

b) Hope looks at the excellency of the promise; faith looks at the certainty. Hope reads over the writing of the promise; faith looks at the seal of the promise. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Ti 1:2). That which hope looks at is eternal life; that which faith looks at is the infallibility of the promise: God Who cannot lie has promised. In a word, faith *believes*, hope *waits*. Faith shows a Christian the land of promise; hope sails there with patience.

Thus you see how faith and hope differ, but these twins must not be parted. Faith strengthens hope and hope comforts faith—as an elm supports the vine, and the vine loads the elm with its fruit. Faith is the cable and hope the anchor, and both these help to keep the soul steady so that it does not dash upon shelves⁵ or sink in the quicksands.

From “A Sacred Anchor” in *A Plea for the Godly and Other Sermons*,
reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria. Used by permission.

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686): British non-Conformist Puritan preacher.



⁴ **Jerome** (c. 347-419/420) – Monastic leader, often regarded as the most learned of the Latin churchmen. Known for his Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate.

⁵ **shelves** – a range of rocks lying at or near the surface of the water

HOPE IN GOD

Wilhelmus A'Brakel (1635-1711)

Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him.—Psalm 43:5

GOD gives His children great and glorious promises, but He does not always fulfill them immediately. He postpones at times the fulfillment, and occasionally allows many difficulties to come between, in order to test their faith. Nevertheless, to be able to proceed courageously, hope is needed...

I. HOPE DEFINED

Hope is expressed in Hebrew by the words *tikvah*, *tocheleth*, *sebber*, all of which mean “expectation” and are translated by the word *hope*. There is also *kislah* and *kesel*, because the foolish world hopes without foundation and ridicules the expectation of the godly. Furthermore, there is *bittachon*, which is expressive of “trust without fear.” In Greek, the word is *elpis*, which signifies “to build upon faith, to be free of anxiety, to anticipate with certainty.” Occasionally, it signifies the matter hoped for; here it signifies the motion of the heart.

Hope is a propensity¹ infused² by God into the hearts of believers by means of the Word, whereby they patiently, actively, and with assurance anticipate future promised benefits.

Hope is a *propensity*. Propensities are generally distinguished as being either acquired or infused. *Acquired* propensities complement either the intellect, the will, or actions, thus enabling one to engage in artistic activity. These skills are acquired by way of much exercise. The *infused* propensities are faith, hope, love, etc. Man, due to his blindness, evil disposition, and impotence, cannot acquire these by his own activity; rather they are infused into the soul by God. Having been infused, they, by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, are improved by way of [man's] many exercises. God does not infuse them repeatedly with every act, implying that man would time and again be destitute. Rather, when God makes the soul spiritually alive, He gives her a virtuous disposition and the competence to be spiritually active. By reason of this competence, the regenerated man—by the

¹ **propensity** – tendency or bent of mind, inclination, or disposition.

² **infused** – put in; introduced into; instilled.

coinciding operation of the Holy Spirit, Who must continually influence him—brings forth various virtues. Such is also true for hope, for it is not a transitory³ act, but rather a propensity—a disposition of spiritual competence from which deeds proceed.

II. THE NATURE OF HOPE

The nature of hope consists in a *sure expectation*. Hope is not the equivalent of possession: whatever one possesses, one cannot hope for. “Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom 8:24). Hope expects and anticipates that which has not been observed as yet, is not yet present, but which is yet to come. “But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom 8:25). The apostle therefore conjoins expecting and hoping—the latter explaining the former.

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope” (Phi 1:20). Hope is a sure expectation. It is not a wish such as, “I wish I had this and that”—as Balaam said, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!” (Num 23:10). Such is the hope of the unconverted. They are neither partakers of the promise nor of the matter, and yet they say, “I hope to be saved.” Thus, their hope is but a wish that shall come to naught. “When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth” (Pro 11:7).

III. THE OBJECTS OF HOPE

The objects of hope consist in the promised or future benefits.

A. God Himself

God Himself is the supreme good and the complete felicity⁴ of man. In the covenant, God promises Himself to believers; and God is thus the object of hope. God is, however, also the Promisor and Giver of all salvation to His children, and He is thus once more the object of hope. Those who exercise hope look to Him, expect from Him, and rest in Him as the One Who is good, true, immutable,⁵ and omnipotent. “Hope thou in God” (Psa 42:5); “And have hope toward God” (Act 24:15). He is therefore called “the hope of Israel” (Jer 14:8). “For thou art *my* hope, O Lord GOD” (Psa 71:5).

Hope expects benefits from God. These benefits are temporal, spiritual, or eternal in nature. Hope is also exercised relative to *temporal*

³ **transitory** – existing only for a short time.

⁴ **felicity** – happiness.

⁵ **immutable** – not capable of change; always the same.

benefits, for God has also promised temporal benefits—this referring in a general sense to all that they stand in need of to serve Him according to His purpose in this life. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5); “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1Co 10:13). A believer may and must take hold of this promise, let go of all fear, and expect its fulfillment with certainty.

B. Eternal Felicity

Hope has as one of its objects *eternal felicity*. Hope is a “hope of salvation” (1Th 5:8); “the hope which is laid up for you in heaven” (Col 1:5); “hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2); and “hope of eternal life” (Ti 1:2). All that is of this world is transitory and to be esteemed of little value, but that which is eternal is everything. If eternity weighs down upon the heart, and man considers himself as having to depart from here either into glory or eternally to be in a place of horror—he will shake and tremble. He cannot be at peace unless he is assured of his eternal felicity. God promises this to believers, and they must hold this before them as the goal to be attained, and therefore strive and reach out for it. Since God promises salvation, they must hope for, anticipate, and expect it with assurance. That will engender⁶ comfort and a zeal for godliness.

C. Promised Benefits

Hope focuses upon *promised benefits*. Where there is no promise, there can also be no hope; and if there are promises, there can likewise be no hope unless these promises have been made *unto us*. Only believers are heirs of the promise and, therefore, they alone are able to hope. When Scripture speaks of hope, therefore, it simultaneously speaks of promises, and is thus called “the hope of the promise” (Act 26:6); “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Ti 1:2). The heathen are therefore said to be *without hope*, due to being “strangers from the covenants of promise” (Eph 2:12).

Hope focuses upon *future benefits*. Faith and hope both ascertain the reality of a matter. Faith focuses upon future benefits as much as hope does. They differ, however, in that faith represents these future benefits as if they are a present reality. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). Hope,

⁶ **engender** – produce or cause to exist.

however, postpones the matter, and considers it as yet having to come to pass. “Not as though I had already attained...but I follow after...I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phi 3:12, 14). The person who exercises hope says, “It is true; I do not have it as yet, but I *shall* have it.” He does not say, “Maybe,” nor, “There is a good probability,” but rather, “It is certain and infallibly true. It cannot miscarry; it is definite; I shall have it. I commit myself to this with such certainty as if I already had it. I adjust my conduct accordingly, for I am counting on it and I proceed in reliance upon this.”

IV. THE SUBJECT OF HOPE

To the object of hope we join the *subjects* of hope, who are the children of God. An unconverted person has no basis for hope, since there is no promise for him whatsoever. Furthermore, being dead, he can also not bring forth the deeds of life. To have hope is the privilege of God’s children only. In regeneration, they have received life and thus also the ability to exercise hope. “Which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope” (1Pe 1:3). The promises are made to them only, and therefore they alone have a basis for hope. “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath...to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb 6:17-18). Hope is therefore called “the hope of the righteous” (Pro 10:28; Gal 5:5). Only they hope, and only they are exhorted to hope. “I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope...Let Israel hope in the LORD” (Psa 130:5, 7). It is grievous that they who may and are able to hope do not more frequently engage therein.

V. THE CAUSE AND MEANS OF THE EXERCISE OF HOPE

A. God Alone

The cause of the exercise of hope is God alone. God promises the matters: “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1Jo 2:25). God gives the matter that is hoped for and has been promised: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2Ti 4:8). God infuses into them the ability to hope and in actuality *causes* them to hope. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the

power of the Holy Ghost” (Rom 15:13); “God, even our Father, which...hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2Th 2:16).

B. The Word

The means⁷ is the Word. In the Word, God presents the matter in its beauty and preciousness. In the Word, He presents the Mediator⁸ by Whom the promised matters have been merited, and by the Word God works faith in the Savior—and by faith hope is wrought in us.

All blessings contained in the promises are founded upon and confirmed in Christ, Who, by His blood, has removed the partition between God and man; and Who, by His merits, has merited salvation for the elect. “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen” (2Co 1:20). A believer, hoping upon the promise, focuses his eye upon the Lord Jesus in order to attain the fulfillment through Him. The Lord Jesus is therefore called our “hope”: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).

No one becomes a partaker of Christ—and thus also not of the benefits of the covenant—except by faith. Faith, being exercised toward Christ by receiving Him and claiming Him as one’s own, views the promised benefits as being his own. Thus, hope proceeds from faith, expecting the receipt of the benefits as being one’s own, and that these benefits will be most certainly given to him at the appropriate time. In that respect faith is the foundation of hope. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope” (Rom 15:13).

VI. THE ADJUNCT AND RESULT OF HOPE

A. Patience

Hope has as its adjunct⁹ patience. There is much time, much cross-bearing, and much strife between promise and possession. Then hope comes and shows the glory of the benefits, and the certainty of be-

⁷ **means** – instruments through which God works to communicate to the hearts of men.

⁸ **Mediator** – a go-between; “It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all Eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.” (1689 *London Baptist Confession* 8.1; see also Free Grace Broadcaster 183 *Christ the Mediator*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY)

⁹ **adjunct** – something added to another.

coming a partaker of them. This is followed by patience, which supports hope so that it does not succumb due to tribulations—the latter being the way in which God leads to the possession of the promised matter. Since there is no other way—and since we must either let go of the benefits and forego them, or along with the end must simultaneously choose the way—hope becomes thereby a patient expectation. The believer commits himself to bearing it, wishes to bear it, and bears it willingly and with a quiet heart, for the glory and certainty of the benefits infinitely make up for this. The Lord Jesus has thus gone before, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb 12:2). Therefore, we also must “run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1). The apostle, therefore, says in Romans 8:25, “But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it,” and he also speaks of a “patience of hope” (1Th 1:3).

B. Industry in Service

The result of hope is holy industry. Hope neither causes us to be inactive, nor will it tolerate occupation with other things; instead, it engenders holy industry to attain the end in the right way. The end in view causes us to be active and to take the means in hand. God, Who has promised to give the end, leads His children to this end by means of holy industry. He causes them to forsake the world, focus upon heaven, and lay aside all burdens and the sins that so easily beset¹⁰ them (Heb 12:1). They thus courageously overcome all the obstacles that stand in the way and hinder them. He causes them to walk in the way of His commandments, and to seek glory, honor, and immortality by persevering in well-doing. This is conveyed by the following exhortations: “Strive to enter in at the strait¹¹ gate” (Luk 13:24); “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1).

From *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, reprinted by
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Wilhelmus A’Brakel (1635-1711): Venerated theologian representing the Dutch Second Reformation. Born in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands.



