

# Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 186

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## **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**

*“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*



## Free Grace Broadcaster

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The *Free Grace Broadcaster* is a quarterly digest of classic Christian sermons and articles, each issue focusing on a different theme. The *Broadcaster* is useful for personal devotions, discipleship, family worship, evangelism, and sermon preparation. Authors include C.H. Spurgeon (Baptist, 1834-1892), J.C. Ryle (Anglican, 1816-1900), Horatius Bonar (Presbyterian, 1808-1889), and A.W. Pink (Independent, 1886-1952).

### **In this issue:**

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686): *What Hope Is* – a Biblical definition of hope.

Wihelmus A'Brakel (1635-1711): *Hope in God* – describes the promised, present, and future benefits of hope.

J.C. Ryle (1816-1900): *Our Hope* – details the five marks of a really good hope.

John Owen (1616-1683): *Hope is a Glorious Grace* – shows that hope is a great support and consolation for God's people. Gives a helpful illustration regarding our journey toward heaven.

John Gill (1697-1771): *Of the Grace of Hope* – a detailed exposition of the objects, subjects, causes, effects, and properties of the grace of hope.

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686): *The Sacred Anchor* – the Christian's blessed hope in the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892): *The Hope Laid Up in Heaven* – a moving description of Heaven as a marvelous hope for God's children.

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# HOPE



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# WHAT HOPE IS

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

**H**OPE is a theological grace planted in the heart by the Spirit of God whereby a Christian is quickened to the expectation of those things which 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). Aquinas\* 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 which is difficult to attain; so hope differs from *desire*. Desire is weak and transient; 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 which is feasible and which there is 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 which keeps the heart from sinking in despair. Thus you have seen what hope is.

**QUESTION:** How does *hope* differ from *faith*?

**ANSWER:** 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 Luther said, it is hard to find a difference. But, though they are placed near together like the two wings of the cherubim on the mercyseat, 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 water, comfort the fainting soul. There is joy in believing (Rom 15:13); rejoicing in hope (Rom 5:2). Faith and hope, like those two golden pipes (Zec 4:12), empty their golden oil of joy into a Christian. But, though in some things these two graces agree and are alike, yet in some things they differ.

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

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; but we must first believe the things contained in the promise before we hope for them. Therefore, Jerome\* 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.

They differ in their nature and that two ways:

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.

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 hath promised”(Tit 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 shelves† or sink in the quicksands. This much for the first, what hope is.

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

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

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

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

# HOPE IN GOD

Wilhelmus A'Brakel (1635-1711)

*“Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him”*—Psalm 43:5

**G**OD 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, and this we shall now discuss. *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*, *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 propensity\* infused† 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 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 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 transitory• act, but rather a propensity—a disposition of spiritual competence from which deeds proceed.

## 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

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\***propensity** – a bent of mind, inclination or disposition.

†**infused** – put in, introduced into, instilled.

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

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 which shall come to naught. "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth" (Pro 11:7).

**The object of hope consists in the promised or future benefits.** God Himself is the supreme good and the complete felicity\* 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, 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 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.

### **The Objects of Hope**

**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 "the hope of eternal life" (Tit 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,

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\***felicity** – happiness.

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 engender\* comfort and a zeal for godliness.

**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 therefore speaks of hope, 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” (Tit 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, 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.” So much about the objects 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 show 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). They only hope, and they only 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

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

is grievous that they who may and are able to hope do not *more frequently* engage therein.

### **The Cause and Means of the Exercise of Hope**

**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 which 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).

**The means is the Word.** In the Word, God presents the matter in its beauty and preciousness. In the Word, He presents the Mediator 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,” “...which is 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); “...with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope” (Rom 15:13).

### **Patience: The Adjunct\* and Result of Hope**

**Hope has as its adjunct 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 becoming a partaker of

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

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).

**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 which so easily beset\* them. 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 strait 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).

### **A Call to Serious Self-Examination**

Having considered the nature of hope, you must now turn to yourself and observe whether this 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. 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 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,

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\***beset** – surround; hem in.

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? 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, 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.

**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<sup>†</sup>, 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 acquiesces<sup>•</sup> 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

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\*When speaking of *qualifications*, ABrakel 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.

<sup>†</sup>**deftness** – skill or agility.

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

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

### **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 convinced\* 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?

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

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\*“**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.

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—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, lethargic\* 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 which 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. 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:

***First, 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, anticipate grace, light, comfort, and sanctification in this life, and blessed fellowship with God hereafter. God has promised these matters to you, however, 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?

