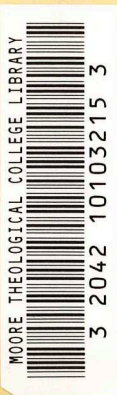


# **HOPE WITHOUT SHAME**

**Geoffrey Bingham**

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**HOPE WITHOUT SHAME**



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# HOPE WITHOUT SHAME

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## General Foreword

The series *Living Faith Studies* was commenced in 1975, under the title of *Masters' Classes* which were intended as materials to be used by pastors and teachers. The idea was that I would gather together materials from available bibliography and add that dash of co-ordination and understanding that I possessed. The studies were put into note form, each one being bound.

Because the title *Masters' Classes* scared some who might otherwise have read them, it was decided to call them *Living Faith Studies*. Over a period of five years, fifty studies were formed. They were put out in A4 paper format, and hence difficult to display in bookshops. It was then decided to turn them into the present series.

For the most part the studies have not been greatly revised or reshaped, though doubtless they would benefit from revision and editing. I could not see myself having the time to do this in the light of other books I am presently writing. Our publishing company felt, nevertheless, that the materials available in this series have real value to readers who wished to have quick access to the themes they contain.

Thematic writing has its drawbacks simply because themes are abstracted from the Scriptures, where, in fact, they are not presented thematically. No one theme can be properly treated since its context is a holistic one. Even so,



much that is useful can be achieved by thematic research and presentation.

It is with the hope—and trust—that these books may be valuable to readers that we publish them. They require serious reading, the looking up of the biblical references nominated, and, where possible, the use of books nominated in the Bibliographies.

*Geoffrey Bingham*

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## Foreword

Paul talks of hope 'without shame'. In Romans 5:5 he says—in essence—'We are not shamed to hope because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given unto us'. He is looking back to something which has happened. Through the Revelation of the saving work of Christ's Cross the new believer comes to experience the great thrust of God's love. It is love which is given at enormous cost on God's part but which is utterly a gift to the newly redeemed person. As though this were not enough, the gift of the Third Person of the Trinity is also given to him, and with his coming the Holy Spirit brings what Paul calls 'the fruit of the Spirit' (Gal. 5:22–23).

The incoming of love, joy, peace with the Holy Spirit is what establishes us in hope. If God has done this great thing in our *past*, what will He not do for the *future*? Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are filled with wonderful promises for the believer.

They assure him that not only will God support him faithfully to the end of this life, but He has shaped up an unbelievably rich and powerful future for him, in which he will be raised from the dead, enter into eternal life, be glorified, receive an eternal inheritance, and become one of the serving community which is known as 'a Kingdom of priests'. With this community he shall reign upon the earth.

Man without hope is hopeless. All too few realise that to have no true hope, is really to have little to live for in the present. Men and women outside God have to manufacture goals in order to stimulate themselves in hope. Kings, rulers and politicians offer so much, but have no guarantee that they can fulfil these promises. Marxism insists that an ultimate kingdom of peace and human sufficiency is built into what they call the dialectic of history, i.e. dialectical materialism. Other philosophies and religions try to give some sort of hope, knowing instinctively that man cannot endure without hope, yet none of these systems can give true hope. These are 'without God and having no hope in the world'.

From the Judaic-Christian Scriptures the Christian draws immense hope. To him God is 'the God of hope', and all the promises God gives are the basis of his hope for 'God is not a man that he should lie'. Their's is 'the hope of the Gospel', i.e. Christ himself who is 'the hope of glory', and 'the hope of everlasting life', for 'he has begotten [them] us to a living hope by his resurrection from the dead'.

We see then that importance of hope for the true believer. Rich as is love, it cannot truly be love unless accompanied by hope and faith, for 'thus abide faith, hope and love'. Thus it is essential that we discover both personally and theologically the nature and experience of hope. It is fair to say that a resurgence of hope for the church would radically correct many of its weaknesses and failures. The church is always in danger of becoming an institution which tries to play the power game, using its numbers to force changes in the political and international

realms, thus seeking to effect true morality. The danger is that it will set moral goals before God's true goals, i. e. the judgements of all evil so that the day of hope—the true eschatological Kingdom of God, may be ushered in with great glory. Any goal which is short of God's goal—the revelation of His glory—is not an object of the true hope he has given mankind.