¹⁰ **beset** – surround; hem in.

¹¹ **strait** – so narrow as to make passage difficult.

OUR HOPE

J.C. Ryle (1816-1900)

Good hope through grace.—2 Thessalonians 2:16

I hope is a very common expression. Everybody can say, “I hope.” About no subject is the expression used so commonly as it is about religion. Nothing is more frequent than to hear men turn off¹ some home-thrust² at conscience by this convenient form of words, “I hope.” “I hope it will be all right at last.” “I hope I shall be a better man some day.” “I hope we shall all get to heaven.” But why do they hope? On what is their hope built? Too often they cannot tell you! Too often it is a mere excuse for avoiding a disagreeable subject. “Hoping,” they live on. “Hoping,” they grow old. “Hoping,” they die at last—and find too often that they are lost forever in hell.

I ask the serious attention of all who read this paper. The subject is one of the deepest importance: “We are saved by hope” (Rom 8:24). Let us, then, make sure that our hope is sound. Have we a hope that our sins are pardoned, our hearts renewed, and our souls at peace with God? Then let us see to it that our hope is “good” and “lively” and one that “maketh not ashamed” (2Th 2:16; 1Pe 1:3; Rom 5:5). Let us consider our ways. Let us not shrink from honest, searching inquiry into the condition of our souls. If our hope is good, examination will do it no harm. If our hope is bad, it is high time to know it and to seek a better.

There are five marks of a really “good hope.” I desire to place them before my readers in order. Let us ask ourselves what we know of them. Let us prove our own state by them. Happy is he who can say of each of these marks, “I know it by experience. This is my hope about my soul.”

I. In the first place, a good hope is a hope that a man can explain. What saith the Scripture? “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1Pe 3:15).

If our hope is sound, we must be able to give some account of it. We must be able to show why, wherefore, on what grounds, and for

¹ **turn off** – divert; deflect.

² **home-thrust** – a well directed or effective thrust that wounds in a vital part.

what reason we expect to go to heaven when we die. Now, can we do this?

Let no one misunderstand my meaning. I do not say that deep learning and great knowledge are absolutely needful to salvation. A man may know twenty languages and have the whole body of divinity at his fingers' ends, and yet be lost. A man may be unable to read and have a very weak understanding, and yet be saved. But I do say that a man must know what his hope is, and be able to tell us its nature. I cannot believe that a man has got possession of a thing if he knows nothing about it.

Once more, let no one misunderstand my meaning. I do not say that a power of talking well is necessary to salvation. There may be many fine words on a man's lips and not a whit of grace in his heart. There may be few and stammering words, and yet deep feeling within planted there by the Holy Ghost. There are some who cannot speak many words for Christ, and yet would die for Him. But for all this, I do say that the man who has a good hope ought to be able to tell us why. If he can tell us no more than this, that he feels himself a sinner and has no hope but in Christ, it is something. But if he can tell us nothing at all, I must suspect that he has got no real hope.

I am aware that the opinion just expressed displeases many. Thousands can see no necessity for that clear knowledge which I believe to be essential to a saving hope. So long as a man goes to church on Sunday and has his children baptized, they think we ought to be content. "Knowledge," they tell us, "may be very well for clergymen and professors of theology, but it is too much to require it of common men."

My answer to all such people is short and simple. Where in the whole New Testament shall we find that men were called Christians, unless they knew something of Christianity? Will anyone try to persuade me that a Corinthian Christian, or a Colossian, or Thessalonian, or Philippian, or Ephesian, could not have told us what was his hope about his soul? Let those believe it who will: I, for one, cannot. I believe that in requiring a man to know the ground of his hope I am only setting up the standard of the New Testament. Ignorance may suit a Roman Catholic well enough. He belongs to what he considers to be the true Church! He does as his priest tells him! He asks no more! But ignorance ought never to be the characteristic of a Protestant Christian. He ought to know what he believes; and if he does not know, he is in a bad way.

I ask every reader of this paper to search his heart and see how the matter stands with his soul. Can you tell us nothing more than that “you hope to be saved”? Can you give no explanation of the grounds of your confidence? Can you show us nothing more satisfactory than your own vague expectation? If this be the case, you are in imminent peril of being lost forever! Like Ignorance in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*,³ you may get to your journey’s end and be ferried by Vainhope over the river without much trouble. But, like Ignorance, you may find to your sorrow that there is no admission for you into the Celestial City. None enter in there but those who know what, as well as Whom, they have believed (2Ti 1:12).

I lay down this principle as a starting point and I ask my readers to consider it well. I admit most fully that there are different degrees of grace among true Christians. I do not forget that there are many in the family of God whose faith is very weak and whose hope is very small. But I believe confidently that the standard of requirement I have set up is not a whit too high. I believe that the man who has a “good hope” will always be able to give some account of it.

II. In the second place, a good hope is a hope that is drawn from Scripture. What says David? “I hope in thy word.” “Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.” What says St. Paul? “Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Psa 119:81, 49; Rom 15:4).

If our hope is sound, we ought to be able to turn to some text, fact, or doctrine of God’s Word as the source of it. Our confidence must arise from something that God has caused to be written in the Bible for our learning, and that our heart has received and believed.

It is not enough to have good feelings about the state of our souls. We may flatter ourselves that all is right and that we are going to heaven when we die, and yet have nothing to show for our expectations but mere fancy and imagination. “The heart is deceitful above all things”; “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Jer 17:9; Pro 28:26). I have frequently heard dying people say that they felt quite happy and ready to go. I have heard them say that they felt as if they craved nothing in this world. And all this time, I have remarked that they

³ *The Pilgrim’s Progress* – classic allegory by John Bunyan (1628-1688), in which the main character, Christian, seeks relief from the guilt-burden of the Law, finds forgiveness at the cross of Christ, and proceeds to face many trials in this world on his way to eternal life in the Celestial City; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

were profoundly ignorant of Scripture, and seemed unable to lay firm hold on a single truth of the gospel! I never can feel comfort about such people; I am persuaded that there is something wrong in their condition. Good feelings without some warrant of Scripture do not make up a good hope.

It is not enough to have the good opinion of others about the state of our souls. We may be told by others on our death beds, to “keep up our spirits” and “not to be afraid.” We may be reminded that we have “lived good lives, or had a good heart, or done nobody any harm, or not been so bad as many,” and all this time our friends may not bring forward a word of Scripture and may be feeding us on poison. Such friends are miserable comforters. However well meaning, they are downright enemies to our souls. The good opinion of others, without the warrant of God’s Word, will never make up a good hope.

If a man would know the soundness of his own hope, let him search and look within his heart for some text, doctrine, or fact out of God’s book. There will always be some one or more on which your soul hangs if you are a true child of God. The dying thief in London who was visited by a city missionary and found utterly ignorant of Christianity, laid hold on one single fact in a chapter of St. Luke’s Gospel—which was read to him—and found comfort in it. That fact was the story of the penitent thief. “Sir,” he said, when visited the second time, “Are there any more thieves in that book from which you read yesterday?” The dying Hindu who was found by a missionary on a roadside, had grasped one single text in the First Epistle of St. John and found in it peace. That text was the precious saying, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jo 1:7). This is the experience of all true Christians. Unlearned, humble, poor as many of them are, they have got hold of something in the Bible and this causes them to hope. The hope that “maketh not ashamed” is never separate from God’s Word (Rom 5:5).

Men wonder sometimes that ministers press them so strongly to read the Bible. They marvel that we say so much about the importance of preaching and urge them so often to hear sermons. Let them cease to wonder and marvel no more. Our object is to make you acquainted with God’s Word. We want you to have a good hope, and we know that a good hope must be drawn from the Scriptures. Without reading or hearing, you must live and die in ignorance. Hence we cry, “Search the Scriptures”; “Hear, and your soul shall live” (Joh 5:39; Isa 55:3).

I warn every one to beware of a hope not drawn from Scripture. It is a false hope, and many will find out this to their cost. That glorious and perfect book, the Bible, however men despise it, is the only fountain out of which man's soul can derive peace. Many sneer at the old book while living, who find their need of it when dying. The Queen in her palace and the pauper in the workhouse, the philosopher in his study and the child in the cottage, each and all must be content to seek living water from the Bible if they are to have any hope at all. Honor your Bible, read your Bible, stick to your Bible. There is not on earth a scrap of solid hope for the other side of the grave that is not drawn out of the Word.

III. In the third place, a good hope is a hope that rests entirely on Jesus Christ. What says St. Paul to Timothy? He says that Jesus Christ "is our hope." What says he to the Colossians? He speaks of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (1Ti 1:1; Col 1:27).

The man who has a good hope founds all his expectations of pardon and salvation on the mediation and redeeming work of Jesus the Son of God. He knows his own sinfulness; he feels that he is guilty, wicked, and lost by nature—but he sees forgiveness and peace with God offered freely to him through faith in Christ. He accepts the offer: he casts himself with all his sins on Jesus and rests on Him. Jesus and His atonement on the cross, Jesus and His righteousness, Jesus and His finished work, Jesus and His all-prevailing intercession, Jesus and Jesus *only* is the foundation of the confidence of his soul.

Let us beware of supposing that any hope is good which is not founded on Christ. All other hopes are built on sand. They may look well in the summer time of health and prosperity, but they will fail in the day of sickness and the hour of death. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1Co 3:11).

Church membership is no foundation of hope. We may belong to the best of churches, and yet never belong to Christ. We may fill our pew regularly every Sunday and hear the sermons of orthodox,⁴ ordained clergymen, and yet never hear the voice of Jesus or follow Him. If we have nothing better than church membership to rest upon, we are in a poor plight: we have nothing solid beneath our feet.

Reception of the sacraments is no foundation of hope. We may be washed in the waters of baptism and yet know nothing of the water of

⁴ **orthodox** – literally, "of right belief"; of doctrines that are essential to the Christian faith. This implies consistency in belief and worship with the revelation of Holy Scripture.

life. We may go to the Lord's Table every Sunday of our lives and yet never eat Christ's body and drink Christ's blood by faith. Miserable indeed is our condition if we can say nothing more than this! We possess nothing but the outside of Christianity; we are leaning on a reed.

Christ Himself is the only true foundation of a good hope. He is the Rock; His work is perfect. He is the stone, the sure stone, the tried Corner Stone. He is able to bear all the weight that we can lay upon Him. He only that buildeth and "believeth on him shall not be confounded" (Deu 32:4; Isa 28:16; 1Pe 2:6).

This is the point on which all true saints of God in every age have been entirely agreed. Differing on other matters, they have always been of one mind upon this. Unable to see alike about church government, discipline, and liturgies, they have ever seen alike about the foundation of hope. Not one of them has ever left the world trusting in his own righteousness. Christ has been all their confidence; they have hoped in Him and not been ashamed.