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

**(1)** God’s truth, faithfulness, and omnipotence. “...for He is faithful that

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

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).

**(2)** 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?

**(3)** 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).

**(4)** The eternal and immutable testament confirmed in the death of the Testator\* (Heb 9:15-17). “And I appoint unto you a kingdom” (Luk 22:29).

**(5)** 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).

**(6)** The oath of God. “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show 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).

**(7)** The given earnest† which 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).

**(8)** 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, “For we are saved by hope” (Rom 8:24). Who will refuse to depend upon such a certain assurance?

**Thirdly, 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 who exercises hope will adduce• 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 which 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).

**Fourthly, 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

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\***testator** – one who makes a legally valid will or testament before death.

†**earnest** – a token given in advance which promises something to come.

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

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).

**Fifthly, 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).

**Sixthly, 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 1John 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.

**Seventhly,** 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 and in meriting salvation for His own by virtue of His satisfaction.

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.

—From *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*,  
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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.

# OUR HOPE

J.C. Ryle (1816-1900)

*“Good hope through grace”*—2 Thessalonians 2:16

**H**OPE 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 off\* some home-thrust† 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 for ever 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, and wherefore, and on what grounds, and for 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

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\***turn off** – divert; deflect.

†**home-thrust** – a well directed or effective thrust, which wounds in a vital part.

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 for ever. Like Ignorance, in *Pilgrim's Progress*, 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."

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 14:4).

If our hope is sound, we ought to be able to turn to some text or fact or doctrine of God's Word as the source of it. Our confidence must arise from something which God has caused to be written in the Bible for our learning and which 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 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 or 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 which "maketh not ashamed" is never separate from God's Word.

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 4:3).

*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 which 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, 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 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 and 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 which 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 that another man does not; he is conscious of possessing a well-grounded expectation, of good things to come. This consciousness may vary exceedingly in different persons. In one it may be strong and well-defined; in another it may be feeble and indistinct. It may vary exceedingly in different stages of the same person’s experience. At one time he may be full of “joy and peace in believing;” at another he may be depressed and cast down. But in all persons who have a “good hope,” in a greater or less degree, this consciousness does exist.

I am aware that this truth is one which has been fearfully abused and perverted. It has been brought into great disrepute by the fanaticism, enthusiasm, and extravagance of some professing Christians. Mere animal\* excitement has been mistaken for the work of the Holy Ghost. The overwrought feelings of weak and nervous people have been prematurely and rashly supposed to be the result of grace. Men and women have been hastily pronounced “converted,” who have soon gone back to the world and proved utterly “unconverted” and dead in sins. And then has come in the devil. Contempt has been poured on religious feelings of every description: their very existence has been denied and scouted†; and the result is that the very name of “feelings” in religion is in many quarters dreaded and disliked.

But the abuse and perversion of a truth must never be allowed to rob us of the use of it. When all has been said that can be said against fanaticism and enthusiasm, it is still undeniable that religious feelings are plainly spoken of and described in Scripture. The Word of God tells us that the true Christian has “peace” and “rest” and “joy” and “confidence.” It tells us of some who have the “witness of the Spirit,” of some who “fear no evil,” of some who enjoy “assurance,” of some who “know whom they have believed,” of some who “are persuaded that they shall never be separated from the love of God in Christ.” These are the feelings for which I contend: this is that sober, inward experience in which I see nothing extravagant, enthusiastic, or fanatical. Of such feelings I say boldly, no man need be ashamed. I go further and say that no man has a “good hope” who does not know *something*, however faintly, of these feelings in his own heart. I go further still and say that to hold any other doctrine is to cast dishonor on the whole work of the Holy Ghost.

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\***animal** – of or relating to the senses; the physical as distinct from the spiritual aspect of people.

†**scouted** – sneered out; treated with contempt.

Will any one tell us that God ever intended a true Christian to have no inward consciousness of his own Christianity? Will any one say that the Bible teaches that people can pass from death to life, be pardoned, renewed, and sanctified, and yet feel nothing of this mighty change within? Let those think it who will: I can hold no such doctrine. I would as soon believe that Lazarus did not know that he was raised from the grave, or Bartimeus that he was restored to sight, as believe that a man cannot *feel* within him the Spirit of God.

Can a weary man lie down in bed and not feel rested? Can the parched traveler in an African desert drink water and not feel refreshed? Can the starved sailor, in Arctic regions, draw near to the fire and not feel warmed? Can the half naked, hungry, homeless wanderer in our streets be clothed, fed, and housed, and not feel comforted? Can the fainting sick man receive the healing cordial\* and not feel revived? I cannot believe it. I believe that in each case something will be felt. Just so 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.