The reading of this little book, then, should prove quite valuable, even though its treatment is not as comprehensive as it ought to be. It is at least an introduction to the great theme of hope, and may inspire some readers to go more deeply into the subject. It is hoped this study may be of great encouragement to those who have not previously given it much conscious thought. No better introduction to the study of biblical hope is a quote from Jeremiah 29:11,

'I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope'.



## **1. Introduction: The Meaning of Hope**

We all have a general idea of the meaning of hope. For some it is wishful thinking, a desire to see something better happen. For others it is a vague optimism that all will be well. There is even a negative form of hoping that all will not be well! Then there is the ideological hope of Marxism, which sees in the dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis a process of history which must inevitably climax in an evolutionary peak. This future state of man will be good. Even then it will not remain as an ultimate. The dialectic will take man from state to state. However, it is a hope which can lift oppressed man out of his despair and give him something to fight for, and such hope is dynamical. If history is hastening towards a certain goal then man must co-operate to see that it is consummated.

The Biblical view of hope is not based upon a materialistic dialectic but the person and nature of God. In the Old Testament the one who knew God trusted in Him as the faithful Creator who did the best by His world. Nowhere did men see hope from the gods, although they

knowtowed to them. Believing man trusted God, and the prophets declared that God would bring His plan to completion and as a result His glory would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and from His Messiah would come the ultimate Kingdom of righteousness, peace and plenty.

In the New Testament hope for the future is based upon the acts of God in the past. These and the prophetic utterances are vindicated in the person of Jesus, the Messiah, who has now redeemed man through his death and resurrection. Whilst the believer, and the believing community rest in faith upon what has been done, they also look with hope to the future. The outcome of the death and resurrection of Christ is the promise of eternal life, glory and inheritance for the people of God, as well as the entire renovation of the heavens and the earth. It is this hope which keeps the people of God from despair and fires them with motivation to live with that end-goal in view. They have hope for the future which keeps them going in the present.

In order to understand this hope we need to see more fully, in the Scriptures, the reasons for this hope. Also we need to understand how it provides a dynamic for living for the people of God.

## 2. Man and the History of Hope

### MAN, FALLEN AND UNFALLEN

In one way the use of the word 'hope' for unfallen man

might seem unnecessary and unrelated. As a creature of God in time, he has nothing to fear, and so does not have to 'hope against hope'. The future is assured. Yet this assurance is conditional upon his not eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He has positive guidance as to his vocation on the earth from the primal mandate (Genesis 1:28ff.). This too is because he is made in the image of God. Later Scriptures speak of the plan and intentions of God (e.g. Ephesians 1:4-14), so that we may assume God had a goal for His creation even before it began. We might also draw the inference that unfallen man would know the God of the goal, and so in some way also know the goal of God. However that may be, there was something of ultimate intention in the mandate when man was to be fruitful, multiply and fill up the earth. Having filled it, what then?

One thing is clear, to reject God was to reject His plan, either knowingly or unknowingly. Hence the Gentiles are described as 'having no hope' (Ephesians 2:12), for they are the 'others who have no hope' (I Thessalonians 4:13). If we take Romans 1:18-32 in full we see that all who reject God are without hope. Hence, at the very best they are men who relate to fate. Only those who have hope relate to destiny.

### THE USE OF HOPE IN ISRAEL

The words used in Hebrew (in the Old Testament) which are often translated hope are in fact the verbs and nouns which mean 'longing after', 'waiting for', 'to be



stretched out towards', and so carry the ideas of 'hoping', 'trusting', 'having faith', 'making confession of assurance', and so on.

Sometimes these uses are simply secular. The Biblical validity of hope is dependent upon the nature of the object. In Jeremiah 17:5 to put one's hope (trust) in man will prove futile. In Job 31:24-28 secular trust in riches, or one's secret endeavours, is to prove oneself false to God. Even religious trust in righteousness as such (i.e. one's own works) is foolish (Ezekiel 33:13). It seems that men have to have objects of faith, and that these build up hope in the subject himself.