Would any one like to know what kind of death-beds a minister of the gospel finds comfort in attending? Would you know what closing scenes are cheering to us and leave favorable impressions on our minds? We like to see dying people *making much of Christ*. So long as they can only talk of "the Almighty" and "Providence" and "God" and "mercy," we must stand in doubt. Dying in this state, they give no satisfactory sign. Give us the men and women who feel their sins deeply and cling to Jesus, who think much of His dying love, who like to hear of His atoning blood, who return again and again to the story of His cross. These are the death-beds that leave good evidence behind them. For my part, I had rather hear the name of Jesus come heartily from a dying relative's lips, than see him die without a word about Christ and then be told by an angel that he was saved.

IV. In the fourth place, a good hope is a hope that is felt inwardly in the heart. What says St. Paul? He speaks of hope that "maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts"; he speaks of "rejoicing in hope" (Rom 5:5; 12:12). The man who has a good hope is conscious of it. He feels within him something what another man does not; he is conscious of possessing a well-grounded expectation of good things to come...I cannot believe that a man can be a true Christian if he does not feel something within. A new birth, a pardon of sins, a conscience sprinkled with Christ's blood, an indwelling of the Holy Ghost, are no such small matters as men seem to suppose. He that knows anything of them will feel them—there will

be a real, distinct witness in his inward man...The “good hope” is a hope that can be felt.

V. In the last place, a good hope is a hope that is manifested outwardly in the life. Once more, what saith the Scripture? “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1Jo 3:3). The man that has a good hope will show it in all his ways. It will influence his life, his character, and his daily conduct; it will make him strive to be a holy, godly, conscientious, spiritual man. He will feel under a constant obligation to serve and please Him from Whom his hope comes. He will say to himself, “What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me?” He will feel, “I am bought with a price: let me glorify God with body and spirit, which are His.” “Let me show forth the praises of Him Who hath called me out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Let me prove that I am Christ’s friend by “keeping his commandments” (see Psa 116:12; 1Co 6:20; 1Pe 2:9; Joh 15:14).

This is a point that has been of infinite importance in every age of the Church. It is a truth that is always assailed by Satan and needs guarding with jealous care. Let us grasp it firmly and make it a settled principle in our religion. If there is light in a house, it will shine through the windows; if there is any real hope in a man’s soul, it will be seen in his ways. Show me your hope in your life and daily behavior. Where is it? Wherein does it appear? If you cannot show it, you may be sure it is nothing better than a delusion and a snare.

The times demand a very distinct testimony from all ministers on this subject. The truth on this point requires very plain speaking. Let us settle it in our minds deeply and beware of letting it go. Let no man deceive us with vain words. “He that doeth righteousness is righteous.” “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1Jo 2:6; 3:7). The hope that does not make a man honest, honorable, truthful, sober, diligent, unselfish, loving, meek, kind, and faithful in all the relations of life is not from above. It is only “the talk of the lips which tendeth to penury.”⁵ “He that boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain” (Pro 14:23; 25:14).

(a) *There are some in the present day who flatter themselves they have a good hope because they possess religious knowledge.* They are acquainted with the letter of their Bibles; they can argue and dispute about points of doctrine; they can quote texts by the score in defense of

⁵ **penury** – extreme lack or poverty.

their own theological opinions. They are perfect Benjamites in controversy: they can “sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss” (Jdg 20:16). And yet they have no fruits of the Spirit, no charity, no meekness, no gentleness, no humility, nothing of the mind that was in Christ.

And have these people a hope? Let those believe it who will, I dare not say so. I hold with St. Paul: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge...and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (1Co 13:1-3). Yes: hope without charity is no hope at all.

(b) There are some, again, who presume to think they have a good hope because of God’s everlasting election. They boldly persuade themselves that they were once called and chosen of God to salvation. They take it for granted that there was once a real work of the Spirit on their hearts, and that all therefore must be well. They look down upon others, who are afraid of professing as much as they do. They seem to think, “We are the people of God, we are the temple of the Lord, we are the favored servants of the Most High, we are they that shall reign in heaven and none beside.” And yet these very people can lie, cheat, swindle, and be dishonorable! Some of them can even get drunk in private and secretly commit sins of which it is a shame to speak! And have they a good hope? God forbid that I should say so! The election that is not “unto obedience” is not of God, but of the devil (1Pe 1:12). The hope that does not make a man holy is no hope at all.

(c). There are some in this day who fancy they have a good hope because they like hearing the gospel. They are fond of hearing good sermons. They will go miles to listen to some favorite preacher, and will even weep and be much affected by his words. To see them in church, one would think, “Surely these are the disciples of Christ, surely these are excellent Christians!” And yet these very people can plunge into every folly and gaiety of the world. Night after night they can go with their whole heart to the opera, the theatre, or the ball. They are to be seen on the race-course. They are forward in every worldly revel.⁶ Their voice on Sunday is the voice of Jacob, but their hands on week days are the hands of Esau. (Gen 27:11, 23). And have these people a good hope? I dare not say so. “The friendship of the world is enmity with God” (Jam 4:4). The hope that does not prevent conformity to

⁶ **revel** – wild party; boisterous festivity.

the world is no hope at all. “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world” (1Jo 5:4).

Let us beware of any hope that does not exercise a sanctifying influence over our hearts, lives, tastes, conduct, and conversation. It is a hope that never came down from above. It is mere base metal and counterfeit coin. It lacks the mint-stamp of the Holy Ghost and will never pass current⁷ in heaven. The man that has a real hope, no doubt, may be overtaken in a fault. He may stumble occasionally in his practice and be drawn aside from the right path for a while. But the man that can allow himself in any *willful* and *habitual* breach of God’s Law is rotten at the heart. He may talk of his hope as much as he pleases, but he has none in reality. His religion is a joy to the devil, a stumbling block to the world, a sorrow to true Christians, and an offence to God. Oh, that men would consider these things! Oh, that many would use some such prayer as this, “From antinomianism⁸ and hypocrisy, good Lord, deliver me!”

I have now done what I proposed to do. I have shown the five leading marks of a sound good hope. (1) It is a hope that a man can explain. (2) It is a hope that is drawn from Scripture. (3) It is a hope that is founded on Christ. (4) It is a hope that is felt within the heart. (5) It is a hope that is manifested outwardly in the life. Such, I firmly believe, is the hope of all true Christians, of every name, church, denomination, people, and tongue. Such is the hope that we must have, if we mean to go to heaven. Such is the hope without which, I firmly believe, no man can be saved. Such is the “good hope through grace.”

From *Our Hope*.

J.C. Ryle (1816-1900): Bishop of the Anglican Church. Born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England. Revered author of *Knots Untied*, *Old Paths*, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, and *Holiness*; the latter and many others available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



⁷ **current** – accepted monetary currency in a particular country.

⁸ **antinomianism** – from the Greek *anti*, “against”; *nomos*, “law.” The teaching that in the gospel age the Law of God is of no use or obligation to Christians. Antinomians often reject the notion of obedience as legalistic.

THE EFFECTS OF HOPE

John Owen (1616-1683)

Christ in you, the hope of glory.—Colossians 1:27

HOPE is a glorious grace whereunto blessed effects are ascribed in the Scripture, and an effectual operation unto the support and consolation of believers. By it are we purified, sanctified, saved. And, to sum up the whole of its excellency and efficacy, it is a principal way of the working of Christ as inhabiting in us: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27). Where Christ evidenceth His presence with us, He gives us an infallible hope of glory; He gives us an assured pledge of it and worketh our souls into an expectation of it. Hope in *general* is but an uncertain expectation of a future good that we desire; but as it is a *gospel grace*, all uncertainty is removed from it that would hinder us of the advantage intended in it. It is an earnest expectation, proceeding from faith, trust, and confidence, accompanied with longing desires of enjoyment.

From a mistaken [view] of its nature...few Christians labor after it, exercise themselves unto it, or have the benefit of it; for to live by hope, they suppose, infers a state not only beneath the life of faith and all assurance in believing, but also exclusive of them. They think to hope to be saved is a condition of men who have no grounds of faith or assurance—but this is to turn a blessed *fruit* of the Spirit into a common affection of nature. Gospel hope is a fruit of faith, trust, and confidence; yea, the height of the actings of all grace issues in a well-grounded hope, nor can it rise any higher (Rom 5:2-5).

Now, the reason why men have no more...benefit by this excellent grace is because they do not abide in thoughts and contemplation of the things hoped for. The especial object of hope is eternal glory (Col 1:27; Rom 5:2). The peculiar use of it is to support, comfort, and refresh the soul in all trials, under all weariness and despondencies, with a firm expectation of a speedy entrance into that glory, with an earnest desire after it. Wherefore, unless we acquaint ourselves by continual meditation with the reality and nature of this glory, it is impossible it should be the object of a vigorous, active hope, such as whereby the apostle says “we are saved” (Rom 8:24). Without this we can neither have that evidence of eternal things...nor that preparedness in our minds for them, as should keep us in the exercise of gracious hope about them.

Suppose sundry¹ persons engaged in a voyage unto a most remote country, wherein all of them have an apprehension² that there is a place of rest and an inheritance provided for them. Under this apprehension, they all put themselves upon their voyage to possess what is so prepared. Howbeit,³ some of them have only a general notion of these things. They know nothing distinctly concerning them, and are so busied about other affairs that they have no leisure to inquire into them; or do suppose that they cannot come unto any satisfactory knowledge of them in particular, and so are content to go on with general hopes and expectations.

Others there are who by all possible means acquaint themselves particularly with the nature of the climate whither they are going, with the excellency of the inheritance and provision that is made for them. Their voyage proves long and wearisome, their difficulties many, and their dangers great; and they have nothing to relieve and encourage themselves with but the hope...of the country whither they are going. Those of the first sort will be very apt to despond and faint; their general hopes will not be able to relieve them. But those who have a distinct notion and apprehension of the state of things whither they are going, and of their incomparable excellency, have always in a readiness wherewith to cheer their minds and support themselves.

In that journey...wherein we are engaged towards a heavenly country, we are sure to meet with all kinds of dangers and difficulties. It is not a general notion of blessedness that will excite and work in us a spiritual, refreshing hope. But when we think and meditate on future glory as we ought, that grace which is neglected for the most part as unto its benefit, and dead as unto its exercise, will of all others be most vigorous and active, putting itself forth on all occasions. This, therefore, is an inestimable benefit of the duty exhorted unto, and which they find the advantage of who are really spiritually minded.

From *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded* in *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 7, 321-323; reprinted by Banner of Truth.

John Owen (1616-1683): Puritan minister of congregational churches and vice-chancellor of Oxford University. Born in Stadham, Oxfordshire, England.



¹ **sundry** – miscellaneous.

² **apprehension** – an idea formed by observation or contemplation.

³ **howbeit** – however; nevertheless.

THE GRACE OF HOPE

John Gill (1697-1771)

Hope to the end for the grace...of Jesus Christ.—1 Peter 1:13

HAVING treated of faith in God, and of trust or confidence in Him, the next in course to be considered is the Grace of Hope. For in this order they stand: faith [then] hope—“*faith* is the substance of things *hoped* for” (Heb 11:1)—and therefore go together. And the same word is rendered sometimes *trust* and sometimes *hope*, so near akin are these graces. Thus in Ephesians 1:12, what we translate “Who first trusted in Christ” is in the Greek text and so in the margin:¹ “Who first hoped in Christ.” Concerning which grace, the following things may be observed.

