

Hope of the Christian

The term hope (Greek elpis, Hebrew batah) had in Greek and Roman times a neutral meaning as expectation of good or evil. Some treat it cynically; others extol it; some poets class it among evils. Paul characterizes the Gentile world as a world without hope (Eph. 2:12). For some Old Testament writers God is "the Hope of Israel" (Jer. 14:8).

They trust in Him (Jer. 17:7), wait passively upon Him (Psa. 42:5), or actively anticipate His blessing (Psa. 62:5). The unbelieving Israelites cherished materialistic hopes for a messianic kingdom; and others looked only for transitory promises, since such as they anticipated the resurrection (Dan. 12:2).

Christ Himself is described as the Christian hope (I Tim. 1:1), and by His resurrection the specifically Christian virtue of hope is bestowed on the regenerate, who abound in hope through the Spirit (Rom. 15:13).

There are six aspects of hope related to the Christian life:

- This hope relates to salvation and is an essential grace, like faith and love (1 Cor. 13:13); but where faith refers to past and present, hope includes the future (Rom. 8:24-25). Its object is the ultimate blessedness of God's kingdom (Acts 2:26; Titus 1:2).
- It produces the moral fruits of joyful confidence in God (Rom. 8:28), unashamed patience in tribulation (Rom. 5:3), and perseverance in prayer.
- It anticipates an actual righteousness (Gal. 5:5) and is thus good (2 Thess. 2:16), blessed (Titus 2:13), and glorious (Col. 1:27).
- It stabilizes the soul like an anchor by linking it to God's steadfastness (Heb. 3:6; 6:18-19).
- It was generated in the Old Testament believers by God's promise first given to Abraham (Romans 4:18), then embraced by Israel (Acts 26:6-7), and proclaimed by Paul as the hope of the gospel.
- The one in whom hope is placed is sometimes called elpis, such as the Lord Jesus in (1 Tim. 1:1); the Thess. (1 Thess. 2:19); and God (Jer. 17:7).

Similarly, the thing hoped for is elpis (1 John 3:3; Col. 1:5), hope stored up in the heavens, expectation focused on the parousia.

Elpis is a collective hope in the body of Christ. The Thessalonians are exhorted to hope for reunion with their deceased brethren (1 Thess. 4:13-18), and ministers hope for their converts (2 Cor. 1:7), desiring to present them perfect (Col. 1:28). Christ as the chief Shepherd expresses this hope that His own will together behold His glory (John 17:24), and this consummation is guaranteed by the earnest of the Spirit within Christian hearts (Rom. 8:16).

Hope therefore is defined as confident anticipation based on divine integrity, moving toward with eager anticipation of the next imputation. Hope has progressive objectives. It is never stagnant or dormant but looking forward to divine promises. Hope is actively seeking to do the purpose, plan and will of God. Hope lives in the premise that glorifying God is the purpose of his existence.

There are three categories of hope:

- Hope of eternal life for unbeliever
- Hope of spiritual maturity for advancing believer
- Hope of blessing in time and blessing in eternity
- The hope of the believers is quite far from wishful thinking of the unbelievers.

Wishful thinking is emotional, attached to experience or situation, expectant of things that might not really come. In most cases, wishful thinking focuses on the person's ability to expect the things he wishes to become reality. Some defined faith in same level as wishful thinking. Both hope and faith are not dependent on the subject (the one who believes) but on the object (the One he believes).

Confidence is not how much you can believe and not how long you stay believing but on the immutability and veracity of the one you believe. In prayer for example, some claim that they have super faith because of their ability to ask and expect great things from God.

Such faith is presumptuous because faith is misdirected on the one who believes. The issue is not on the greatness of your faith but on the greatness of God.

Confidence on God is built by Bible doctrine (see Tract No. 43). Presumptuous faith does not need the veracity of Bible doctrine since it is stimulated by superstitions, myths, demonic doctrines and lies. Bible doctrine consistently and systematically stored in the souls will become wisdom or epignosis, available whenever the believer is inside the divine sphere.

