

Fundamental Christian Attitudes: Hope, Part 1

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-136

As I said earlier, I...I come this morning to really the culminating spiritual attitude and that attitude is hope. It really begins at the end of the list because it is that attitude that catapults us into the future. Now when we talk about hope as a spiritual attitude, we need to do a little defining, and I think it's fairly simple to do that. Let's do it against the backdrop of how most people use the word.

Most people use it as a synonym for wish, or want, or desire. In other words, they say, "I hope So-and-so comes...I hope I get the job I'm seeking...I hope I get the grades I'm pursuing...I hope I get accepted here or accepted there...I hope that my dream for this comes to pass." And it's nothing more than an expression of a wish.

That is not the way the Bible uses the word hope. In the Bible the word hope is not a wish, it is not a fantasy, it is not a dream, it is not an allusion, it is not a plan that someone works out, it is a reality. It is a fact not yet realized. But it is nonetheless a fact and nonetheless a reality. It is just not yet realized. So when we talk about hope we're talking about something that is true, factual, promised by God and will come to pass.

To show you that I want you to listen as I take you to several Scriptures to just lay the foundation of defining hope. In Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 19 we read this..."This hope...that hope, by the way, is mentioned in verse 18...This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast." Now we're talking here about a hope that is sure. We're talking about a hope that is steadfast, that is fixed, that is factual. In fact, it says in the same verse that it is connected with one who enters within the veil where Jesus has entered has entered as a forerunner for us. We by hope are linked to Jesus who has entered into the Holy of Holies in the heaven of heavens and the presence of God as a forerunner for us. He went ahead of us and we are as if chained to Him going to be pulled in to the same Holy of Holies. This is a tremendous statement. This hope is an anchor. It is not something flimsy, it is not something lightweight, it is not something movable or shakeable, it is an anchor, it is sure, it is steadfast and it links us to the Holy of Holies, it links us to the inside because we are connected to Jesus Christ who already went in there as our forerunner, or the one who goes before us. He is there as a high priest forever interceding for us. He goes before the Father on our behalf. He pleads our case. He is our advocate. He is our mediator. He is Jesus Christ who is the secure one to whom we are connected and our hope therefore is an anchor sure and steadfast. As surely as Jesus rose, as surely as He ascended, as surely as He was seated at the right hand of the throne of God in the presence of God, so sure is our hope for we are connected

to Christ who is our forerunner.

Then in 1 Peter chapter 1 we find another definition of this biblical understanding of hope. First Peter 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope." And then in verse 4, "That hope involves obtaining an inheritance, a heavenly inheritance, which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." And again here we're talking about something that is firm, secure, steadfast, imperishable, undefiled, will not fade away, reserved in heaven for us.

So we're not talking about a wish. We're not talking about a dream or a vision or something we...we plan because we want it to happen. We're talking about a reality, all bound up in the purposes of God and anchored in the work of Jesus Christ. We then have a living hope, that is a hope in life, a hope that lives permanently. And that inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and cannot fade away is now reserved in heaven for you.

Now somebody might say, "Well what if I don't get there? Maybe the inheritance will stay there but I'll never make it." Verse 5, "You for whom the inheritance is reserved are protected by the power of God through faith." You're going to get there because you are protected from falling. "Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless," Jude says. You are protected by the power of God through your continuing faith for that salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. You're going to get there...you're going to get there even though you have to go through various trials now, verse 6 says, you rejoice greatly because you know where you're headed and you're headed to an internal hope, an undefiled, unfading, imperishable hope which is reserved for you in heaven where Jesus Christ has gone as your forerunner to whom you are anchored and therefore that is a hope to be considered sure and steadfast.