I. THE OBJECT, GROUND, AND FOUNDATION OF HOPE

A. What the Object of Hope Is Not

Not any creature whatever, angel or man. Not the Virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord, as the papists² impiously³ and blasphemously address her: *Salve regina, spes nostra*—“Save us, O queen, our hope”!

*Nor any creature-enjoyment.*⁴ “If I have made gold my hope” (Job 36:24), the object of it, says Job (meaning he had not, though some have), placing their hope of future good in it in this life, to the neglect of a dependence on divine providence. And indeed, [they] have carried it so far as to hope and imagine that they are the persons whom God will delight in to honor in the world to come with happiness and bliss, who have had so great a share of it in this, forgetting or not knowing that “not many noble are called” (1Co 1:26).

Nor creature-merits, of which there are none; a creature cannot merit anything at the hand of God. He is not deserving of the least temporal mercy from Him, having sinned against Him. Nor can he give Him anything that may lay Him under an obligation to him, or that God has not a prior right unto. Much less can he merit eternal

¹ **margin** – In the first editions of the King James Bible, the translators placed alternate renderings in the margins.

² **papists** – those who follow the pope of Rome; Roman Catholics.

³ **impiously** – with irreverence for God or contempt for His authority.

⁴ **creature-enjoyment** – human pleasures or desires.

happiness of Him and so have any hope of it on that account, for that is the free gift of God through Christ (Rom 5:15).

Nor any creature-righteousness, which is the hope of the moralist and legalist. [They] fancy they have kept all the precepts of the Law from their youth, and that touching the righteousness of the Law they are blameless and are not as other men are—and therefore [they] hope for eternal life and happiness. But such hope is like “a spider’s web,” spun out of their own bowels, which has no strength, solidity, and substance in it; which if they lean upon, it shall not stand; and if they attempt to hold it fast, it shall not endure (Job 8:4, 15).

Nor any supposed privileges of birth and education and of profession of religion, as being born of religious parents, educated in the Christian religion, and having some notions of the principles of Christianity. And going yet further, making a profession of faith in Christ, subjecting to the ordinances of Christ—baptism and the Lord’s Supper—and continuing in a round⁵ of religious exercises, and yet destitute of the grace of God in truth. “What is the hope of the hypocrite,” though he hath gained a place and a name in the church of God, when God taketh away his soul (Job 27:8)? But Jehovah, the Creator and Lord of all and the covenant-God of His people, is the principal object of hope and the only solid sufficient ground and foundation of it. As David said, “Thou art my hope, O Lord God; thou art my trust from my youth!” (Psa 71:5). “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD...whose hope is in the LORD” (Jer 17:7; Psa 146:5).

B. What the Object of Hope Is

1. God *essentially* considered is the object of hope. “Hope thou in God,” says the psalmist, “for I shall yet praise him” (Psa 42:11). So the Church speaks of Him: “O the hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble” (Jer 14:8)! The grounds of [this] hope in God are His grace, mercy, and goodness. He has proclaimed His name, “The LORD God, merciful and gracious...abundant in goodness” (Exo 34:6), and it is the abundance of His mercy, grace, and goodness that lays a solid foundation for hope in Him and encourages to it. “Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy” (Psa 130:7)! He is plenteous in it, rich in mercy, [and] there is a multitude of tender mercies with Him. He takes “pleasure in those that hope in his mercy” (Psa 147:11), and His eye “is upon them” to do them good (Psa 33:18). Therefore there is great encouragement to make the Lord God the object of their hope.

⁵ **round** – series.

2. **God *personally* considered is the object of hope.** God the Father is called the God of hope not only because He is the Author and Giver of that grace, but because He is the object of it: by Whom Christ is said to be raised from the dead, that “faith and hope might be in God,” that is, in God the Father (Rom 15:13; 1Pe 1:21). And Christ the Son of God is called “our hope” and “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (1Ti 1:1; Col 1:27), that is, the object, ground, and foundation of it, which are His blood, righteousness, and sacrifice. The Spirit of God also is equally the object of hope as of faith and confidence. He will assist in the exercise of every grace and the performance of every duty; and particularly, He will carry on and finish the work of grace upon the soul.

3. **The less principal objects of hope, connected with the divine persons, are the *promises of God and the things therein promised.*** Hence the Word of God, the Word of promise, is represented as the object of hope. Says the psalmist, “In his word do I hope” (Psa 130:5), the ground and foundation of which hope is in the faithfulness and power of God. “For he is faithful that promised” (Heb 10:23), nor will He suffer His “faithfulness to fail” (Psa 89:33). And therefore the performance of His promises may be hoped for. Besides, He is “able also to perform,” and upon this footing Abraham believed “in hope against hope” (Rom 4:21, 18). The hand of the Lord “is not shortened that it cannot save” (Isa 59:1). He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20); and therefore we may hope—yea, believe—there will be a performance of whatsoever is spoken and promised by Him.

a. In general, things to be hoped for are represented,

1). *As things unseen*, of which faith is the evidence and gives encouragement to the exercise of hope upon them: “Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom 8:24). The glories of another world are things not seen, so as thoroughly to understand and comprehend—yet hope of enjoying them upon the divine promise is conversant⁶ with them, which enters into that within the veil (Heb 6:19).

2). *They are things future*, yet to come, and therefore hoped for. Hence saints are exhorted to “hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 1:13), when He shall be revealed from heaven and appear [the] second time; and therefore are directed to look “for that blessed hope,” the hope

⁶ **conversant** – familiar; acquainted.

laid up in heaven, the hope of happiness to be enjoyed at “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13).

3). *Things hoped for are difficult to come at and possess.* Many tribulations lie in the way to the kingdom, through which men must enter into it. The righteous—by reason of many afflictions, trials, and temptations—are scarcely saved, though at last certainly saved. And since the gate is strait and the way narrow that lead to eternal life (Mat 7:14), there must be a laboring and striving to enter in, of which there is hope. And therefore,

4). *Hope is of things possible,* or otherwise it would turn to despair, as in Cain and those who said, “There is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices” (Jer 18:12). But “there is hope in Israel concerning this thing” (Ezr 10:2): eternal life and happiness as well as concerning all things leading on to it, which will certainly issue in it. And therefore, “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD” (Lam 3:26). At least he has encouragement to put “his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope” (Lam 3:29), or seeing hope of salvation is to be entertained.

b. More particularly...the objects of hope, which are to be hoped for, are 1) salvation by Christ, the pardon of sin through Him; 2) all blessings of grace and the supplies of it for the present life; and 3) things after death, as the resurrection of the body and eternal life.

1). *Salvation by Christ.* As soon as ever a soul is made sensible⁷ of its lost state and condition by nature, its inquiry is, “What must I do to be saved?” And being shown the way of salvation by Christ and directed to Him for it—in Whom it is complete, perfect, and every way suitable—it is encouraged to hope in Him for it and say, as David did, “LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation” (Psa 119:166). Salvation, though wrought out, yet the full possession of it is to come, and the difficulties in the way of enjoying it many. And yet it is possible to be had, and therefore hope is conversant about it...

a) Great encouragement is given by Christ to sensible sinners to hope for and expect salvation from Him. “Look unto me,” says He, “And be ye saved, all the ends of the earth”—men in every quarter of it and in the uttermost parts thereof, of whatsoever rank, quality, and character—“for I am God, and there is none else” (Isa 45:22). And so [He is] able to save to the uttermost all laboring and heavy laden sinners, burdened with a sense of sin and the guilt of it. He invites

⁷ **sensible** – perceiving so clearly as to be convinced; persuaded.

[them] to come to Him, and promises then to give them rest for their souls (Mat 11:28-29), and assures them that He will in no wise, upon any account, reject and cast them out, but receive them in the most kind and tender manner. And for their encouragement to come to Him and exercise faith and hope on Him, it may be observed, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Luk 15:2)...

b) The gospel-declaration gives great encouragement to sinners to hope in Christ for salvation: that he who believes shall be saved; that he who seeth the Son and believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life (Joh 6:40; 3:16). To a soul inquiring after salvation the gospel thus directs, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Act 16:31)...

2). *The blessings of grace*, and supplies of it in the present life, and through it, are [also] the objects of hope...and in the exercise of which there is much encouragement. For as long as there is a throne of grace standing and the God of all grace sitting on it—inviting souls to come to it for grace and mercy to help them in every time of need, bidding them ask and it shall be given—there is good and sufficient ground and reason to hope in Him for it. And so long as there is a fullness of grace in Christ and the communication of it not cut off, as it never will be from His people, they may most comfortably hope, yea, be assured, that their God in Christ will “supply all [their] need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phi 4:19). And seeing there are such exceeding great and precious promises of grace and strength from the Lord—that their strength shall be renewed; that they shall go from strength to strength; and that as their day is, their strength shall be—there is abundant reason to hope in His Word for the fulfillment of it.

3). *There are blessings to be enjoyed after death* that are the objects of hope—not only of soul, of its being with Christ immediately and in a state of happiness and bliss—but a) of the resurrection of the body also, and b) of eternal life in soul and body for evermore.

a) The resurrection of the body is an object of hope and is often so represented: “Of the hope and resurrection of the dead,” that is, [because] of the hope of it “I am called in question,” says the apostle (Act 23:6). And again, “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Act 24:15). Once more, “now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers... for which hope’s sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.” [Paul] then adds, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with

you, that God should raise the dead?” (Act 26:6-8). The description of the object of hope entirely agrees with it, it being future, yet to come, what is unseen to carnal sense and reason, and difficult how it should be; and yet possible, considering the omniscience and omnipotence of God, and not to be reckoned incredible. It may be hoped for, and there is good ground and reason for it from scripture-testimonies of it: from the resurrection of Christ and from the union of His people to Him. They are represented as “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body” (Rom 8:23), which they have reason to expect, and is worth waiting for, and the happiness that will follow upon it.

b) Eternal life to be enjoyed both in soul and body is a grand object of hope, which is therefore called “the hope of eternal life,” “hope of glory,” “the blessed hope,” and “hope laid up in heaven,” all intending the happiness hoped for (Ti 1:2; 2:13; Rom 5:2; Col 1:5) and for which there is good ground and reason...

II. THE SUBJECTS OF THE GRACE OF HOPE

A. Only Men

Who they are that are partakers of this grace of hope are only men, and these not all men, [for] some are described as those “which have no hope” and who live and die without it (1Th 4:13). And all men are “having no hope” whilst in a state of nature and unregeneracy (Eph 2:12). For however they may feed themselves with a vain hope, they have no solid, well-grounded hope. Dying in such a state, they die without hope. And some, through the force of their own corruptions and the power of Satan’s temptations, give into despair and abandon themselves to a vicious course of living, saying, “There is no hope” (Jer 18:12).