*Let us beware of a hope that is not felt and a Christianity that is destitute of any inward experience.* They are idols of the present day, idols before which thousands are bowing down. Thousands are trying to persuade themselves that people may be born again and have the Spirit, and yet not be sensible of it; or that people may be members of Christ and receive benefit from Him, who have neither faith nor love towards His name. These are the favorite doctrines of modern days! These be the gods which have taken the place of Diana and Mercury and "the image which fell down from Jupiter!"† These be the last new deities invented by poor, weak, idolatrous man! From all such idols let us keep ourselves with jealous care. Golden as their heads may be, their feet are no better than clay. They cannot stand: they must sooner or later break down. Miserable indeed are the prospects of those who worship them! Their hope is not the hope of the Bible: it is the hope of a dead corpse. Where Christ and the Spirit are, Their presence will be *felt!*

Can any one in his senses suppose that the apostle Paul would have been content with Christians who knew nothing of inward feelings? Can we fancy that mighty man of God sanctioning a religion which a person might have, and yet experience nothing within? Can we picture to ourselves a member of one of the Churches he founded, who was utterly unacquainted with peace or joy or confidence towards God and was yet approved by the great apostle of

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\* **cordial** – a tonic that raises the spirits and gives cheerfulness to those who are weakened and depressed.

† Acts 19:35

the Gentiles as a true believer? Away with the idea! It will not bear reflection for a moment. The testimony of Scripture is plain and explicit. Talk as men will about enthusiasm and excitement, there are such things as *feelings* in religion. The Christian who knows nothing of them is not yet converted and has everything to learn. The cold marble of a Grecian statue may well be unimpassioned\*. The dried mummy from Egypt may well look stiff and still. The stuffed beast in a museum may well be motionless and cold. They are all lifeless things. But where there is life, there will always be some feeling. 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 one 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” (Psa 116:12; 1Co 6:20; 1Pe 2:9; Joh 14:14).

This is a point which has been of infinite importance in every age of the Church. It is a truth which 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†.” “He that boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain” (Pro 14:23; 25:14).

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\***unimpassioned** – completely lacking of emotional influence.

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

**(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 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 a man speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, he is become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though a man has the gift of prophecy, and understands all mysteries, and all knowledge, and has not charity, he is nothing.” Yes: hope without charity is no hope at all (1Co 13: 1-3).

**(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 and cheat and 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 which is not “unto sanctification” is not of God, but of the devil. 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\*. Their voice on Sunday is the voice of Jacob, but their hands on week days are the hands of Esau. 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 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

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\***revel** – a wild party or boisterous festivity.

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 current\* 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 antinomianism† 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 and Church and denomination and 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* which is available as a small booklet  
from Chapel Library.

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\***pass current** – pass for truth.

†**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.

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

# HOPE IS A GLORIOUS GRACE

John Owen (1616-1683)

*“Christ in you the hope of glory”*—Colossians 1:27

**H**OPE is a glorious grace, whereunto blessed effects are ascribed in the Scripture, and an effectual operation unto the supportment\* 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 which we desire; but as it is a gospel grace, all uncertainty is removed from it, which 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 mistake of its nature, it is that 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 use of, 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.” Without this we can neither have that evidence of eternal things, nor that valuation of them, nor that preparedness in our minds for them, as should keep us in the exercise of gracious hope about them.

Suppose sundry† persons engaged in a voyage unto a most remote country, wherein all of them have an apprehension• that there is a place of rest and

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\***supportment** – support.

†**sundry** – miscellaneous.

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

an inheritance provided for them. Under this apprehension they all put themselves upon their voyage, to possess what is so prepared. Howbeit\* 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 and expectation 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 or pilgrimage wherein we are engaged towards a heavenly country, we are sure to meet with all kinds of dangers, difficulties, and perils. 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*, John Owen,  
*The Works of John Owen*, vol. 7, pp. 321-323, reprinted by Banner of Truth.

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\***howbeit** – however; nevertheless.

**John Owen** (1616-1683): called “The Prince of the Puritans” and committed to the Congregational way of church government. He was a chaplain in the army of Oliver Cromwell and vice-chancellor of Oxford University, but most of his life he served as a minister in congregational churches. His written works span forty years and run to twenty-four volumes representing among the best resources for theology in the English language. Born to Puritan parents in the Oxfordshire village of Stadham.