This brings us to the nature of hope. Hope is trust in God with a view to His handling of the creation, and His (good) intentions for its future. When man is in the image of God then he too must be aligned with God in this purpose, and so has hope in God. His object of hope is God Himself. Where he is consistent with the image of God he shares in the mandate God has given, knowing it will come to a good end. Where he rejects God, man will still have the thrust to look to the future. Hence he will make secular objects of hope or he will devise religions or concepts which obliterate any idea of an eschaton.

In idolatry the worshipper seeks to placate the god, or to worship in such a way that the end will be a good one. Rarely are the gods depicted as beneficent. Mostly they are hostile, arbitrary or capricious. There is a certain amount of doom or fate surrounding them. In Islam even Allah is not excepted from some of this. When the gods are in the plural then each has his sphere of operation, authority and power. The gods, too, can be in conflict.

Local deities are able to assist in local situations. The idea of their controlling a high cosmic end is not known.

In Israel God is called 'Thou hope of Israel' (Jeremiah 14:8, 17:13). Time and again the phrase 'to hope in Yahweh' is used, whilst the single Israelite could cry 'Thou, O Lord, art my hope' (Psalm 71:5), and in soliloquy could address his soul, 'Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?' and having asked the question could say, 'Hope in God!' (Psalm 42:5, 11). In all of these cases there was present assurance that God would act well in the near or far future, primarily because He had always acted in this good way. This was especially so where the member of the covenant had rendered obedience.

Because of God's innate goodness men would wait for Him. To wait simply means to hope, this hope being a fixed assurance resulting from the nature of God. God is the true object of hope, therefore man can come into the subjective experience of hope, that is he waits for the good thing to happen. So he waits for the name of God (Psalm 52:9) as the Jerusalem Bible puts it:

I mean to . . . put my hope in your name,  
that is so full of kindness,  
in the presence of those who love you

Also he waits for the word of forgiveness (Psalm 130:5), for His arm (Isaiah 51:5), salvation (Genesis 49:18), and many other things. This is both his trust and hope in God. Of course it is hope for it has not as yet happened. It is certain, at the same time, that it will happen. This understanding of hope in short-term situations trains us to understand hope in its widest eschatological sense.



## THE PROPHETS AND HOPE

We have suggested that the image of God in man has teleological connotation. Man has a thrust for goal or conclusion. It is certain, anyway, that he needs immediate goals, such as the making of an object, the tilling of a field, the consummation of a wedding, whatever his views may be on the nature of history. For the Hebrew, God was present to such goals. He saw the universe as functional and therefore with some element of purpose. However, it remained for the prophets to give a rationale to history, an explanation to the events of time, and goal to which they were moving. Such prophecy was rooted in their understanding of the nature of God. This prophetic thrust is important when we remember that the pagan gods did not give hope. At the best were diviners and necromancers who tried to foretell or influence what was to happen. They would seek to do this in the best interests of their clients. Greek and Roman cultures were beset with reading the portents so that some kind of a hope—either positive or negative—could be based upon these.

Speaking in terms of covenant the Israelite could base his hope upon his own ethical living. The terms of the covenant were that God's people would be blessed in obedience. True enough, they could know a good future if they obeyed, and a disastrous one if they did not obey. They then had to deal with the incorrigible nature of sinful man, and also, as Paul later revealed, the stimulating, inciting and exacerbating nature of the very law under which they lived. For this reason the prophets were important. They could stimulate hope where they had

been only failure. A classic statement along these lines is Jeremiah 29:11, 'For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, *to give you a future and a hope*'. Locally in this prophecy it is to bring them back from Babylon after the exile of the seventy years. Hence in Jeremiah 31:17 God says, 'There is hope for your future, and your children shall come back to their own country'.