B. Only Regenerate Men

Only regenerate men are subjects of the grace of hope. In regeneration every grace is implanted in the soul, and this with the rest. Yea, to this and the exercise of it, they are particularly regenerated; for, according to the abundant mercy of God, souls are by Him begotten “again unto a lively hope” (1Pe 1:3). Hence, when first quickened by the Spirit and grace of God—and [they] see themselves lost and undone in a captive state, and as it were, prisoners to sin, Satan, and the Law—they are yet prisoners of hope, and are enabled to hope for deliverance. [They] are directed to turn to the strong hold, Christ, where they find salvation, safety, and comfort.

C. Believers in Christ

Believers in Christ are partakers of this grace and they only. Faith and hope always go together. They are implanted at the same time, and grow up and thrive together. Though one may be in exercise before the other, [or] one may be more in exercise at one time than the other, yet they are always together and assist each other. Abraham *believed in hope against hope*; and the experience of faith works, or exercises, hope. Hence we read of them together: “That your faith and hope might be in God”; “now abideth faith, hope, charity,” or love (1Pe 1:21; 1Co 13:13). Faith is the ground-work of hope, lies at the bottom of it, and is its support. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for” (Heb 11:1).

III. THE CAUSES OF THE GRACE OF HOPE

[We now consider] the causes of the grace of hope; and the reason these should be inquired into, because all men in a state of nature are without it.

A. God: The Efficient Cause

The efficient cause of it is God. Hence he is called, “the God of hope” (Rom 15:13), not only because He is the object of it, but because He is the Author of it—even God: Father, Son, and Spirit. It is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who begets men again to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance, and this is owing to the virtue of the resurrection of Christ from the dead (1Pe 1:3). And, indeed, it is the gift both of the Father and of Christ: “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath...given us... good hope through grace” (2Th 2:16). And as it is “through the power of the Holy Ghost” that saints abound in hope in the exercise of the grace of hope (Rom 15:13), it may well be thought that it is by this same power that it is first produced in them.

B. The Grace of God: The Moving Cause

The moving cause of it is the grace and mercy of God. Hence it is called “good hope through grace” (2Th 2:16). It is not of nature, for it is not naturally in men; but is owing to the grace of God. It is not through the merits of men nor any motives in them, but entirely through the grace of God it is given. It is a gift of free grace, and is sometimes ascribed to the “abundant mercy” of God as the spring of it (1Pe 1:3); it is owing to mercy and to the aboundings of mercy.

C. The Gospel: The Means

The gospel is the means by which it is wrought, encouraged, and confirmed, and therefore called “the hope of the gospel” (Col 1:23). The doctrines of it greatly animate to it. The good news and glad tidings the gospel brings—of free and complete salvation by Christ; of full pardon of sin by His blood; of peace, reconciliation, and atonement by His sacrifice; and of the fullness of grace that is in Him—give great encouragement to hope in the Lord, as do the many exceeding great and precious promises in it, by means of which “the heirs of promise...have a strong consolation” (Heb 6:17-18). These are that of which God causes His people to hope (Psa 119:49), what are the ground and foundation of it; [to] support it and encourage to the exercise of it.

D. Its Promotion and Increase

There are many things which serve to promote and increase it. The whole Scripture has a tendency thereunto, which is written that men “through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15:4), particularly the promises contained in it. The goodness, power, and faithfulness of God displayed both in making and fulfilling them, and especially when opened and applied by the Holy Spirit of promise, serve greatly to cherish the grace of hope. The things said concerning the person, offices, and grace of Christ; His resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, session at the right-hand of God, intercession for His people; and the glorification of Him in heaven, are all subservient to this end: that our “faith and hope might be in God” (1Pe 1:21). The experience of the saints in all ages—of the grace, goodness, etc., of God, and particularly the saints’ own experience of the same in times past—greatly strengthen the grace of hope, and encourage to the exercise of it. Experience works it, exercises it, and tends to increase it (Rom 5:4).

IV. THE EFFECTS OF HOPE

The effects of hope [are those things] that are produced through it and that follow upon it.

A. Not Ashamed

It is said of hope that it “maketh not ashamed” (Rom 5:5). The reason given of which is “because the love of God is shed abroad” in the hearts of such who have it (Rom 5:5). [This] supports it and gives it life and vigor, so that a soul possessed of it is not ashamed to appear before God and men, is not ashamed in his present circumstances,

nor will be ashamed at the coming of Christ. This grace makes not ashamed because it does not disappoint those that have it, who will most certainly enjoy the things that are hoped for. And as this grace makes not ashamed, those who have it need not be ashamed of it. As David prays, “Let me not be ashamed of my hope” (Psa 119:116). When hope is a good one, he that has it has no reason to be ashamed of it, nor will he.

B. Weaned from the World

It weans from the world and the things of it. [It] makes a man sit loose unto them, when he knows that he has in heaven a better and a more enduring substance, and can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. When he seeks those things that are above and has hope of enjoying them, his affections are drawn off of things on earth and are set on things in heaven. And he longs to be unclothed, that he might be clothed upon with his house from heaven, and chooses rather to be absent from the body that he might be present with the Lord.

C. Carried through Difficulties

It carries cheerfully through all the difficulties of this life, and makes hard things sit easy; whereas, if in this life only saints had hope, they would be “of all men most miserable” (1Co 15:19). But hope of a future state of happiness beyond the grave bears them up under all the troubles of the present state, and carries them comfortably through them, so that they glory in tribulation (Rom 5:3-5).

D. Supported in Death

It yields support in death, for “the righteous hath hope in his death” (Pro 14:32), not founded on his own righteousness but on the righteousness of Christ. [This is] a hope of being with Christ forever, and of enjoying eternal life and happiness with Him, which gives him peace and joy in his last moments, and causes him to exult in the view of death and the grave. There are many other fruits and effects of a good hope, some of which may be gathered from what follows under the next head.

V. THE PROPERTIES OF THE GRACE OF HOPE

The properties and epithets⁸ of the grace of hope show more fully the nature, excellency, and usefulness of it...

A. Living Hope

It is a lively or living hope (1Pe 1:3). So called,

⁸ **epithets** – terms used to characterize a person.

1. Because the subject of it is a living man, one spiritually alive. A man dead in trespasses and sins is without hope, but a man regenerated and quickened by the Spirit of God is begotten again to a lively hope.

2. Because it has for its object eternal life. One that is justified by the grace of God is made an heir “according to the hope of eternal life” (Ti 3:7).

3. [Because it] has for its ground and foundation a living Christ and not dead works. As faith lives upon a crucified Christ, hope receives its virtue and vigor from the resurrection of Christ. Christ, as risen and at the right hand of God, greatly encourages to seek and hope for things above, where He is.

4. [Because] it is of a cheering and enlivening nature. “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life” (Pro 13:12). It causes gladness and joy. Hence we read of “the rejoicing of the hope” and of rejoicing “in hope” (Heb 3:6; Rom 5:2; *see* Pro 10:28).

5. [Because] it is an abiding, ever-living grace, and is always more or less in exercise, as water that is always flowing and running is called living water. This grace is lively or living, [while] others seem to be ready to die. And though it is sometimes in a low state itself, and a man puts his mouth in the dust “if so be there may be hope” (Lam 3:29), yet still there is hope. When he is in the worst case, a saint cannot give up his hope; nor will he part with it for all the world. It is one of the abiding graces (1Co 13:13).

B. Purifying Hope

It is represented as of a purifying nature. “Every man that hath this hope in him”—of appearing with Christ, being like Him, and seeing Him as He is—“purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1Jo 3:3), that is, as Christ is pure. All men are by nature and through sin impure. No man can purify himself by anything that he can do; it is peculiar to the blood of Jesus to cleanse from sin. Neither faith, nor hope, nor any other grace have such virtue in them as to make a man pure from his sin; no otherwise can they purify from it, but as they deal with the blood of Christ. He that has hope in the blood and righteousness of Christ for justification and salvation, and expresses it, does thereby declare that he is righteous as Christ is righteous, being made the righteousness of God in Him (2Co 5:21)...

C. Hope as a “Helmet”

Hope of salvation by Christ is compared to an helmet: “and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1Th 5:8)...It serves to defend the head from false doctrines. A man whose hope of salvation is fixed on Christ cannot give into errors contrary to the proper deity and eternal sonship of Christ; [or] to justification by His righteousness, atonement, and satisfaction by His sacrifice—for these take away the foundation of his hope, and therefore he whose hope is sure and steadfast cannot easily be carried away with divers and strange doctrines, nor with every wind of doctrine.

Hope of salvation by Christ is like an helmet that covers the head in the day of battle. It makes a man courageous to fight the Lord’s battles and fear no enemy, to engage even with principalities and powers, having on the whole armor of God: the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and particularly having such an helmet [that] an enemy cannot hurt his head or give him a mortal wound on it (Eph 6:10-18). Hope, like an helmet, is an erector or lifter up of the head. In the midst of difficulties, hope keeps the head above water, above the fear of danger; so that the hoping, believing soul can even glory in tribulation (Rom 5:3).

From *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*.

John Gill (1697-1771): Baptist minister, theologian, and biblical scholar. Author of *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, *The Cause of God and Truth*, and his nine volume *Expositions of the Old and New Testaments*. Born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, England.



Is there no method under divine grace by which the believer may arrive to a well-grounded assurance, concerning the great truths of the Gospel? Is it not possible for him to be so firmly settled in those great truths, as that he shall not only be ready “to give answer to everyone that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him,” but to find the comfort of it in his own mind, that his faith “doth not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God”? To this inquiry I answer, Yes, blessed be God, there is. An infallible method is discovered, at once to secure from the possibility of apostasy, and to afford comfort and satisfaction to the believer’s own mind, concerning the great truths of God; namely: from the Spirit’s work in the heart; by the sweet influences of which he may find “joy and peace in believing, and abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.”—*Robert Hawker*

THE SACRED ANCHOR

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.—Titus 2:13

EMPHATICALLY—“that blessed hope.” Hope here is used as a figure for the things hoped for. “That blessed hope” is the hope of blessedness. A Christian’s hope is not in this life, [for] then he would have forlorn hope. There is nothing here to be hoped for but vicissitudes.¹ All the world rings² changes, but we are looking for “that blessed hope.” This is the difference between the seaman’s anchor and the believer’s anchor. The seaman casts his anchor downwards; the believer casts his anchor upwards in heaven, looking for that blessed hope. The believer is a rich heir (Heb 6:17), and he waits till the royal crown shall be set upon his head.

I. WHAT A CHRISTIAN HOPES FOR

The object of a Christian’s hope is set down specifically: “The glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Here, by the way, the deity and Godhead of Christ is strongly proved from hence against the Arians,³ as Jerome and Chrysostom⁴ well observe. The apostle shows Who this great God is. It is, he says, “our Savior Jesus Christ,” but that only in transit. To speak, then, of the object of a Christian’s hope set down here specifically—“the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior”—there is a threefold appearing of Christ.

A. There is an appearing of Christ to us, as when He was incarnate. “Into us a child is born” (Isa 9:6). This was a happy appearing when this Morning Star appeared. Salvation appeared to mankind when Christ took flesh; He married our human nature to the divine nature. The virgin’s womb was the place consecrated for tying that knot. Great is the mystery: “God was manifest in the flesh” (1Ti 3:16). ’Tis

¹ **vicissitudes** – changes or variations.