Now this hope is an essential part of the gospel. Look at Colossians chapter 1. It is an essential part of the gospel, Colossians chapter 1 Paul in verse 3 says we give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love you have for all the saints. And why are we so thankful? Because, verse 5, of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

There it is again. Our hope is something that is already laid up for us in heaven. It is not something we invent, it is not something we bring into existence by visualization, or imagination, or fantasy or will to happen, or will to happen, or work to happen, it is something that exists because God has ordained it. It is laid up for us in heaven. And then he says, "Of which you previously heard in the Word of truth, the gospel." And that's a very important note. The hope that is laid up for us in heaven is a part of the gospel, okay? It is a part of the gospel. The gospel includes our eternal hope, doesn't it? And when we talk about being saved we talk about being saved so that we may enter into eternal life, that's our hope. Our hope is inseparable from gospel truth. As surely as the gospel preaches that

Jesus died and that Jesus rose and that is fact, as surely as the gospel preaches that if you believe your sins are forgiven and you are justified, and that's a fact, as surely as the gospel preaches the Spirit of God comes to dwell in your life and to sanctify you, separating you from sin and giving you victory over it, so surely does the gospel promise eternal life in heaven, and that too is fact...it is as yet unrealized for us but it is nonetheless fact.

The gospel then comes in all three tenses...past, present and future. To see that unfold look at Titus chapter 1...Titus chapter 1, this is all by way of just a starting introduction here. But the Apostle Paul whom we all know, of course, and revere and the character of whose ministry is well described for us in the New Testament, gives us what is a summary statement in these two verses of his ministry. His was a gospel ministry. He says he was a bondservant of God and that's a very generic term, a lot of people could say that...they served God, they were slaves of God. Everyone who knows God falls into that category, but the unique fulfillment of that very general responsibility is defined for us in the words "an Apostle of Jesus Christ." All of us are servants of God, he too, but the unique area in which he served was an Apostle of Jesus Christ, or a messenger. That is to say he preached the gospel.

And what did he preach in that gospel? Well, three components are given here. One, for the faith of those chosen of God. That is the ministry of evangelism. He preached the gospel so that the elect could believe and be saved. That's what it's saying. He preached salvation, or he preached justification. He preached so that the elect, those chosen by God, would hear and believe.

Then the second aspect of gospel preaching was the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness. That's sanctification or edification. The first is evangelism, and then edification. The first involves justification, those who are chosen by God, hear the gospel and believe and therefore are justified. And then those who have believed are taught the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness by which they are sanctified. So you have a second aspect of gospel ministry, one has to do with justification, the second with sanctification.

And then the third one in verse 2, "In the hope of eternal life," and that has to do with glorification. Paul preached all three of those things. Now those are the three tenses of salvation. Past tense, we were saved at the moment of our faith. Present tense, we are being saved as we are continually triumphing over sin. Future tense, we will be saved.

Now dividing it even more clearly, in the past we were saved from the penalty of sin. At the moment of faith you were saved from the penalty of sin, there will be no condemnation. You will never bear any consequences for your sin in the presence of God after this life because the righteousness of Christ was imputed to you and He bore all your iniquity in His own body on the cross. So at the moment of faith you were saved from the penalty of sin. In the present you are now being saved from the power of sin as the Holy Spirit and the truth of the Scripture gives you victory over sin. Some day

you will be saved from the presence of sin when you go into heaven in your glorification where there is no sin whatsoever.

So salvation comes in those three tenses, that's why Paul can say in Romans 13, "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed." There's a sense in which your salvation has happened, a sense in which it's happening, and a sense in which it's nearer and that would be in the glorifying sense.

So all of those make up the gospel. When we preach the gospel we talk about justification and sanctification and glorification. We talk about being saved from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, the presence of sin. All of that makes up the gospel. And that third aspect, that future aspect is the aspect of hope which is as essential to the gospel as any other component and which is the ultimate end of the gospel, for what does it mean if it doesn't end up in eternal life? So our hope is a living hope. It is a sure and a steadfast hope. It is anchored to Jesus Christ. As soon as God's electing purpose was fulfilled in the faith of those who heard the gospel and believed, as sure as His sanctifying process goes on through the Spirit and the Word, so will hope be realized in the glory which is to come. This is the hope of which the Bible speaks. So we're not talking about wishful thinking, we're not talking about something you want to happen. We're not talking about something you desire or think you need. We're talking about a fact, a truth, a reality as of yet unrealized, but still a reality.

Now when you look at the world it is typical in the world for people to try to invent something for their future. Most people do it in a religion. They become a part of a religion, whether it's Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam, that concocts some hope for the future, something in the after life. Or maybe they follow Shirley Maclaine(?) and others in the new Age movement, the contemporary neo-agnosticism and believe in reincarnation, and that's their hope, as the Hindus do. Whatever it is. It may be other forms of cultic Christianity or whatever. People put their trust in something which gives them some anticipation of the future.