Presumptuous faith leads only to unrealistic expectation that will become unreality. The biblical faith is not unrealistic expectations because it is based on the perfect character of God who cannot deny Himself. It's truthfulness toward His creation is based on His truthfulness toward Himself. Man cannot be the object of hope because man is untrustworthy.

The divine essence or the perfect character of God is the basis of our confidence. God will fulfill whatever He has promised without human intervention or contribution. It is true that God involved men in His plan and purpose (for man) but He is not dependent on men. In grace, God choose to involve men in His operation. This confidence (hope) do not slow down or stop until it has done the plan, purpose and will of God.

Christ is the Author of hope, meaning the integrity of God gives our lives meaning, purpose, and definition. The only hope for unbelievers is the hope of salvation because all the other plan and purpose of God is inside this plan. God has a plan for all unbelievers, and that is to be saved. God has no other plan for unbelievers except salvation. Man may outline his own plan (Prov. 16:1, 3, 19:21, 20:5) but its success depends on God's plan and purpose for man (Isaiah 8:10).

The hope is the hope of glorifying Christ (Col. 1:27), it is the hope of imputed blessings that glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. God has great and fabulous plan for all Church Age believers all summed up in the objective of glorifying Christ.

When God provided salvation, He also provided everything a believer might need in order to reach spiritual maturity and the sustenance for existence on earth. Spiritual maturity is the objective of the Christian life, and the blessings of spiritual maturity in time and eternity is the Christian motivation.

God designed the life of the Church Age believers to glorify Christ by receiving blessings that comes as results of spiritual maturity. We glorify God by receiving blessings.

Bible doctrine is the source of hope. Bible doctrine is the reality from which we keep receiving the hope, the proof of matters that have not been seen (Heb. 11:1). Hope is a process that needs continuity and progression; it must be built by systematic intake of Bible doctrine. Hope, faith or confidence on God can diminish and die without Bible doctrine.

Every believer is responsible to make his faith grow continually until it is fully established in spiritual maturity. The hope of the Bible is based on having potentials. There are three potentials:

- The unbelievers potential for salvation
- The believers potential for blessings in time
- The believers potential blessings in eternity

It is the job of God to bless; our job is to develop the capacity that frees God to bless us. God is free to bless believers inside spirituality and spiritual maturity. Logistical grace is available to every believer regardless of their spiritual status. Blessing in time is exclusive for spiritually mature believers.

God cannot give to immature or carnal believer the blessing reserved only for spiritually mature believers. That is why, material prosperity earned by the power of old sinful nature is never a sign of spirituality or maturity.

After salvation, our basis of hope is the Person and saving work of Christ. Hope is never separated from the Person of Christ. A person without Christ is a hopeless person regardless of his claims and assumption. Hope in God through Christ is the only workable and functional hope, the rest are nothing but presumptuous faith.

Four basic types of confidence in the world:

- Godly confidence – true faith in the true God
- Religious confidence – pseudo faith in false god
- Self confidence – trust in personal abilities
- Unrealistic confidence – trust in things

Words of warning concerning not overcoming fear:

- Overcoming fear is a mandate to every believer and is a skill that everyone can learn and practice, not unless one is like most people who cling to their fear.
- If you refuse to let go of your fear, but obeying it as your master, giving in to its demands because it's part of who you are, then you have been grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit.
- If you are not willing to start overcoming your fear, you probably would not overcome it at all.
- If you think there is nothing wrong with not overcoming your fear, you might die in your fear through sin unto death.

Fear means lack of confidence on God. Do you have confidence in:

- God's power in your weakness
- God's wisdom in your confusion
- God's grace in your unworthiness
- God's mercy in your failure and sins
- God's sympathy in your pains and agony
- God's faithfulness in your unfaithfulness
- God's immutability in your wickedness
- God's happiness in your unhappiness
- God's eternal life in your doubts

Basic truth related to confidence on God:

- Everyone that seeks the Lord will find Him.
- Everyone that trusts in the Lord continue to know His will, plan, purpose, His grace and to enjoy sweet communion with Him.
- Everyone that trusts in the Lord will confirm His faithfulness by application of Bible doctrine to life experience as sign of spiritual growth.



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