# OF THE GRACE OF HOPE

John Gill (1697-1771)

**H**AVING 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, hope—faith is the substance of things hoped for—* 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 “*Who first hoped in Christ.*” Concerning which grace, the following things may be observed:

**I. The object, ground, and foundation of it, Jehovah, God, Father, Son, and Spirit.** Not any creature whatever, angel or man. Not the Virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord, as the papists impiously\* and blasphemously address her: *Salve regina, spes nostra*; Save us, O queen, our hope!

**Nor any creature-enjoyment†:** “*If I have made gold my hope,*” 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 (Job 36:24). 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.*

**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 which may lay Him under an obligation to Him or which God has not a prior right unto. Much less can he merit eternal happiness of Him and so have any hope of it on that account, for that is *the free gift of God through Christ.*

**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 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,

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

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

making a profession of faith in Christ, subjecting to the ordinances of Christ—baptism and the Lord’s Supper—and continuing in a round\* 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 75:5). “*Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is!*” (Jer 32:7; Psa 146:5).

**First, God, essentially considered, is the object of hope.** “*Hope 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 which hope in God are His grace and mercy and goodness. He has proclaimed His name, “*The Lord God, merciful, gracious, abundant in goodness,*” and it is the abundance of His mercy, grace, and goodness, which 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!*” He is plentiful 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*, and His eye is upon them to do them good. Therefore there is great encouragement to make the Lord God the object of their hope (Psa 130:7; 147:11; 33:18).

**Secondly, God personally considered, is the object of hope.** God the Father, who 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* (Rom 15:13), that is, in God the Father (1Pe 1:21). And Christ the Son of God is called *our hope* and *Christ in you the hope of glory*, that is, the object and ground and foundation of it, which are His blood, righteousness, and sacrifice (1Ti 1:1; Col 1:27). 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.

**Thirdly, 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,*” the ground and foundation of which hope is in the faithfulness and power of God (Psa 130:5). “*For he is faithful that has promised,*” nor will He *suffer His faithfulness to fail*. And therefore the performance of His promises may be hoped for; besides, He is *able also to*

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\*round – series.

*perform*. And upon this footing Abraham believed *in hope against hope*. The hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think; and therefore may hope, yea, believe, there will be a performance of whatsoever is spoken and promised by Him.

**1st, 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, 25). 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 conversant\* 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 thee, at the revelation of Jesus Christ,*” when He shall be revealed from Heaven and appear [the] second time; and therefore are directed “*to look for that blessed hope,*” the hope laid up in heaven, the hope of happiness to be enjoyed “*at the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ*” (1Pe1:13; Tit 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 straight and the way narrow*, which lead to eternal life, 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,*” 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*” (Ezr 10:2; Lam 3:26). At least he has encouragement to “*put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope*” (Lam 5:29) or seeing hope of salvation is to be entertained.

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

1. Salvation by Christ: as soon as ever a soul is made sensible† of its lost

\***conversant about** – familiar or acquainted with.

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

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 119:116). 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. (1.) It has been thought of, contrived, and fixed: the thoughts of God were employed about it in eternity. He resolved upon the salvation of some of the sons of men; He appointed them to salvation and chose them to it through certain means. He contrived the scheme of it in the wisest manner and settled and established it in the covenant of grace, all which serve to encourage hope of it. (2.) And as God appointed some to salvation, He appointed one to be the Savior of them, and a great One, even His own Son, His equal and His fellow, every way and on all accounts capable of such a work. He promised Him, He sent Him, and He came to seek and save lost sinners. And He is become the Author of eternal salvation and His name is called Jesus, because He saves His people from their sins. Therefore have they reason to hope in Him. (3.) Salvation is actually wrought out by Christ. It is entirely finished. The work is done and completely done. It is a full salvation, nothing wanting to make it perfect. Wherefore, "*Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with him is plenteous redemption*" (Psa 130:7), which includes in it and secures all the blessings of grace as justification, forgiveness of sin, adoption, and eternal life. (4.) Salvation being wrought out by Christ, it is in Him and to be had by Him and by no other. So said the apostle Peter, "*Neither is there salvation in any other*" (Act 4:12). But inasmuch as there is salvation in Him, it may be hoped for from Him though there is no hope of it elsewhere. "*Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains: Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel*" (Jer 3:23) and in Him only. And therefore such who are acquainted herewith, hope in Him only and will have no other Savior. (5.) 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 [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). (6.) Salvation in and by Christ is to be had