Most people would think that because they are religious or because they are good, because they do good deeds and in their own mind they're a lot better than they really are, of course, before a holy God, that everything is going to turn out fine in the end. And they hope in their own estimation of what the future holds. Some people, of course, hope in their ingenuity. They try to hedge against the realities of the inevitable tragedies of life with their own ingenuity, their own fortunes, their own money, their own plans, etc., etc.

But anybody who is outside the gospel of Jesus Christ is hopeless, no matter what they do. And all the visualization that they endeavor to do, and all the creating in their mind of the future they hope they will realize is absolutely and utterly useless. There's only one hope and that is Jesus Christ and apart from Him there is no hope. There is no hope for the future, there is only eternal hell, eternal

pain, eternal punishment. That's why Job 8:13 says, "The hypocrite's hope shall perish." Again Job 27:8, "For what is the hope of the hypocrite when God takes away his soul?" Or Job 31:24, "If I have made gold my hope or have said to the fine gold, 'Thou art my confidence,' I have denied the God who is above." Or Proverbs 10:28, "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness but the hope or the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

It's so foolish. You have a world of people trying to create a future for themselves that can't be created. There are only two places in the future...heaven and hell. God created them both. Those who are headed for heaven by faith in Jesus Christ have hope, the rest have no hope and all of them will end up in the eternal hopelessness of hell. And I suppose one of the greatest torments of hell is the knowledge that the pain that's going on at any given moment will never ever cease, that is hopelessness.

The picture of the man with no hope is given by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:12 where he describes the unconverted man as having no hope, without God in the world, having no hope. I find it frightening to even contemplate living life without hope...bleak. In Paul's day there were some who believed that the only hope for the soul was death. There were some who believed that the body was an incarceration for the perfection of the soul. And what the soul needed to do was escape the body into the euphoria of perfection. That was sort of the Greek dualistic view that the soul was good and the body was bad.

And they even went so far in some places as to say that when someone was killed in a battle or through some kind of wound that the soul actually escaped the body through that wound. Or, in fact, they died by some internal disease and no open wound occurred, the body would yield up the spirit through the mouth and that spirit would then be liberated into the freedoms that the spirit can enjoy when it's unencumbered by the body.

There were others who were not so hopeful and who believed that death was all there is. They were a minority group but they were the cynics and they were the ones who believed there was nothing but this life. Diogenes was one of them, he wrote, "I rejoice in sport in my youth. Long enough beneath the earth shall I lie, bereft of life, voiceless as a stone and shall leave the sunlight which I loved. Good man though I am, there shall I see nothing more." And if you believe that, you might become a Hedonist...just do whatever you want to do because you're going to go down into the ground and that's the end.

Whether you have that minority view of the bleakness of no future, or the majority who hope there's something out there and they would like to create it in their own minds, which most do, either with the assistance of religion or by themselves, in any case, apart from Jesus Christ there is no hope...no hope. Anyone without God, without Christ, has no hope for the future. And because you have no hope for the future, death takes on terrifying proportions. Men must have hope. They must have a

sure confidence for the future.

Now as Christians this is essential to our salvation. Further to show you that, turn to Romans 8, and this is a passage which I could actually go through completely this morning, and it would be enough to give you the whole picture of hope, but I'm not going to do that because there's another passage I want to give you tonight from 1 John that I think is even more potent. But this one certainly is without equal in the emphasis that it makes.

But Romans chapter 8 takes on the theme of hope as it gets down just past the middle. For example, verse 23 of Romans 8, "And not only this but we ourselves having the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves." Now let me stop you there. He's talking now about people, believers groaning. And he says we do this also.

What does that mean? Well go back to verse 22, the whole creation groans. Here he personifies creation as having expressed its agony over the effects of the curse. The world has fallen, the universe has fallen and the earth feels the pain of its fallenness. And he has a picture here of the groaning earth, waiting for the time when the curse is reversed. And we know that time to be the time of the millennial kingdom when the Lord Jesus comes and reigns on the earth and the earth is restored and renewed to almost Edenic-like quality, like the Garden of Eden. And that's going to happen. The desert will blossom like a rose, and streams in the desert will spring up and a great river will flow from back of Jerusalem out into the desert, and there's going to be a different world. There will be a gentler world. The great cataclysms that we know in nature will cease and the earth will become milder and more gentle in that renewed condition of the millennial kingdom. That's coming and the creation he personifies as sort of groaning and anticipating that. It's...it's wanting to be free from corruption.