² **rings** – filled with report or talk.

³ **Arians** – followers of Arius of Alexandria, Egypt (c. 250–c. 336), who taught that Jesus was not Deity, but the highest of created beings.

⁴ **Chrysostom** (347-407) – Early Church Father, biblical interpreter, archbishop of Constantinople. His zeal and clarity of preaching earned him the name “Golden-mouth.”

such an enigma as the angels adore (1Pe 1:12). God said, “The man is become as one of us” (Gen 3:22); but now we may say, God Himself has become as one of us, “in the likeness of men” (Phi 2:7). This was Christ’s first appearing.

B. There is an appearing of Christ *in us*, that is, when He appears in our hearts, which is called forming Christ in us (Gal 4:19). Christ is said to appear in us when, by the operation of His grace, He transforms us into His own image. In the Incarnation, Christ made Himself like us; by sanctification, He makes us like Him, holy as He is holy—and this is a comfortable appearing. What are we the better for Christ’s appearing in our flesh unless He appears in our hearts? What are we the better for a Christ without us unless we have a Christ within us? “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).

C. There is an appearing of Christ *for us*, and that two ways:

1. *Christ appears for us as an advocate*. He is entered into heaven, there “to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:24). ’Tis a metaphor borrowed from our law courts, where the attorney pleads for the client. So Christ pleads as an advocate for the saints. Satan is the accuser, but Christ is the advocate. He answers all bills of indictment brought in; and He appears, says the apostle, in the presence of God for us. The high priest, under the Law, appeared before the ark and the mercy seat,⁵ which was but a type of God’s presence; but Christ appears in the very presence of God for us, in the face of God. He spreads His merits before His Father and, in the virtue of His bloody sufferings, pleads for mercy. And if Christ appears for us in heaven, shall not we appear for Him upon earth?

2. *Christ appears for the saints as a judge*, and this appearing is meant in the text, “Looking for...the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior.” Christ’s *first* appearing in the flesh was dark and obscure: His beauty was veiled over (Isa 53:2); all who saw the man did not see the Messiah. But His *second* appearing as our judge will be a glorious appearing, like the sun breaking out of a cloud. It will be a glorious appearing both in respect of Christ and the saints.

II. CHRIST’S GLORIOUS APPEARING

A. It will be a glorious appearing in respect of Christ Himself, and that three manner of ways:

1. *His person will be glorious*. That light which shone upon St. Paul, surpassing the glory of the sun (Act 26:13), was but a part of Christ’s

⁵ **mercy seat** – place where God met with men in the Holy of Holies (Exo 25:17-22).

beauty, like a sparkle of the Sun of righteousness. What will it be when He shall appear in all His spiritual embroidery?

2. *His throne will be glorious.* He shall sit upon the throne of His glory (Mat 25). He shall have His chair of state set Him more rich than ivory or pearl, a throne more sublime and magnificent.

3. *His attendants shall be glorious.* “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him” (Mat 25:31). The angels are the courtiers⁶ of heaven. They are compared to lightning in regard of their sparkling luster (Mat 28:3); and these glorious, sublimated⁷ spirits shall be Christ’s satellites,⁸ part of Christ’s train and retinue,⁹ accompanying Him to His throne. Thus it will be a glorious appearing in regard of Christ.

B. It will be a glorious appearing in regard of the saints. Christ will appear to do three things:

1. *Christ as a judge will appear to acquit His people,* and that is by pronouncing the sentence, “Come ye blessed of my Father” (Mat 25:34). The debt-book shall be crossed¹⁰ in the blood of the Lamb.

2. *Christ as a judge will appear to vindicate His people.* The names of the godly, many times, lie buried in reproach; but at that day, they shall, as Bernard¹¹ said, “Be fragrant with the finest perfumes.” Christ will give them a new name. He will call them His friends, His spouse, the apple of His eye. Their names shall flourish with honor and give forth their perfume as the wine of Lebanon.

3. *Christ as a judge will appear to crown His people,* when body and soul shall be reunited and perfected in glory. Christ will take His people into His sweet and everlasting embraces. He will lay them in His bosom; He will set them upon His throne; He will fill them with the inebriating¹² wine of His love to all eternity. And thus you see what is the saint’s hope, namely the glorious appearing of Christ, when He shall appear as a judge to acquit, vindicate, and crown them.

See here the misery of a wicked man who has all his hope in this life. He makes the wedge of gold his hope; he casts his anchor down-

⁶ **courtiers** – attendants at a sovereign’s court.

⁷ **sublimated** – elevated, exalted.

⁸ **satellites** – willing and obedient followers.

⁹ **retinue** – the attendants accompanying a high-ranking person.

¹⁰ **crossed** – erased or canceled.

¹¹ **Bernard De Clairvaux (1090-1153)** – monk and mystic, one of the most influential churchmen of his time.

¹² **inebriating** – intoxicating.

wards. He can have no hope of Christ's appearing: he fears Christ's appearing; he does not hope for it. He is like a prisoner who fears the judge's coming to the bench. Christ's appearing will be a dismal appearing to him. When Christ shall appear, "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1Pe 4:18).

A wicked man is like a mariner at sea who has no anchor; like a man in a storm who has no shelter. Where is his hope when he shall come to die? It is with a sinner as it was with the old world when the flood came: the water rose higher and higher by degrees. First, the waters came to the valleys, but they encouraged themselves in the hills. Then the waters came to the mountains. Aye,¹³ but there might be some trees upon the hills, and they would climb up to them. Then the waters prevailed and rose to the top of the trees. Now they had nothing to trust in; all hopes of being saved were gone.

So it is with a sinner. If one comfort is taken away, he has another left. If a relation is gone, he has an estate left; if one crutch is broken, yet he has another to lean upon. Aye, but sickness comes, and he sees he must die and appear before his Judge. Now he has no hope. He dies despairing; he must lie forever in the boiling furnace of God's wrath.

Put yourselves upon the trial: Do you have this blessed hope of Christ's appearing and of your appearing with Him in glory? Come almost to any man, and you shall hear him say that he hopes to be saved. Well, then, let every soul put itself upon the trial.

Let us live suitably to our hopes in a holy, angelic walking. They who have heaven in their hopes should have heaven in their lives. Let us walk after that golden pattern which Christ has left us (1Joh 2:6). As we hope to have Christ's death for our justification, we must have His life for our imitation. I will conclude with Philippians 1:27, "Only let your conversation¹⁴ be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."

From "A Sacred Anchor" in *A Plea for the Godly and Other Sermons*, reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria. Used by permission.

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686): English non-Conformist Puritan preacher and prolific author of *A Body of Divinity*, *The Ten Commandments*, *Heaven Taken by Storm*, and numerous others. Actual place and date of birth unknown.



¹³ **aye** – yes or yea.

¹⁴ **conversation** – behavior; conduct.

MOTIVES TO HOPE

Wilhelmus A'Brakel (1635-1711)

What is my strength, that I should hope?—Job 6:11

YOU must turn to yourself and observe whether hope is to be found in you. You need no other mirror to be made acquainted with yourself than the truth itself. You will agree with me that the person for whom all hope of ever being saved is cut off, is most wretched indeed.

I. A CALL TO SERIOUS SELF-EXAMINATION

Answer for yourself the following questions.

First of all, are faith in Christ, reconciliation with God (and the sense of this), the despising of the world and all that pertains to it, the denial of your own lusts, the love of God, a sanctified life, and felicity after this life—[are these] your portion and are they precious to you? Are you acquainted with them, do you recognize yourself in them, do you long for them, is it your objective, and do you reach forth unto them in order that you might attain them?

Upon finding promises in the Word of God, you will find qualifications conjoined to them, indicating to whom the promises are made. Do you have these qualifications, so that you may perceive that these promises are made to you? Do you approach God with them as the One Who is true and omnipotent, and do you rest with them in the promising God?¹ Do you expect the receipt of these benefits, are you intent upon them, and do you strive for them with all that is in you? Are you opposed to all that hinders you, and do you overcome these obstacles? Do you endure everything to that end, reach forth to it, and seek to apprehend it—and does it sanctify you? How does your heart respond? If you are inwardly convinced that these things are not to be found in you, you do not have this hope, and your insistence that you nevertheless have this hope is nothing but deceit. Your hope will truly be deceived if you die in this condition.

¹ When speaking of *qualifications*, A'Brakel is not attempting to focus the reader solely upon works or religious feelings. As he shows, these things flow from faith in the promises of Christ. His target is not the weak Christian, but the religious hypocrite.

Secondly, answer once again: Are not your anticipation, your expectation, your hope, and your rest related to men? Do you not expect it from that gentleman or that friend who will help you, expecting it now to go well? Do you not—in your heart—end in them, their presence, their favor, and their power? Do you not put your trust in money and belongings, and endeavor to find rest in the pursuance of them? Are you not encouraged when you have them, and does this not remove your fear? Are you relying upon your skills, your deftness,² and your strength? If you cannot find help or rest anywhere, do you then not fix your hope upon a change of season, reasoning that you cannot help this, but that it has to be this way, and that therefore you will exercise patience? If your heart responds affirmatively and acquiesces³ that this is an accurate representation of your condition, then be assured that you are without hope in God and upon salvation, for these are contradictory to each other and cannot go hand in hand.

Thirdly, answer once more: You have a hope of being saved. But do you have a basis for this hope, or is it only because you would like to be in heaven when you can no longer bear it here, since it is better there than to be in hell? Is it because your own spirit testifies that you will indeed be saved, and does that put you at ease? Or is it because you are baptized, faithfully attend church, partake of the Lord's Supper, pray to God, give alms, and lead a life beyond reproach? If your heart responds that such is the case, I say to you that you have no basis for your hope, and that no promises are made to such persons. Your hope is vain.

You, therefore, having been convinced by a threefold variety of questions that you do not have a true hope, consider how wretched you are—for there is not a single promise to be found for you in the Bible; there is not one whereby you can comfort yourself. Rather, all the threatenings and curses recorded in the Word of God are applicable to you. They will become a reality for you if you do not repent. Hear for a moment what the Lord says concerning your hope. "The hypocrite's hope shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web" (Job 8:13-14). It is indeed woven together, but it is the weakest structure there is. When removed by either the wind or a mop, it lies there, fully undone. "But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost" (Job 11:20). What will it avail you that you

² **deftness** – skill or agility.

³ **acquiesces** – to consent without protest.

have deceived yourself with an imaginary hope, if you find yourself to be excluded? Therefore, awake and repent!

II. THE GODLY REBUKED AND EXHORTED

The godly are also to be rebuked for the feebleness with which they exercise hope. For they have reason to hope, and the principle of hope is already within them—something they ought to be convinced of in answering the three questions presented above. Yes, it is a great error that they are more engaged in striving against their hope than to stir it up—as if they had only then accomplished something when saying, “My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD” (Lam 3:18). All promises have been made to you. Why do you not acknowledge this to be so, being judgmentally convinced⁴ that it is true within—the Word of God being the judge here? How is it possible that the heirs of the promises have so little dealings with them, and so rarely strive for possession of, hope in, and longingly and joyfully expect the fulfillment of the promises?