freely. It is wholly of free grace and not of works. God saves and calls men according to His grace, and they are saved by grace, and not of works; not by works of righteousness done by them: but according to the abundant mercy and rich grace of God in Christ: were any conditions required on the part of sinners, qualifying them for, and entitling them unto salvation, they might despair of it. But since it is all of free grace they may be encouraged to hope for it. (7.) Salvation by Christ is for sinners, even for the chief of sinners; as Christ came to call sinners to repentance, so to die for them and by dying to save them. In this lies the high commendation of the love of God to us, that *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Rom 5:8). And this is no small encouragement to such who see themselves polluted, guilty sinners, to hope for salvation by a dying Savior since He *came into the world to save sinners, even the chief* (1Ti 1:15). (8.) The gospel-declaration gives great encouragement to sinners to hope in Christ for salvation: that he that believes shall be saved; that he that seeth the Son and believeth on Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. To a soul inquiring after salvation the gospel thus directs, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!*" (Mar 16:16; Joh 6:40; Act 16:31).

2. Pardon of sin through the blood of Christ: this is what is immediately sought after and prayed for by a soul convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment; with David it says, "*For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity: for it is great!*" (Psa 25:11). So great that a sinner cannot bear the weight of its guilt; so great that none but God can forgive it; and if He should mark iniquity and insist on satisfaction for it, there would be no standing before Him; but *there is forgiveness with him*, pardoning grace and mercy with Him. And therefore there is encouragement to hope in Him (Psa 130: 3, 4, 7), and to come before Him, though in the manner the publican did; saying, "*God, be merciful (or propitious\*) to me a sinner!*" (Luk 18:13). There is ground and reason to hope for pardoning mercy through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ.

(1.) Because God is a sin-forgiving God; He can forgive sin, and none can do it but Him; and He does *abundantly pardon!* pardons both abundance of sins and abundance of sinners and all freely; sins of omission and commission, gross and grievous ones (Isa 43:25). And there is none like Him on this account (Mic 7:18). Jehovah has in covenant promised the forgiveness of sins: *I will forgive their iniquity; and I will remember their sin no more!* (Jer 31:34). He has proclaimed His name, merciful and gracious, *forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin*, even sins of every sort and size (Exo 34:7). Wherefore the greatest sinners may hope in Him for pardon. (2.) The blood of Christ has been shed on account of sin and the pardon of it. God *set* Him

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\***propitious** – disposed to be gracious or merciful.

*forth* in His purposes and decrees, in His council and covenant, to be the *propitiation, through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins*; to make reconciliation and atonement for sin by His blood, that men believing in it might have the pardon of it; and God has sent Him forth in the fulness of time to shed His blood for this purpose. And *His blood is shed for many for the remission of sins*; and hence satisfaction for sin being made by it, *God is faithful and Just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1Jo 1:9). (3.) Christ's blood being shed and forgiveness of sin through it obtained, Christ is exalted as *a Prince and a Savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins* (Act 5:31). And to whomsoever He gives the one He gives the other; so that penitent sinners have great reason to hope in Him for pardon, and which they may expect to have of Him freely. He *gives*, and he gives it freely; pardon of sin is according to the riches of grace and is owing to the tender mercy of God and the multitude of it. (4.) The declaration of it made in the gospel gives great encouragement to hope for it. Christ gave orders to His apostles, before His ascension to heaven, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name, among all nations*; to all sorts of men in them, *beginning at Jerusalem*, where some of the chief and greatest of sinners lived; even such who had been lately concerned in the shedding of His blood (Luk 24:47). According to this commission given them, wherever they came they made it known to men, that *through* Christ was *preached unto them the forgiveness of sins*. In this both they and the prophets agreed and bore witness, *That through His name, the name of Christ, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins* (Act 13:48; 10:43). (5.) The instances of pardon recorded in Scripture, and of some notorious sinners, serve much to encourage hope of pardon likewise; as a Manasseh, guilty of the grossest of crimes; a Mary Magdalene, out of whom Christ cast seven devils; the woman a sinner, who washed Christ's feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head and loved much because much was forgiven her; Saul the blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious person, who obtained mercy; and many of the Corinthians, described as the worst of sinners, and yet were pardoned and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.

3. The blessings of grace, and supplies of it in the present life, and through it, are the objects of hope, and about which that is conversant, 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 Jesus Christ* (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.

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

1. 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, of the hope of it, “*I am called in question,*” says the apostle. And again, “*And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust.*” Once more, and “*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.*” [He] then adds, “*Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?*” (Act 23:6; 24:15; 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.