But so do believers want to be free from corruption. We have what he calls back in verse 19 also the anxious longing of the creation that waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. We also want the freedom, verse 21, of the glory of the children of God. We want to be all we can be. We always hear that from the Army commercial and I always think of that...be all you can be. Well, folks, we won't be in the Army, we will be in glory. We will be all we can be by God's design and purpose when we get to glory. And that's the glorious manifestation of the children of God. And that's what we wait for. And the sufferings of this life aren't worthy to be compared with what that's going to be. So we are enabled to endure them by our hope because we know what's coming.

So, he's talking about hope. And verse 23 then he says, "We groan." And what do we want? We want...we want the redemption of our body, we're tired of the sinful battle in our flesh and we've had our souls redeemed at the point of faith, we want our bodies redeemed, we want to be all we can be. We want to be that whole person. Then verse 24, "For in hope we have been saved."

You see, the point is there's an element of our salvation we have not realized. We have been saved in hope. And then he goes on to define it. "But hope that is seen is not hope." It is something promised, pledged, guaranteed, it is a fact, it is a reality not yet seen, not yet realized. "For why does one also hope for what he sees." Well he doesn't. If he sees he doesn't have to hope for it, it's there. "But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it."

And so, here we are. We have been saved from the penalty of sin by being justified. We are being continually given strength to overcome sin so we're being saved from the power of it. And we long to be saved from the presence of it. And that's our hope. That's the culminating aspect of our salvation. And it is guaranteed in the gospel. Go down to verse 29...well verse 28 we could start, "We know that all things...God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." So, we're headed for our hope. A lot of bad things can intervene. Satan comes, he tempts, the world, the flesh, that comes against us. We have our struggles, and our sins, and our temptations, and our doubts, and our fears, and we wonder whether we're going to make it all the way to our hope. And then we're reminded in verse 28, no matter what comes into our life, God works it together for good because He's going to fulfill His purpose. He's going to get us there. "All that the Father gives Me...Jesus said...will come to Me and I will lose...how many?...none of them, but I'll raise them up on the last day." We're going to get there, we're going to make it. We're going to be kept by the power of the Spirit to the time of the revealing of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of our hope because God is working all of that out and that's why verses 29 and 30 are true. "Whom He foreknew He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." And to be conformed to the image of His Son means we have to be perfect, body and soul, because the glorified Christ in His post-resurrection form is the model. We're going to be made more like Christ, we'll see more about that tonight. And we're going to be made more like Him. We're going to be glorified both soul and body, like the glorified and risen Christ. As much as glorified humanity can be like incarnate deity will be like Him.

So that's the plan. Whom He foreknew He predestined. And then verse 30, He predestined, He called, whom He called He justified, whom He justified, these He also...what?...glorified. Very simple. Nobody was ever justified who won't be glorified. Okay? Nobody was ever justified who won't be glorified, that's the purpose of God. He's working it out because He predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son, He didn't predestine us to get justified and then fall out. He predestined us to be made like Christ so He takes us through all the way to the end. So our hope is a hope that is anchored, it is a hope that is guaranteed, it is a hope that is promised to us, and God makes all things work together for good to get us there. And verse 26 and 27, the Holy Spirit also is assisting to get us to the fulfillment of our hope by His wonderful supernatural intercession.

So, now that gives you a definition of the biblical hope, at least in a sort of a general sense. We're talking about something that is a fact, that is a component of salvation, that is the final element of

salvation...that is the entering in to eternal life in the perfection of being made like Jesus Christ to enjoy sinless perfection and the bliss of the presence of God forever and ever. That is our hope. That's where we are headed.

Now the Bible breaks down that concept of our hope into some component parts, and I want to give them to you this morning by way of an introduction. And even though you may not know where I'm going, I know where I'm going and I'm driving and we'll get there. Okay? So just hang on.

But I wrote down maybe a dozen features of our joy in Scripture...of our hope in Scripture that should produce joy in our hearts. And I'm going to kind of lay these out for you.