Amos 3:7 has it, 'Surely the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets', meaning that they in turn reveal it to the people. We see then that *prophetic promise* and *hope* are closely linked. On the widest scale the prophets, although they speak to their time, and even to its localised conditions, begin to build up the larger hope which relates to God's ultimates, not only for His people, Israel, but for the creation itself, for the families or nations of man are important in this regard. We see great promises for Israel in passages such as Ezekiel 36 and 37, Jeremiah 29 and 31, yet beyond Israel's blessing the passages of more universal nature such as in Isaiah 11, 65 and 66, as also in selective passages of the minor prophets. In other words, there is really no hope except through promise, and since that promise is prophetically given, its reality is sealed. One can have faith in them, the kind of faith that is 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'.

Such hope is of course, contested. Often appearances give no confidence for fulfilment of the promises, as we see in Micah chapter seven. The writer speaks of contrary elements but says, 'But as for me, I will look to the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear



me.' An example of such hope in the promise of God is seen in Abraham's life where, trusting the promise of God he is said to have 'hoped against hope, (Romans 4:18), that is he believed he would be the father of many nations even though Sarah was aged and barren. Note that the hope is in the promise of God since the circumstances seem against such a promise being fulfilled. However God's promise is as sure as Himself (cf. Hebrews 6:13ff.). We conclude then that hope is 'faith with a future look'.

### CHRIST THE HOPE OF ISRAEL, THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECIES

Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is the substance of things hoped for. In the case of the Jews the *substance* of their hope was Christ who came and fulfilled the Scriptures. What they had once hoped for was now coming to pass. Indeed it had happened. So they had the *substance* of the matter. That is why, in the Acts and the Epistles, they no longer hope for what has now happened. Messiah was the one they hoped in that salvation might come to pass. Now it has come to pass and so in that sense Messiah ceases to be the object of hope. He is the object of faith, or the faith-evoking object. 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ' (Romans 10:17). Yet salvation is not completed until the eschaton, hence for the final outcome of salvation—resurrection and glory—he is still the hope of mankind, and in particular 'the hope of Israel' (Acts 28:20).

In passages such as Luke 24:25–27, 44–46, Acts 13:27,

24:14 and 26:22–23 (cf. I Corinthians 15:3–4, Acts 17:3), it is made clear that Messiah came and fulfilled the Scriptures to the point of bringing salvation to Israel and the Gentiles. If then he has fulfilled those prophecies, in what sense then can he be called 'the hope of Israel'? The answer is that since hope always relates to the future, then there must be something pertaining to Messiah in regard to the future. The Book of Acts makes it clear that this is the resurrection. This is seen from Acts 23:6, 24:15, 26:6, 7, and 28:20. We can say that in regard to the coming of salvation, the coming Messiah was to Old Testament Israel their hope. In fulfilling salvation he fulfilled the hope that was theirs. However whilst salvation is offered to man in the here and now, it is not completed until the redemption of the body (Romans 8:18–25), and in this sense Christ is still the hope of Israel, and for that matter the hope of the church. As we have said it is in Christ that we have hope for the ultimate resurrection from the dead. Whilst we can talk of a spiritual rising with Christ (Romans 6:1–11, Colossians 3:1ff., Ephesians 2:5–8), yet bodily rising is still in the future. In this sense Christ is still our hope, and especially the hope of the resurrection.

### CONCLUSION TO THE HISTORY OF HOPE

We can conclude this section by saying that hope is inherent in created man since God has fixed goals for His universe. Sin has clouded those goals, and hence man must either make his own goals which may be immediate or terminal (for time), or reject the view that there are



goals, or one great goal, in which case he must make history to be no history but simply cyclic patterns, or linear but open-ended. Curiously enough it is man's sin that makes him need a good goal, which makes salvation imperative if he is not to be ultimately destroyed, so that his hope can be in the grace of God and not in the substitute ideologies or plans of man which can only be temporal and cannot cope with the terminal elements of death and beyond. It may well be true that man will make his own gods to fulfil his own systems, or that he will devise ideologies which will make this world seem enough, but if it is true that God has made everything appropriate in its own time, and set eternity (or, the world) in man's heart, then man will be frustrated by anything less than the true goal God has set for mankind. He may devise a goal, and so set his hope on a lesser end, but he is so structured as a created being that he will never be able to be fully satisfied by it.