2. 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” and “hope of glory,” “the blessed hope,” and “hope laid up in heaven,” all intending the happiness hoped for (Tit 1:2; 2:13; Rom 5:2; Col 1:5) and for which there is good ground and reason: (1.) From its being a free gift, not to be obtained by the merits of men or the works of the creature, but is entirely owing to the free grace of God. *The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom 6:23). If it was to be acquired by doing, it might be despaired of; but since it is the good pleasure of our heavenly Father to give us the kingdom, it may be hoped for. (2.) It is in the hands of Christ to give it. He has power to give it to as many as the Father has given Him, and He does give it to all His sheep. He is a sun and shield and gives both grace and glory (Psa 28:7), and therefore it may be hoped for from Him. Yea, He Himself is the ground of it and is therefore called, *our hope*, and *Christ in us the hope of glory* (1Ti 1:1; Col 1:27). [His] righteousness entitles to it, and His grace makes meet\* for it. (3.) From

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\*meet – fit, suitable.

the promise of it in Christ, called "*The promise of life which is in Christ Jesus*" (2Ti 1:1), and which was put into His hands as soon as made. It is safe and secure, firm and stable, and which was very early made: *In hope of eternal life; which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began*; Who is faithful that has promised, and therefore it may be hoped for, expected, and depended on. And this is the declared will of God, that *whosoever seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life* (John 6:40). Hence all such persons may steadily hope and wait for it. (4.) From the preparations and prayers of Christ for it: He is gone to prepare heaven and happiness for His people by His presence and mediation and has promised to come again and take them to Himself, that they may be with Him where He is. And for this He prays and makes intercession and which is always prevalent; and He is always heard (Joh 14:2, 3; 17:24). (5.) From the Spirit's work in the hearts of men, who works them for that self-same thing, eternal glory, whose grace is a well of living water springing up unto eternal life. And between grace and glory is an inseparable connection: to whom grace is given glory is also. Whom God calls, justifies, and sanctifies, He also glorifies; therefore those who are partakers of the one may hope for the other.

## **II. The subjects of the grace of hope, or who they are that are partakers of it.**

1. Not angels, good or bad. Not *good* angels, [because] they are in the full enjoyment of God and of all felicity. They see God, and what is seen is not hope. They are in the present possession of happiness, and so that is not future. Nor is there any thing about them or attends them to make their happiness difficult or doubtful. Nor evil angels, the devils: there is a kind of faith ascribed to them, the belief of a God, of one God, at whom they tremble, but have no hope. There is not the least ground and reason for them to hope for a recovery out of their apostate state or of their being ever restored to the favor of God. For as soon as they fell they were cast out of heaven, cast down to hell, and laid up in chains of darkness, reserved for the great and last judgment, when they will receive of their final sentence and full punishment, which they expect and have no hope of escaping. Hence they said to Christ in the days of His flesh, "*Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*" (Mat 8:29). They have no foundation of hope of salvation by Christ; He took not on Him the nature of angels, nor obeyed nor suffered for them, nor redeemed any of them by His blood. These were only men out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation. Nor was the gospel, the good tidings of salvation by Christ, nor any messages of grace sent to them, nor any repentance given them. And so no remission of sins [is] to be hoped for by them.

2. Only men, and these not all men, [for] some are described as *those without hope* and who live and die without it. And all men are *without hope* whilst in a state of nature and unregeneracy (1Th 4:13; 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).

3. 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 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.

4. 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, 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).

5. They are the Israel of the Lord, whose hope the Lord is; and who are encouraged to hope in Him and do, even the whole Israel of God. His spiritual Israel—Jews and Gentiles—sooner or later, hope in the Lord. The Israel whom God has chosen for His peculiar treasure, and whom He has redeemed from all iniquity and effectually calls by His grace, and who appear in due time to be Israelites indeed, and even *all* sensible sinners, who are quickened and born again, come under this character and are encouraged to hope in the Lord for mercy and salvation. *Let Israel hope in the Lord* (Psa 130:7). Hence he is called, "*The hope of Israel*" (Jer 14:8).

6. The separate souls of saints after death, in heaven, seem to be possessed of and to be in the exercise of the grace of hope, particularly with respect to the resurrection of their bodies. As *the flesh* of Christ, by a figure, is said to rest in *hope* of its resurrection, that is, His soul rested or waited in hope of the resurrection of His body, whilst in the grave, being confident of it (Psa 16:9); so the souls of the saints, whilst in a separate state in heaven and during the abode of their bodies in the grave, rest, wait, and hope for the resurrection of them. And this may be what Job has a reference to when he says, "*If a man die shall he live again?*" He shall in the resurrection-morn. "*All the*

*days of my appointed time* (of lying in the grave) *will I wait till my change come,*” until Christ changes the vile bodies of His people and makes them like His glorious one (Job 14:14). And something of this kind may be observed in the answer to the souls under the altar crying, “*How long, O Lord,*” to whom it was said that they should *rest yet for a little season,* be still and quiet, hope and wait, *until their fellow servants and brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled* (Rev 6:9, 10, 11).