A. What Prevents the Saints

There are matters which prevent them from doing so.

1. *The promised matters are frequently obscure*, so that they cannot perceive the glory and beauty of them. This impedes the longing for them. This is generally caused when the contemplation and a continual focus upon these matters are neglected.

2. *There is the commission of sins*, in consequence of which they doubt their spiritual state and are fearful of not being a partaker of Christ and all His benefits.

3. *They are overwhelmed* by the grievousness and the long duration of the cross. This causes their soul to be cast down (Psa 42:6).

4. *Historical faith is under attack*, or it is too weak to ascertain matters with certainty and infallibility as to their clarity and veracity.

By all these the godly are thus prevented from being exercised in hope. I maintain, however, that these ought not to hinder them. They ought to labor with the little grace they have, and submit to their judgment as having been convinced of it. For to neglect the exercise of hope will confuse them more and more, rob them of their strength, and cause them to sink down in listlessness and discouragement—

⁴ “Judgmentally convinced” and “judgmental perception” are A’Brakel’s way of saying that these sleepy Christians believe the truth - their *judgement* is convinced - but they are not *experiencing* the fulness of their hope in Christ.

yes, to sink away in despondency. They dishonor God in His goodness, truth, faithfulness, and omnipotence, and give the devil the opportunity to toss them back and forth. And rest assured that you will not prevail effortlessly here. One overcomes by way of striving; and the more a person exercises hope, the more earnest he shall be in his endeavor. Therefore, do not yield to hopelessness—even if your heart is not sensibly desirous for spiritual benefits, does not find any sweetness in the exercise of hope, and your unbelieving heart vehemently opposes this. Proceed, then, with your judgmental perception that you are a partaker of the promises. You will then perceive that hope will be quickened within you.

Therefore, lethargic⁵ soul, lift up your heart, for felicity is not to be found here below. “In the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come” (Isa 45:24). Consider the help of the Lord to be a certainty in all temporal and spiritual matters. Establish your salvation as being certain and immovably steadfast because He Who has promised is faithful. Speak as follows: “I shall be helped. The Lord shall most certainly lead me by His counsel and take me into glory.” Rejoice in your blessedness and in that great salvation that has been promised you. Count on it and embark upon the way that leads to it. Endure all things and do not succumb to anything—it will yet all work together for good. Anticipate felicity, fully hope in it, and overcome all obstacles with a steadfast and brave heart.

B. The Saints Victorious

Everything will have to surrender to you, and the outcome will not fail. You will gain the upper hand, inherit the crown of life, and receive the end of faith, for:

1. The benefits which are the object of your hope are so precious and attractive, that it will kindle the desires of all who reflect upon them attentively. To be cared for by God in this life, and thus to be without care as to the outcome of a given matter, is glorious and most desirable. Then we are dependent upon God in our activity and know that the outcome (whatever it may be) will be for the best; yes, anticipating grace, light, comfort, and sanctification in this life, and blessed fellowship with God hereafter. God has promised these matters to you...and you will be partakers of them. Are not these matters worthy to be desired by you, to be expected in hope, to be striven for, and should not your conduct be governed accordingly?

⁵ **lethargic** – drowsy; inclined to sleep; sluggish.

2. The promises pertaining to these matters are certain. God will neither change, nor will any creature rob you of them, for they rest upon:

a. God's truth, faithfulness, and omnipotence. "He is faithful that promised" (Heb 10:23); "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isa 26:3); "neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD" (Isa 54:10).

b. Christ, as upon a certain and immovable foundation. "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded" (1Pe 2:6). Could that which Christ has merited miscarry?

c. The Word, of which the Lord Jesus says, "thy word is truth" (Joh 17:17); "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2Co 1:20).

d. The eternal and immutable testament confirmed in the death of the Testator⁶ (Heb 9:15-17). "I appoint unto you a kingdom" (Luk 22:29).

e. Eternal love. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer 31:3). Those whom He has foreknown, predestinated, called, and justified, He will also glorify (Rom 8:29-30).

f. The oath of God. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that...we might have a strong consolation" (Heb 6:17-18).

g. The given earnest⁷ that is worth infinitely more than the promised matter itself. "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph 1:13-14).

h. Fellowship with Christ. Since He is the head and already is in heaven, the members will most certainly follow. "And hath...made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). Therefore the apostle says, "we are saved by hope" (Rom 8:24). Who will refuse to depend upon such a certain assurance?

3. Hope is a strong consolation in cross-bearing and in all the tribulations of this life; in all things it causes the focus to be upon the promised benefits. "So shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1Th 4:17-18). The person

⁶ **Testator** – one who makes a legally valid will or testament before death; here, Jesus Christ.

⁷ **earnest** – token given in advance that promises something to come.

who exercises hope will adduce⁸ the following proof: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18). Hope perceives the profit of tribulations and the glory that will follow it. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2Co 4:17).

4. Hope will cause the believer to battle courageously, for it ascertains the certainty of the victory. “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air” (1Co 9:26); “Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God...therefore we are always confident” (2Co 5:5-6).

5. Hope rejoices the heart; man cannot live without happiness. However, in the world the godly endure many tribulations, and if they had nothing but tribulation they would succumb. All that man strives for is related to happiness, for a joyful heart begets strength for soul and body. Hope, however, causes the believer to “glory in tribulations” (Rom 5:3), and there is thus a “rejoicing in hope” (Rom 12:12).

6. Hope sanctifies the soul. The imagination and the wish leave the work undone, but a sure hope stimulates activity. Since the matters hoped for are spiritual and holy, they thus also sanctify the person exercising hope. This is all the more so since the way in which God leads His children to glory is the way of holiness. This is to be observed in 1 John 3:3: “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” Hope in and of itself is precious, and it is furthermore precious since it engenders courage, joy, and holiness.

7. In addition to all—this being the most eminent virtue—hope glorifies God and the Lord Jesus. It acknowledges God’s sovereignty in either accepting or bypassing a sinful person; God’s free grace to grant such a one salvation in spite of his sins; His truth, immutability, and faithfulness; the fact that He keeps His word and will most certainly fulfill His promises; His omnipotence in preserving them unto salvation in spite of all their enemies, as well as in granting it to them; and the love of God and of the Lord Jesus to give Himself as a Surety,⁹ and in meriting salvation for His own by virtue of His satisfaction.

⁸ **adduce** – offer something as evidence or proof.

⁹ **Surety** – one who assumes the responsibilities or debts of another. As our Surety, Christ guaranteed a full legal satisfaction for our sin and our deliverance upon His payment of our debt upon Calvary’s cross.

Therefore, all who desire to glorify God, be active to exercise hope continually. Be continually engaged in seeking for all manner of promises in the Word of God, appropriating them to yourself, and relying upon them. Do not cease to pray that the Lord may cause you to hope. Stir up others, and let the exhortation of others to hope steadfastly find entrance into your hearts. While you are thus engaged, you will experience that your hope will not make you ashamed; but that you, upon patiently anticipating their fulfillment, will most certainly become a partaker of these blessings at the appointed time.

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Wilhelmus A'Brakel (1635-1711): Venerated theologian representing the Dutch Second Reformation, author of the four volume *The Christian's Reasonable Service*. Born in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands.



You say, "It is presumption for me to hope." My dear friends, it is never presumption to listen to truth. If it be true that in due time Christ died for the ungodly; if it be true that he who cometh to Him He will in no wise cast out; if it be true that He has said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa 1:18); if it be true that He has said, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins" (Isa 44:22)—why not listen to that as well as the other? Surely you must look at the fair side as well as the foul; and while your ear is hearing of the work of Christ and the promise of God, you will be able to cry—"I do believe, I must believe, That Jesus died for me."—*Charles Spurgeon*

"A stranger will they not follow...for they know not the voice of strangers" (Joh 10:5). Against the detestable spirit of this age, and against everything else that would corrupt the gospel of Christ, it is the mark of the true seed to stand opposed. If you bear witness to the truth, the truth bears witness to you. Blessed are those who are not removed from the hope of their calling.—*Charles Spurgeon*

THE HOPE LAID UP IN HEAVEN

C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.—Colossians 1:5

WE speak of our “hope which is laid up for us in heaven” as a very marvelous hope, and it is so if we only consider that, **A. It is a great act of grace that sinners should have a hope at all.** That, when man had broken his Maker’s Law, there should remain a hope for him, is a thought which should make our hearts leap with gratitude. Do you not recollect when you felt it to be so? When sin lay heavily upon your conscience, Satan came and wrote over the lintel¹ of your door, “No Hope.” And the grim sentence would have stood there to this day had not a loving hand taken the hyssop,² and by a sprinkling of precious blood removed the black inscription. “Wherefore remember...that at that time ye were without Christ...having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:11-12). That was our condition once; and it is a marvelous thing that it should be thoroughly changed, and that assurance should have taken the place of despair. In our carnal estate, many false hopes, like will-o’-the-wisps,³ danced before us, deceived us, and led us into bogs of presumption and error—but we really had no hope.

This is a dreadful condition for a man to be in: it is, indeed, the very worst of all; never is the storm so terrible as when in the howling of the winds the man distinctly hears the words “No hope.” Yet into the thick darkness of NO HOPE we once steered our course, and each time we tried to rely upon good works, outward ceremonies, and good resolutions, we were disappointed anew—and the words rung into our souls with dread monotony, “No hope; No hope,” until we were fain⁴ to lie down and die. Now, sinners though we be, we have a hope.

¹ **lintel** – horizontal beam of a door frame that usually supports the structure above it.

² **hyssop** – aromatic shrub used by the Jews in the OT for Passover rites, for the purification of lepers, for plague, and at the red heifer sacrifice.

³ **will-o’-the-wisps** – lights that sometimes hover at night over marshy ground, often attributed to spontaneous combustion of gas from rotting organic matter. It therefore came to be used for deceptive goals or misleading hopes.

⁴ **fain** – glad.

Ever since by faith we looked to Jesus on the cross, a hope full of glory has taken possession of our hearts. Is this not a marvelous thing?

B. More marvelous still is it that our hope should venture to be associated with heaven. Can there be heaven for such as we are? It seems almost presumptuous for a sinner, who so richly deserves hell, even to lift up his eyes towards heaven. He might have some hope of purgatory,⁵ if there were such a region; but a hope of heaven, is not that too much? Yet, brethren, we have no fear of hell or of purgatory now, but we expect to taste the joys laid up in heaven. There is no purgatory for anyone, and there is no hell for saints: heaven awaits all believers in Jesus. Our hope is full of glory, for it has to do with the glory of Christ, Whom we hope to behold.

Dost thou expect then, thou who wast black with lust, that thou shalt sit among the angels? “Ay, that I do,” saith the believer, “and nearer to the throne than they.” And thou who hast plunged into every form of uncleanness, dost thou expect to see God—for none but the pure in heart can behold Him? “Aye, that I do,” saith he, “and not only to see Him, but to be like His Son, when I ‘see him as he is’” (1Jo 3:2). What a divine hope is this! Not that we shall sit down on heaven’s doorstep and hear stray notes of the songs within, but that we shall sing with the happy band. Not that we shall have an occasional glance within the gates of pearl, and feel our hearts hankering after the unutterable joys within the sacred enclosure, but we shall actually and personally enter into the halls of the palace, and see the King in His beauty, in the land that is very far off.