This then brings us to the most important point of all, for consideration. It is this: God has planned, before time, the end of this earth, and the heavens also. He has a goal for His elect people, and an end for the wicked. He has His purposes set for the just and the unjust, the good angelic powers, and the system of Satan and fallen angelic powers. What is more, He has stated it in principle and much of its outworking detail. This is the prophetic announcement, and it will surely come to pass. It (history) can do no less than express the nature and intention of God. In the ultimate God will be vindicated. Man must hope for this for any other kind of hope will not be aligned with reality, and is doomed to non-fulfilment, and the one

who hopes (falsely) will also be linked with that doom.

At this point then we can venture a statement concerning the meaning of true hope. It is this: Christian hope is a valid expectation of the future which God has planned, disclosed, and which He is fulfilling. This expectation of hope, being soundly based, nevertheless calls for the confidence of faith, for believing man must walk by faith and not by sight. Ordinary sight, in the temporal and human realm shows things other than what faith sees. Hope is opposed by other systems than that of God, hence patience which is a fruit of the Spirit is needed for hope to continue. Patience works endurance (by experience) and induces eagerness for the end result. Whilst negative elements seek to destroy hope by obscuring the end-goal, yet the promises of God undergird faith. In addition, God is seen to be at work daily, and His love is known in the heart (where it has been flooded), hence the man of hope is working in the practical presence of God. In fact hope is a present response to God's working presence in the world, and hence is stabilising the believer, ethically, and making him reach out to the end. This is the fact, nature and dynamic of hope.

### 3. The Ultimate Objects And Goals Of Hope

#### INTRODUCTION TO HOPE

How does one come to hope? How is hope born? At what point does hope come to life in a person? Is hope



simply subjective, or is it primarily objective, and then correspondingly subjective? These are questions which need to be answered so that hope is not merely subjective, wishful thinking which is misplaced. Indeed if hope comes from God, is objective and so sustains the subjective elements experienced by believers, and if the basis is the answering promises of God, then hope has its importance and significance for all humanity and the whole of history.

Peter makes the statement that, 'By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'. 'Living' here is opposed to false, deceitful, unproductive of true reality. This living hope relates to our resurrection from the dead. That is what we hope for on the basis of Christ's resurrection. However we would have no hope, even though Christ has risen, had God not brought us to the new birth. The one who has new birth understands the resurrection. Indeed he benefits from it in the very new birth itself, which is spiritual resurrection itself. In this sense hope is a gift. Also hope is an objective gift, not simply an emotional attitude to God's history. Hence Paul says in Romans 8:24, '... in this hope we *were* saved', i.e. not will be, but were.

We have already seen the principle in Jeremiah 29:11, 'I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, *to give you a future and a hope*'. Israel could try, with all its powers, to make its own future, i.e. its own 'hope', but it could not succeed. Being under covenant agreement it was to suffer where it broke the covenant. It could not get out from the covenant so that its history lay in the hand of God. Similarly the

Biblical doctrine of the sovereignty of God placed all nations, and all persons in the same hand. If they are to have hope it must be an objective act and gift of God. Hence for those who receive salvation, II Thessalonians 2:16 explains, '... God our Father, who loved us and *gave us* eternal comfort and good hope through grace...' Here hope is a gift, and so with it eternal comfort comes to the recipient.

We have seen briefly, and will see at greater length later that *hope* is totally dependent upon *promise*. We will receive nothing but what God has promised, but then, also, nothing less. In Romans 15:13 Paul says, 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that *by the power of the Holy Spirit* you may abound in hope'. The Spirit is the Agent of our receiving hope, i.e. its objective fact and our subjective experience of it. This is seen also in Romans 8:14-25. Likewise Christ is the Agent of our hope, as we saw in I Peter 1:3, and indeed I Timothy 1:1 calls him 'Christ our hope', which also relates to Colossians 1:27, 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'.