Number one, our hope comes from God. Our hope comes from God. It is absolutely essential to realize that we are dealing with a hope that is outside of us, that is objective, not subjective. Every time I hear somebody come on television and say, you know, they give these speeches, you hear them, they say, "You can be anything you want to be." That is a lie. We need to realize that. You can't be anything you want to be. You can be anything you're capable of being if given the opportunity. But you can't be anything you want to be. That is foolish to tell people that. You can't be.

Creating that kind of fantasy and imagining that by some kind of visualization you can create a dream of what your reality is for the future, and then somehow live that dream is a frightening and terrible illusion. We're not doing this. When people come to us as Christians and they ask us about our hope, we're not giving them our invention. We're not telling them the way we think it ought to turn out. We're not concocting the scheme for the plan of the future, we have one given to us. Our hope comes from God. And that's essential at the very outset to make clear.

And by the way, that is a repeated theme in the Psalms. You can read through the Psalms and you will find it again and again. But, for example, Psalm 43 verse 5, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God for I shall again praise Him. The help of my countenance and my God." My hope comes from God, the psalmist says. God is the source of my hope...over and over again.

God is the source of hope. The only point I want to make is that as Christians we are dealing with an objective hope outside of us given to us by God. And that's the only one that makes sense since you can't control the future, you can't write the future, you don't have either the power or the knowledge, the omniscience, the omnipotence to create your own future. There is a future available to you provided by God through faith in Christ and there is a future provided for you apart from God, and those are the only two futures you have to choose from. And God is the source of both. God then is our hope.

Secondly, somebody might say..."Well, okay, God is my hope and God has provided this hope, but what if I goof up somewhere along the line? What if I...what if I'm not worthy of that hope? What if my life isn't what it ought to be and I'm not worthy to sort of cash in on that hope?"

Well, let me encourage you a little bit. The second point about hope that I want to show you is that hope is a gift of grace. Hope is a gift of grace like every other aspect of salvation, really. Second Thessalonians 2:16 probably you've read this in passing because it's a benediction at the end of the chapter. But you ought to read it with careful thought in regard to this subject. Verse 16, "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God the Father who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word." Now there's a lot that could be said about that benediction, but let me just pull this out.

God gave us eternal comfort. God gave us good hope by grace. It is not something you deserved. It is not because you were such a good person and such a righteous person or such a religious person or such a God-seeking person, or whatever. It is purely by grace. Our hope comes from God and it is given by grace which means it is utterly unearned, unmerited and undeserved. And God gives it to whom He will according to His own sovereign desires.

Thirdly, our hope is defined, and we've already seen that a little bit in our introduction, but thirdly, our hope is defined by Scripture. Our hope is defined by Scripture. In Psalm 119 there is repeated the idea, "I have hope in Thy Word, I have hope in Thy Word," the psalmist says it a number of times...I have hope in Thy word. In Romans chapter 15, another very important verse to note is the fourth verse where it says that whatever was written in earlier times, referring to Scripture, was written for our instruction that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Hope comes from God, it is granted by grace to an undeserving sinner through salvation, and it is enriched and understood from Scripture. If you want to understand your hope, you go to the Word of God. That's where you learn about your hope. And your hope is clearly defined in Scripture. I have hope in Thy Word. I find comfort and encouragement from the Scripture because it gives me hope in the midst of all the trials of life.

Now that leads me to a fourth comment about hope and understanding it. Our hope is reasonable...it is reasonable. Again I say it is not an illusion, it is not a fantasy, it is not subjective, it is not a matter of visualization, it is not a psychological game we play, it is not something concocted by men, it is not devised by prognosticators...and you can dial up all those ridiculous people that are advertising all over the television now that are going to tell your future if you want, but all you're going to get is lies and probably much of the time satanic deception. Those people don't know the future, those people are hopeless. They have no hope. They exist for one reason and that is to take people's money out of their pocket and put it in their own, and they have no other reason to exist. Our hope is not an irrational thing. Our hope is not determined from a fortune cookie, or any other kind of

prognostication. It is not determined by looking at the stars, it is not determined by calling the psychic network. Our hope comes from Scripture and it is reasonable.