### **III. 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.**

1. 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, who 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, it may well be thought that it is by this same power that it is first produced in them (Rom 15:13).

2. The moving cause of it is the grace and mercy of God. Hence it is called *good hope through grace*. 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 abounding of mercy.

3. The gospel is the means of it 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 strong consolation* (Heb 6:18). These are that of *which God causes His people to hope*, what are the ground and foundation of it, support it, and encourage to the exercise of it (Psa 119:49).

4. 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 scripture 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, &c. 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, which are produced through it and follow upon it.**

1. It is said of it 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. [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.

2. 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.

3. 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 the most miserable*. 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).

4. 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 for ever 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 and epithets of the grace of hope which will more fully show the nature, excellency, and usefulness of it.**

**First, It is called a *good* hope:** “*and hath given us good hope through grace*” (2Th 2:16). 1. In distinction from, and in opposition to, a bad one. A bad one is that which is the hope of the moralist and legalist, which is founded on their own works of righteousness and deeds, done in obedience to the law and is but a sandy foundation to build an hope of eternal salvation upon. Such is the hope of a carnal and external professor of religion, which is laid on birth privileges, education principles, a bare profession of religion, subjection to external ordinances, and a performance of a round of duties; and the hope of a profane sinner, formed upon the absolute mercy of God, without any regard to the merits, blood, and righteousness of Christ.

2. A *good* hope is that which has God’s grace and promises for its object, Christ and His righteousness for its foundation, the Spirit of grace for its Author, and is a part of the good work of grace begun upon the soul. [It] is an hope of good things to come, of which Christ is the high-priest. In this, hope differs from expectation: hope is an expectation of *good* things. And he that fears expects; but he does not expect good things, for fear is an expectation of evil things. But hope is of *good* things. Wicked men expect things which have no substance and solidity in them, and their hope perishes.

3. A *good* hope is that which is of great use both in life and death. It is the Christian sailor’s anchor and the Christian soldier’s helmet. It carries through all the troubles in life, as before observed, and supports in the hour of death, whilst the hope of the hypocrite is like the giving up of the ghost and expires with him. This continues and the man that has it is saved eternally, for “*we are saved by hope*” (Rom 8:24).

**Secondly, It is also a *lively* or *living* one** (1Pe 1:3). So called,

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* (Tit 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 when 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, 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).

**Thirdly, It is represented as of a purifying nature.** “*Every man that hath this hope in him*”—of appearing with Christ and 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 any thing 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).

**Fourthly, Hope is sometimes compared to an anchor, because of its great usefulness to the Christian in this life.** “*Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast*” (Heb 6:19). This world is a sea. The church, and so every believer, is like a ship sailing on it. Christ is the pilot that guides it. Hope is the anchor of it. And a good hope is like an anchor cast on a good foundation, where remaining fixed, it is sure and steadfast. And as the ground on which an anchor is cast is out of sight, so Christ, on which hope is fixed, is unseen, as are also the glories of a future state, [which] it is concerned with. An anchor is of no service without a cable; so not hope without faith, which is the substance and support of it. A ship when at anchor is kept steady by it; so a soul by hope. None of the things it meets with—afflictions, troubles, and temptations—can move it from the hope of the gospel, from the service and cause of Christ. But it remains steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. In some things hope and an anchor disagree: an anchor is not of so much use in storms and tempests at sea as when in a calm or in danger near rocks and shores. But hope is of use when the soul is in a storm sadly ruffled, discomposed, disquieted, and tossed about with sin, temptation, and trouble. Hence David, in such a spiritual storm, cast out the anchor of hope: “*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God!*” (Psa 13:11). And says the prophet Jeremy, “*Thou art my hope in the day of evil*” (Jer 17:17). A cable may be cut or broken, and so [renders] the anchor useless. But faith, which is to hope as the cable is to the anchor, will never fail, can never be destroyed. An anchor is cast on what is below, on ground underneath; but hope has for

its objects things above where Jesus is. When a vessel is at anchor it continues where it is; it moves not forward. But a soul, when it abounds in the exercise of the grace of hope through the power of the Holy Ghost, it is moving upwards, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and enters into that within the veil. And what gives it the preference is, that it *is the anchor of the soul*, and its epithets, *sure* and *steadfast*, serve to recommend it, which certainty and steadfastness of it arise from the Author, Object, Ground, and Foundation of it.