We conclude then that hope as an objective reality is the gift of God the Father given to us by Him through the agency of the Son and the Spirit. To have such a gift must release the believer from all false hopes, counterfeit hopes, and the lack of any hope. It must make a man hopeful, i.e. one who is travelling towards his destiny, and who need not fear a future blank nor be under the terror of a pitiful fate.

## THE OBJECTS OF HOPE

These are of immense interest to the believer, and



corporately to the whole people of God. Short term goals or 'hopes' must surely relate to the unchanging and eternal goals of true hope. In these one can 'abound' (Romans 15:13). Hence Paul desires and prays that his converts may *know* what is the hope of their calling, i.e. that hope to which they are called. What then, are these goals? Whilst we must discuss them in separate categories, yet we will see that they are all of the one piece. They simply constitute *all* that God has for His creation, and in particular His elect family, and the celestial creatures.

### The Hope of Resurrection

It is almost banal to say that mankind hates the death towards which it is headed, and desires either annihilation or renewal, i.e. resurrection, and if possible resurrection of the body so that it may become substantial. Another way of saying this is that it hopes for eternal life, and this rather than mere continuing existence.

In this regard in Titus 1:2 Paul speaks of the 'hope of eternal life which God, *who never lies*, promised ages ago' (Greek: *pro chronon aionion* = 'before times eternal'). II Timothy 1:1 speaks of 'according to the *promise* of eternal life *which is in Christ Jesus*'. Likewise this eternal life is linked to hope in Titus 3:7 where Paul says, 'That we might become justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life'. He adds, 'The saying is sure'.

What then is the hope of resurrection? It is for us the fixed assurance that we shall rise from the dead. We have been born unto that living hope through Christ (I Peter 1:3). This was the import of Paul's statements in Acts.

Paul had been a witness of the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:8, cf. Acts ch. 9). When being judged by the Sanhedrin he claimed that he was before them for no other reason than 'the hope and the resurrection of the dead', meaning that men had hope of resurrection as a true fact of God. In Acts 24:14ff. he repeats this, 'I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets, *having a hope* in God which these themselves [i.e. some members of the Sanhedrin] accept, that there will be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust'. In 26:6 he reiterates that he is on trial 'for hope in the promise [i.e. resurrection] made by God to our fathers'. He adds, 'Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?' We notice in this passage that he speaks of the twelve tribes hoping to obtain the promise, i.e. of resurrection. In Acts 28:20 we see Paul, at the last still claiming that he is in chains because of 'the hope of Israel,' i.e. Christ, but Christ as the fulfilment of the Scriptures, particularly relating to the resurrection from the dead.

On the day of Pentecost Peter speaks of Christ being raised from the dead, and in doing so he quotes Psalm 16, part of which says, 'Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; *moreover my flesh will dwell in hope*'. This is describing Christ in his death and the grave. It is showing that corruption did not touch him because Christ too was the object of hope. He would emerge from death on the promise of the Father. This, then, is a very important principle for it opens up the nature of hope to us. This principle must have imprinted itself on the mind of Peter, for we have seen in I Peter 1:3 that hope pertains to the resurrection.



Paul in I Corinthians 15 discusses the matter of the resurrection and hope. In verses 3 and 4 he speaks of the death and resurrection of Christ as in accordance with the Scriptures, and then goes on to show that Christ's resurrection seals the effectual nature of forgiveness. He says that if Christ was not raised then there is no forgiveness. We would then be still dead in our sins and would only see life, and not resurrection. He says in verse 19, 'If for this life only we have *hoped* in Christ, we are of all men to be pitied'. He bases hope on the objective fact of the resurrection. I Corinthians 15:55-56 makes this clear. Death has no sting, and the grave no victory because the sting of death is sin, and sin's power is by the law (objective guilt), but Christ has given the victory. He in fact is the first-fruits of them that have slept. He is risen; they will rise. This is the objective basis for hope, and so is objective hope itself. It is by this hope we were saved.

In passages such as Romans 6, Colossians 3 and the latter portion of Galatians 2, Paul says we have already died in the death of Christ. This is clearly pointed out in II Corinthians 5:14: 'We judge that when one died, all died'. Because we have died in baptism, we have also risen, and so we shall rise. We have the first portion—of the ultimate—already accomplished. So for us to live is Christ, and to die is (further) gain. That is why Paul can conclude in II Timothy 1:10, 'He has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light'. Since Christ himself is the resurrection and the life, and we are in him, then we can say 'Christ our hope' (I Timothy 1:1).