Look at 1 Peter 3, "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you for the reason of the hope that is in you." When somebody comes to me and say, "What do you think is going to happen to the world?" I liked to be asked that question and I can lay it all out. And they can say, "Well, how do you know that's going to happen? Where did you get all that?" And I can say it's very reasonable, let me show it to you, it's right here in the Word of God and this will give you an account for the hope that is in me.

And then if they say, "Well here's the way I see it in the future." You can ask them where is their reasonable authority for that. Our hope is reasonable. We don't have some irrational fantasy in which we're putting our trust. We have a hope sure, steadfast, reasonable, outlined clearly in Scripture granted to us as a gracious gift from the God who authored it.

Fifthly, as we understand our hope it is secured by Christ's resurrection. Somebody is going to say, "Well, yeah, sure, sure, you think you're going to die and rise again, right? Yeah, right." Do you know anybody who's done that? Do you know anybody that's come back from the grave to tell you that that's accurate? We keep hearing about near-death experiences. May I remind you near death is not death, whatever it is it's not death. Nobody is coming back from death. I don't know, they're coming back from near death is not coming back from death.

But what do we answer when somebody says, "Do you know anybody that came back from death?"

We answer...what?...yes.

"Do you know Him personally?"

Yes.

"Have you met Him?"

Yes.

"Do you talk with Him?"

Yes.

"Who is He?"

Jesus Christ, He came back from death. And the record is clear, over 500 people at one time saw Him on one occasion. And His own disciples saw Him. They saw Him walk through a wall. They ate with Him. They touched Him. They saw the scars in His hands that He had suffered from the crucifixion and it changed their lives and they changed the world, and so forth, and so forth, and so forth.

First Peter 1:3 which I read earlier, I need to read again in this light, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Jesus said, "Because I live...what?...you live also." That's our hope. And we have one who has paved the way. He is the forerunner. He's gone through death and out the other side.

G. B. Hardy, the Canadian scientist, years ago said, "I...in searching for a religion I only asked two questions. Question number one, has anybody conquered death? Question number two, did he make a way for me to do it?" He said, "I searched the religions of the world," he said, "I found Buddhist's tomb occupied and Mohammed's tomb occupied," and so forth and so on, "I came to Jesus' tomb and it was empty and I opened the New Testament and He said, 'Because I live you shall live also,' and my quest was over."

And those are the two questions...has anybody conquered death? Yes, Jesus did. And did He make through His own resurrection a way for us to rise? Answer, yes. Our hope then is from God, designed by God, promised by God, granted by grace, defined in Scripture, reasonable, not irrational fantasy, secured to us by the resurrection.

Number six, it is confirmed in us by the Holy Spirit. It is confirmed in us by the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13, "Now may the God of hope...I love that, the God of hope...fill you with all joy and peace in believing in order that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." You're going to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now let me talk about this for a minute. You read the Bible and you understand your hope. You go through a crisis and the Spirit of God just pours that energy into you, just empowers you to endure the suffering in hope. That's what that means. The combination of the knowledge of Scripture and the energizing power of the Spirit is what sustains a person in the darkest hour and lets them hold on to hope.

As I think about that I think about a few years ago, just a few, in which a young couple who were missionaries in Brigham City, Utah, John and Nora Romanoski, and you will remember the story, those of you who were here. They...they were ministering in Brigham City, Utah which is a very tough place and he was the pastor of the Brigham City Bible Church. He was a beleaguered missionary, obviously, trying to lead Mormons to the knowledge of Jesus Christ right in the very hot bed of

Mormonism.

They had two beautiful daughters, just beautiful girls and a wonderful young son, Kevin. And John decided he wanted to come on their family vacation to Southern California to bring his family to visit Grace Church. And so they packed up their family in their station wagon and they headed down here. They had two extra young men, they had two Italian foreign exchange students, two young guys from Italy who had come to that town as foreign exchange students and they were not Christians and they wanted to lead them to Christ, so it was an evangelistic vacation, typical of a missionary, right? So their three children and these two other kids and mom and dad got in the car and they came down here.