This is a brave hope, is it not? Why, she aspireth to all that the best of saints have received: she looketh for the same vision of glory, the same ecstasy of delight. She even aspireth to sit upon the throne of Christ according to the promise, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev 3:21). Hope reckons to be among the overcomers and to partake in their enthronement. This is marvelous hope for a struggling believer to entertain; yet it is not presumption, but confidence warranted by the Word of God. Is it not a miracle of love that such poor creatures as ourselves should be enabled thus to hope in God?

⁵ **purgatory** – an erroneous doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church which concerns a place or state after death where the souls of those who die in God’s grace may make satisfaction for past sins and become fit for heaven, thus denying the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice.

C. This hope is the more marvelous because it is so substantial. In our text, the apostle scarcely seems to be speaking of the grace of hope, since that can hardly be said to be laid up in heaven, but dwells in our bosoms. He rather speaks of the object of hope; and yet it is clear that in his mind the grace of hope as well as the object must have been intended, because that which is laid up in heaven is not a hope except to those who hope for it. It is clear that no man has a hope laid up in heaven unless he *has* hope within himself. The truth is that the two things—the grace of hope and its object—are here mentioned under one term, which may be intended to teach us that when hope is wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, it is the thing hoped for, even as faith is the thing believed, because it realizes and secures it.

Just as “faith is the substance of things hoped for, [and] the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1), so is hope the substance of the thing it expects and the evidence of the thing it cannot see. Paul in this case, as in many others, uses language rather according to the theological sense that he would convey, than according to the classical usage of the Greek tongue. The words of a heathen people must be somewhat strained from their former use if they are to express divine truth, and Paul does thus stretch them to their utmost length in this case. The hope of the true believer is so substantial that Paul even speaks of it as though it were the thing itself and were laid up in heaven.

Many a man hath a hope of wealth, but that hope is a different thing from being wealthy. “There is many a slip ’twixt the cup and the lip,” saith the old proverb, and how true it is! A man may have a hope of old age, yet he may never reach even middle life; and thus it is clear that the hope of long life is not in itself longevity. But he that hath the divine hope, which grows out of faith and love, hath a hope that shall never be disappointed—so that the apostle speaks of it as being identical with the thing hoped for, and describes it as laid up in heaven. What a marvelous hope is this, which long before its realization is treated as a matter of actual attainment, and spoken of as a treasure reserved in the coffer of heaven!

D. One marvelous point about our hope is this: that it is the subject of divine revelation. No one could ever have invented this hope; it is so glorious as to baffle imagination. The prince of dreamers could never have dreamed it, nor the master of the art of logic have inferred it by reason. Imagination and understanding are both left

upon the ground, while the Bible idea of heaven soars upward like a strong-winged angel. The eternal hope had to be revealed to us; we should never have known it else, for the apostle says, “Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col 1:5).

That a sinful man should have a hope of enjoying the perfect bliss of Paradise is a thing not to be thought of, were it not that the Lord hath promised it. I say again, imagination’s utmost stretch had never reached to this; neither could we have had the presumption to suppose that such a bliss could be in store for men so unworthy and undeserving, had we not been assured thereof by the Word of God. But now the Word of God hath opened a window in heaven, and bidden us look therein and hope for the time when we shall drink of its living fountains of waters, and go no more out forever.

E. This is marvelous, and it is even more marvelous to think that this hope came to us simply by hearing. “Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col 1:5); “Faith cometh by hearing” (Rom 10:17), and hope comes by faith. And so the divine hope of being in heaven came to us by hearing—not by working, not by deserving, not by penance and sacrifice—but simply by hearkening diligently unto the divine Word and believing unto life. We heard that the pierced hand of Jesus had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and we believed and saw a way of entrance into the holiest by His blood. We heard that God had prepared for them that love Him joys indescribable; and we believed the message, trusting in His Son.

Our confidence is in the word which we have heard, for it is written, “Hear, and your soul shall live” (Isa 55:3). And we find that, by hearing, our confidence is strengthened and our heart filled with inward assurance and joyful expectation; therefore do we love the Word more and more. Will we not prize to the uttermost that sacred Word which has brought us such a hope? Yes, that we will. Till we exchange hearing for seeing, and the message of Jesus for Jesus Himself, we will always lend a willing ear to the testimony of Jesus.

F. This hope is marvelous, once more, because the substance of it is most extraordinary. Brethren, what is “the hope which is laid up” for us in heaven? It would need many a sermon to bring out all the phases of delight that belong to that hope.

1. *It is the hope of victory*; for we shall overcome every foe and Satan shall be trodden under our feet. A palm of victory is prepared for our

hands and a crown for our heads. Our life struggle shall not end in defeat, but in complete and eternal triumph; for we shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

2. *Nor do we hope for victory only, but in our own persons we shall possess perfection.* We shall one day cast off the slough⁶ of sin, and shall be seen in the beauty of our new-born life. Truly, “it doth not yet appear what we shall be,” but when we think of the matchless character of our Lord Jesus, we are overjoyed by the assurance that “we shall be like him” (1Jo 3:2). What an honor and a bliss for the younger brethren to be like the firstborn! To what higher honor could God Himself exalt us? I know not of aught⁷ that could surpass this. Oh, matchless joy to be as holy, harmless, and undefiled as our own beloved Lord! How delightful to have no propensity⁸ to sin remaining in us, nor trace of its ever having been there. How blissful to perceive that our holy desires and aspirations have no weakness or defect remaining in them.

Our nature will be perfect and fully developed in all its sinless excellence. We shall love God as we do now, but oh how much more intensely! We shall rejoice in God as we do now, but oh what depth there will be in that joy! We shall delight to serve him as we do now, but there will then be no coldness of heart, no languor⁹ of spirit, no temptation to turn aside. Our service will be as perfect as that of angels. Then shall we say to ourselves without fear of any inward failure, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name” (Psa 103:1). There will be no recreant¹⁰ affection then, no erring judgment, no straying passion, no rebellious lust. There will remain nothing that can defile, weaken, or distract. We shall be perfect, altogether perfect. This is our hope: victory over evil and perfection in all that is good. If this were all our hope it would be marvelous, but there is more to be unfolded.

3. *We also expect to enjoy security* from every danger. As there will be no evil, in us, so there will be none around us or about us to cause us alarm. No temporal evil such as pain, bereavement, sorrow, labor, or reproach shall come near us: all will be security, peace, rest, and enjoyment. No mental evil will intrude upon us in heaven; no doubts,

⁶ **slough** – place of deep mud or mire.

⁷ **aught** – anything.

⁸ **propensity** – inclination or tendency.

⁹ **languor** – lack of physical or mental energy.

¹⁰ **recreant** – unfaithful, disloyal, or cowardly.

no staggering difficulties, no fears, no bewilderments will cause us distress. Here we see through a glass darkly; and we know in part, but there shall we see face to face, and know even as we are known (1Co 13:12). Oh, to be free from mental trouble! What a relief will this be to many a doubting Thomas (Joh 20:25-28)! This is a marvelous hope.

And then no spiritual enemy will assail us; no world, no flesh, no devil will mar our rest above. What will you make out of it, ye tried ones? Your Sabbaths are very sweet now on earth; but when they are over, you have to return to yon¹¹ cold world again. But there your Sabbath shall never end, and your separation from the wicked will be complete. It will be a strange sensation for you to find no Monday morning, no care to be renewed, no toil to be encountered, no harness to be buckled on afresh; above all, no sin to be dreaded, no temptation to be escaped. Heaven is so peaceful that the storms of earth are there unknown, the stirrings of the flesh are never felt, and the howlings of the dog of hell are never heard. There all is peace and purity, perfection and security forever.

4. *With this security will come perfect rest:* “Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours” (Rev 14:13). Heavenly rest is quite consistent with continual service, for like the angels, we shall rest on the wing, and find it rest to serve God day and night. But there you shall not toil till the sweat bedews¹² your face, neither shall the sun smite you nor any heat. No weary limb or fevered brain shall follow upon the blessed service of the glory-land. It is a paradise of pleasure and a palace of glory; it is a garden of supreme delights, and a mansion of abiding love; it is an everlasting *sabbatismos*,¹³ a rest that never can be broken, that evermore remaineth for the people of God. It is a kingdom where all are kings, an inheritance where all are heirs. My soul panteth for it (Psa 42:1). Is not this a charming hope? Did I not say well when I declared it to be marvelous?

5. *Nor is this all, brethren, for we expect to enjoy in heaven a happiness beyond compare.* Eye hath not seen it, nor ear heard it, nor hath the heart conceived it (1Co 2:9); it surpasses all carnal joy. We know a little of it, for the Lord hath revealed it unto us by the Spirit, Who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God. Yet what we know is but a mere taste of the marriage feast: enough to make us long for more, but by no means sufficient to give us a complete idea of the

¹¹ **yon** – *yonder*; at a distance within view; pointing the eye to a distant object.

¹² **bedews** – to moisten as with dew.

¹³ **sabbatismos** – *Greek*: Sabbath rest.

whole banquet. If it be so sweet to preach about Christ, what must it be to see Him and be with Him? If it be so delightful to be ravished by the music of His name, what must it be to lie in His bosom? Why, if these few clusters of Eshcol, which are now and then brought to us, are so sweet (Num 13:23-27), what will it be to abide in the vineyard, where all the clusters grow? If that one bucketful from the well of Bethlehem tasted so sweetly that we scarce dared to drink it, but poured it out before the Lord as a thank-offering (2Sa 23:15-17), what a joy will it be to drink at the well-head without stint¹⁴ forever? O to be eternally at the right hand of God, where there are pleasures for evermore!

6. *This is our hope, and yet there is more, for we have the hope of everlasting fellowship with Christ.* I would give ten thousand worlds, if I had them, to have one glimpse of that dear face, which was marred with sorrow for my sake. But to sit at my Lord's feet and look up into His countenance, hear His voice, and never, never grieve Him; but to participate in all His triumphs and glories forever and forever—what a heaven will this be! Then shall we have fellowship with all His saints, in whom He is glorified and by whom His image is reflected; and thus shall we behold fresh displays of His power and beamings of His love.

Is not this surpassing bliss? Said I not well when I declared that ours is a marvelous hope? Had I eloquence and could pile on goodly words, and could a poet assist me with his sweetest song, to tell of the bliss and joy of the eternal world, yet must preacher and poet both confess their inability to describe the glory to be revealed in us. The noblest intellect and the sweetest speech could not convey to you so much as a thousandth part of the bliss of heaven.

Delivered on Lord's-Day morning, October 13, 1878.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist minister; history's most widely read preacher (apart from those found in Scripture). Today, there is available more material written by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author, living or dead. Born at Kelvedon, Essex, England.



¹⁴ **stint** – restraint or limit.