The *effect* of this hope is incalculable. To know we will never see death is stunning. Others may see what they call

our death, but we never see that; we only see life. For daily living this clears away the fear of death which does incalculable harm to human persons (Hebrews 2:14-15). It daily defeats the devices of Satan in suppressing and tormenting mankind. II Timothy 2:11 points back to our death with him: 'If we have died with him we shall also live with him'. This is the import of Romans 6:10-11. Christ has died once, and death no more has power over him. He is alive. We are to see ourselves in like state. Dead we were, but risen we are. Neither death nor sin should now be allowed to have power over us.

This is the present dynamic (living) hope of the (objective) resurrection.

### The Hope of Glory

In Romans 5:1-2 Paul speaks of being justified by faith, having access 'to this grace in which we stand', and then says, 'We rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God'. What is glory, and what do we mean by sharing it? God's glory is His person, and particularly His person in (powerful) action. In Romans 6:4 Jesus is raised from the dead by 'the glory of the Father'. In Ephesians 1:17 God is 'the Father of glory', i.e. glory proceeds from Him. The idea of glory is radiance, light, substantiality as in 'weight' or even 'weight of glory'. It carries the idea of irresistible triumph. In both the Old Testament and New Testament it is the God of glory who triumphs over all alien forces, and settles His creation in eternal glory. Ultimate glory is the Kingdom of God in righteousness, peace, purity and love. This will be the time when 'the earth will be filled



with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea' (Habakkuk 2:14; cf. Isaiah 11:9).

In Romans 8:18–25 Paul speaks of the whole creation groaning in expectation to see this glory. This glory is called 'the glorious liberty of the children of God' or, 'the liberty of the glory of the children of God', and is a state where the creation itself is released from its bondage to corruption. Man has hope of this glory, and the creation has hope of this glory. Meanwhile it has been subjected to futility (i.e. emptiness, vanity, frustration) and hence it groans. However it has been 'subjected in hope', that is it has been given the hope of restoration. This alone makes its bondage of corruption and futility somewhat tolerable. One day it will be no longer held in such restriction. Many Old Testament and New Testament passages refer to its ultimate state of glory when it will be—to coin a word—'eternalised'. See for example, Isaiah chapters 11, 65, 66 and Revelation chapters 21 and 22.

When then Paul speaks of sharing the glory of God it is against the principle of Romans 3:23, 'All have sinned and *fallen short* of the glory of God'. Man was made in glory (e.g. Psalm 8:3ff., Hebrews 2:5ff., I Corinthians 11:7) for he is the image and glory of God. His glory was his leadership in creation. To rebel against God was to become short of God's glory, and in that sense to fall short of man's glory, which is to reflect the glory of God. This is seen very powerfully in Romans 1:18–32 where men, who knew God, did not 'give to him his glory', and in rejecting the glory of God also rejected the true glory of man, and the glory of creation. Creation also expresses the glory of God (Psalm 19:1ff., Isaiah 6:3, Romans 1:19–20), and

man, part of that creation, is intended to be part of that expression.

What is stunning is the fact that prior to creation God had planned the ultimate glory of man, seen in I Corinthians 2:6–14. In this passage Paul speaks of 'a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification'. He then says that nothing man has experienced, or even imagined, can describe 'what God has prepared for those who love him'. This ultimate glory is thrilling beyond measure. Even so it is spelled out in intelligible terms, but especially it requires the revelation of the Holy Spirit to make it really known to (redeemed) man. Paul says, 'We have received the Spirit which is from God that we might understand the gifts bestowed upon us by God (verse 12).