***Fifthly, Hope of salvation by Christ is compared to an helmet: “and for an helmet the hope of salvation”*** (1Th 5:8). This is a piece of armor that is a defense of the head, a cover of it in the day of battle, and an erector of it. Of such use is hope of salvation by Christ: 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 which 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. 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*

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**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.

# 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*

## WHAT A CHRISTIAN HOPES FOR

**E**MPHATICALLY—“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; then he would have forlorn hope. There is nothing here to be hoped for but vicissitudes\*. All the world rings† 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.

The object of a Christian 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\*, as Jerome and Chrysostom\*\* 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.

**1. There is an appearing of Christ to us**, as when He was incarnate. “To 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 manifest in the flesh (1Ti3:16). ‘Tis such an enigma as the angels adore (1Pe1:12). 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.

**2. 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

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\***vicissitudes** – changes or variations.

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

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

\*\***Chrysostom** – (347-407) early church father, biblical interpreter, archbishop of Constantinople. His zeal and clarity of preaching earned him the name “Golden-mouth.”

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? Colossians 1:27, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

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

**First, Christ appears for us as an Advocate.** Hebrews 9:24, “He is entered into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us.” ‘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 mercyseat, 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?

**Second, 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.

#### **CHRIST’S GLORIOUS APPEARING**

**First, 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 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 courtiers\* of heaven. They are compared to lightning, (Mat 28:3), in regard of

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

their sparkling luster, and these glorious, sublimated\* spirits shall be Christ's satellites†, part of Christ's train and retinue•, accompanying Him to His throne. Thus it will be a glorious appearing in regard of Christ.

**Second, 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." The debt-book shall be crossed\*\* 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 Bernard†† 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 inebriating\*\* 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 downwards. 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°, but there might be some trees upon the hills, and they would

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\* **sublimated** – elevated, exalted.

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

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

\*\* **crossed** – erased or canceled.

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

•• **inebriating** – intoxicating.

° **aye** – yes or yea.

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 conversation [behavior] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."

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

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

# 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*

**F**IRST, 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 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 lintel\* of your door, “NO HOPE.” And the grim sentence would have stood there to this day had not a loving hand taken the hyssop† 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 2:12). 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\*, 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 fain\*\* to lie down and die. Now, sinners though we be, we have a hope. Ever since by faith we looked to Jesus on the cross, a hope full of glory has taken possession of our hearts. Is not this a marvelous thing?

*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

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

†**hyssop** – an 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. This plant is generally considered to be the Syrian marjoram which is a fragrant grey-leaved wiry-stemmed perennial herb, 20–30 cm high, with white or yellow flowers in small heads, growing in dry rocky places.

•**will-o’-the-wisp** – a light that sometimes hovers 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.

\*\***fain** – glad.

towards heaven. He might have some hope of purgatory\*, 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.” 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 which 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?

*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

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\***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.

substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, 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 which 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 which 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 coffers of heaven!

*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 for ever.

*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.

*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 which belong to that hope. 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. Nor do we hope for victory only: but in our own persons we shall possess perfection. We shall one day cast off the slough\* 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 aught† which could surpass this. Oh, matchless joy to be as holy, harmless, and undefiled as our own beloved Lord! How delightful to have no propensity• 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 languor\*\* 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 recreant†† affection then, no erring judgment, no straying passion, no rebellious lust: there will remain nothing which can defile or weaken or distract. We shall be perfect, altogether

\***slough** – a place of deep mud or mire.

†**aught** – anything.

•**propensity** – an inclination or tendency.

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

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

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.

We expect to enjoy security also 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, 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. Oh, to be free from mental trouble! What a relief will this be to many a doubting Thomas! 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 yon\* 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 for ever.

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 bedews† 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*•, a rest which never can be broken, which 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. Is not this a charming hope? Did I not say well when I declared it to be marvelous?

*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; it surpasses all carnal joy. We know a little of it, for the Lord

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\***yon** – *yonder*; at a distance within view. We use this word to point the eye to a distant object.

†**bedews** – to moisten as with dew.

•**sabbatismos** – Sabbath rest.

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 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, 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, what a joy will it be to drink at the well-head without stint• for ever? O to be eternally at the right hand of God, where there are pleasures for evermore!

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 and hear his voice and never, never grieve him, but to participate in all his triumphs and glories for ever and for ever—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

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\*Num 13:23-27

†2Sa 23:15-17

•stint – restraint or limit.

**Charles H. Spurgeon** (1834-1892): Influential Baptist minister in England. 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.