Well two beautiful daughters they had, and the oldest daughter was ready to start college. This was like July and she was going to come to the Master's College in August and so they went to the college on the first Saturday they arrived here to register her for the coming semester. And they did all of that. It was a wonderful and happy time. And as they were leaving the college and driving, for some reason that John doesn't know and inexplicably he pulled out against a red light into an intersection and a truck was coming down the hill at full speed and couldn't stop and hit the car at full speed, maybe 55 to 60 miles an hour out by the 14 on Sierra Highway. And instantly...the two girls were sitting in the back...were catapulted through the back windshield and killed, smashed into the street. The three boys were crushed and put into a critical situation and were eventually helicoptered to the trauma unit. And the car went up in flames and what started out as a very happy and wonderful family vacation in an instant was turned into a holocaust of indescribable proportions as John was sitting in the midst of scattered bodies and his two dead daughters.

My son Mark happened to be coming along and saw the situation. The paramedics and all were called and they came and picked up the pieces of all that was left, and did what they could do. He called me to tell what had happened. Of course, I was just shocked and devastated because I knew John was here and hadn't seen him because it wasn't Sunday yet. I got with him as soon as I could and I didn't know what to say to him in the moment of his unbelievable agony. But I said, "John, what are you feeling?" I don't know why I asked him that, I just did. I said, "What are you feeling? What are you thinking?"

He said, "Well my first thought was that maybe this was a dream but...he said...I know it's not." And then he said, "My second thought was isn't God gracious? Isn't God gracious that He took my two daughters to heaven and spared those two unsaved boys?"

Now I'm telling you, that's an amazing reaction. But that's hope. And it's in that kind of crisis when hope becomes the anchor, isn't it? He knew where his daughters were. And he knew they couldn't be in a better place. His heart was crushed, devastated, but he was thankful that God had spared two unconverted boys from eternal hell. That's hope.

I don't want to live without that hope, do you? All the issues of life...to face all of the issues of life in the blackness in the way most people face them? I said...I said, "Well, I'm overwhelmed, John."

And he said, "Well, you know," he said, I'll never forget this little conversation, he said, "You know, I wanted them to have a big church experience, I just didn't know it would be that one." And he pointed up. And he said, "I wanted them to hear a big choir, I didn't know it would be the angels." What a hope. What an anchor, huh? In the midst of the most severe trauma God spared the life of those three boys, they were in that critical care situation for weeks and weeks and John and Nora were here. And they were smashed around but not severely injured. Their shoes flew off and out of the car. Their glasses smashed, their Bibles burned up, all their personal belongings were gone so we had to clothe them and they came after a few weeks to the church and stood in this pulpit and gave a testimony of thanks and gratitude and expressed their hope in Christ. And eventually picked up the pieces of what was left and went back to continue their ministry without their two precious girls. And within that first year John wrote me a letter and said that they were having the greatest ministry they had ever had, and God was blessing and people were coming to Christ and it was more the testimony of their strength and their hope in the face of the loss of their daughters than anything else that caused their testimony to be effective.

Well you might think it's a morbid moment to rejoice, but I tell you, there was a family who was rejoicing in all that God did. And as a father looks back over that and says how gracious our God is who may have spared these precious girls some greater pain in life and took them immediately into glory, that's our hope and that's the kind of hope that when you get into the context of that kind of suffering at that moment, the Scripture acts as the foundation but it's the energizing work of the Spirit of God that lifts you above that. And that's what I believe the Apostle Paul is talking about in Romans 15:13 when he says that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit just floods us with the confidence and the hope that is ours in Christ.

Number seven in my little list, our hope defends us against Satan's attacks. Our hope defends us against Satan's attacks. Satan wants us to doubt God, to question God, and we wear, according to 1 Thessalonians 5:8 the helmet which is the hope of salvation. Satan comes and smashes us with his crushing blows of doubt and we are solidly able to defend ourselves because our hope is firm. Why? Because the Spirit strengthens us in our suffering and because the Word of God has given us a foundation on which to build our hope.

And then let me suggest to you this, and I think it's very important, our hope is confirmed through trials. I could even say our hope is strengthened through trials. The more you go through trials, the more you have the opportunity to exercise that hope. Is that not true? The more you begin to exercise that hope, the stronger it gets. And the stronger it gets the more able you are to endure greater suffering. That's the grace of God. So, you know, look forward to those times of trial because

trial has a perfecting work and one of the things it perfects, according to James 1, one of the things it perfects is hope. You know, in fact you lose a few children and heaven will become much more precious to you and your hope will become much more important and much brighter. You go through enough of the trials of this life and you'll long for heaven.

Look, we had a funeral this week for Carna(?) Nelson(?), precious godly woman. She lived to be 97. I hope I don't live that long. Lord, you know, I don't want to live to be 97. I don't...that wouldn't be my choice. Just...I want to go to heaven just as soon as...I'm not any more able to preach, I'm out of here. You know, in fact somebody was telling me this week, somebody asked me, he said, "Do you think we're going to go through the Tribulation? I believe in a post-tribulation Rapture," he said, "and don't you think we're going to go through the Tribulation and we won't get raptured till the end?"

I said, "Look, first of all I think the Bible says we'll be taken out at the beginning, but even if I'm wrong and we're going through, I'm not going through. I'm not going to go through the whole Tribulation. I'm just going to go right up to the Antichrist's headquarters and preach the gospel and I'll be in heaven immediately." I can't think of any good reason to hang around here for seven years. Everything I want is there and as you get older in life, more and more of those people most precious to you start going there and heaven becomes all the more precious.

So, as we go through trials and as life escalates in its troubles and we endure those things, our hope gets brighter and brighter and brighter and brighter and brighter until we can come to the place where we say with Paul, "To live is Christ, to die is gain, far better to depart and be with Him." Maybe that was number eight.

If I gave you a couple of more I would say our hope produces joy, our hope produces joy even in the midst of sorrow. It produces songs in the night. Psalm 146 is one of the many Old Testament Scriptures that connects hope with joy. Psalm 146 verse 5, "How blessed, or how happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God." When you have hope in God you have happiness, you have joy, you are blessed.

So, we have a sure hope. We have a hope that removes the fear of death. We have a hope that strengthens through trials. We have the hope that produces joy. We have a hope that defends us against Satan's attacks. We have a hope confirmed in us by the Spirit of God, secured by Christ's resurrection, a reasonable hope that comes from Scripture which was granted to us as a gift of grace by God Himself.

And one final thought, our hope is fulfilled in Christ's return. Our hope is fulfilled in Christ's return. You say, "Well wait a minute, isn't our hope fulfilled when we die?" No, it is in large measure fulfilled, but not completely. When you die your body goes into the grave, or your body is cremated, or whatever, the Scripture doesn't have any preference as to what happens to the body. And so

whatever happens to the body, it goes into the dust and dust becomes dust. And your spirit goes to be with the Lord. So what you have in heaven now is the spirits of just men made perfect, just men and women, according to Hebrews 12. The spirits are there, the bodies have not been raised yet. And they await the second coming of Christ, the Rapture. What happens, the trumpet blows, the angel shouts and the dead in Christ...what?...rise. Well their spirits are already with the Lord. What that means is, glorified bodies rise.

Now some people worry that God won't be able to find all the pieces to put them together because of decay or because they're thrown in the ocean or whatever. It's not the old one, it's a new one, you understand that? If God wanted to find the old pieces He could but there's no need. So you're going to get a resurrected body and that...at that time the resurrected body comes up, joins that spirit and that is the fullness of our hope. Okay? That's when the hope becomes reality. And that's the redemption of the body where we were in Romans chapter 8. So our hope is fulfilled in Christ's return, that is a very, very important theme in Scripture.

So, if we really live in hope, according to what Paul said to Timothy, we should love His appearing, love His coming, love His arrival, love His presence. We should be those who look forward to the blessed hope. Titus 2:13, that's the last Scripture I'll give you, Titus 2:13, it says, "Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus." We go through life looking for His arrival, looking for His appearing, saying with John, "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

Now all of that introduces the great theme of hope. There's one remaining question and that is this question...how does this hope affect our lives now? And that's the answer that we're going to give you tonight from 1 John, don't miss it. Let's pray together.

Father, we have covered such a tremendous theme in Scripture with such glorious, glorious realities associated with it. And our hearts are overwhelmed with the wonder of this glorious hope, this eternal hope. Father, we who know and love and Jesus Christ have this hope, those who don't do not but are without hope and whatever hope they do have will perish. O Lord, I pray that if there are any here who do not know Jesus Christ and thus have no hope and are without God that You might draw them to the Savior in whom is hope. Thank You, Lord, for the hope that is ours in Him. Amen.

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