In I John 3:1–3 the writer says that the ultimate glory will be that 'we shall be like him', for he says, 'we shall see him as he is'. The 'him' refers to the Son of God. He then says, 'Everyone who has *this hope in himself* purifies himself, even as he is pure'. This is the hope of glory. Romans 8:28–30 speaks of God conforming us the image of His Son, and calls this being glorified. I Peter 1:8 speaks of present faith in Jesus 'whom not having seen you love, whom seeing not you believe and rejoice with joy unspeakable and *full of glory*'. That is, one's joy has a measure of the very glory which is ultimately to come in all fulness. In fact Peter says, (verse 13) 'Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ'. This grace is the glory, for in I Peter 5:1 Peter speaks of being 'a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed', thus



equating 'grace' and 'glory'. He then goes on to say (verse 4), 'And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory'.

We could be excused for thinking that glory is only eschatological, but this is not so. In I Corinthians 11:7 Paul speaks of man, now, as being 'the image and glory of God'. He does not explain whether he means sinful man or redeemed man, but probably he is simply thinking that man was created in this way of glory and that is how God sees him, and demands of him all the moral and ethical obedience which relates to that glory. Yet redeemed man, now being a new creation (II Corinthians 5:16, 17, cf. Galatians 6:15) has a restoration of glory. Paul also sees this as a present process (II Corinthians 3:18), saying we are being changed from one stage of glory to another and also that 'we are being renewed in knowledge after the image of him that has created us' (Colossians 3:9-10, cf. Ephesians 4:23-24). In the main, however, we are to see the glory as eschatological and so hope for it. This is why he says, 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Colossians 1:27). It is very much like the parallel seen in Romans 8:9-11 where Christ indwells, but also the Spirit indwells, and he, being the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from the dead will also raise us from the dead, that is bring us to glory.

### *The Process and Climax of Glorification*

In II Corinthians 3:18 we see *a process of glorification* is going on now, from one stage to another. This is as we 'behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord'. In Hebrews 12:2 we are to look at the author and completer of our

faith, as we press towards the goal. This form of identification with Christ is also identification with him in suffering, as we shall see. Christ will present us as 'holy, blameless and irreproachable before him', but for this to happen we are to continue in faith, and of course, hope (Colossians 1:22-23). The main thing is that Christ is (a) among us, whether we be Jews or Gentiles by origin. Romans 9:4 makes it clear that once 'the glory' belonged only to Israel, but now Christ is also among the Gentiles, and this is their hope of glory (Luke 2:29-32). (b) Christ is in us personally, in our very hearts, and this is our hope of ultimate glory (Ephesians 3:14-19). That is why Paul says 'Christ our hope' (I Timothy 1:1). Of course *the climax* of our glorification is when we will see him, the Son. Paul makes this clear in Philippians 3:21 that when we shall see him he 'will change this body of our humiliation that it might be made like his *body of glory*, by the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself'. I John 3:2ff., I Peter 1:13 and 5:4 also make it clear that the change to full glory will happen when Christ appears, and (so) we see him.

If it is looking to the Son that caused *the process* of glorification, then it is seeing him in his parousia ('appearing') that completes that glorification in a climactic act. The ultimate glory, then, depends upon the Son. However it is the Father who gives us 'good hope through grace', and He is 'the Father of glory'. Hebrews 2:9-10 tells us that it is He who took the initiative to 'bring many sons into glory'. After all, as Ephesians 1:4-7 shows, He predestined us in love to be His sons 'to the praise of the glory of his grace', and plans (Ephesians 1:11-14) that



both Jews and Gentiles shall be 'to the praise of his glory', which from Isaiah 43:6-7 we deem to be that the sons and daughters reflect the glory of God when they are in the glorious likeness of His Son (Romans 8:30, I John 3:3). The Father then, prepares this inheritance of glory for His children.

At the same time the Holy Spirit is present both to aid the process of present glorification and the ultimate climactic act of glorification. II Corinthians 3:17-18 makes it clear that the Spirit is the Lord, and it is through his ministry that the process of glorification takes place. I Peter 4:14 speaks of the 'Spirit of glory', or 'the spirit of glory', and this is linked with suffering, and suffering, as we see, relates to the process of glorification in the present time. Likewise in the passage of Romans 8:14-25 the same Spirit relates to the suffering of the believer, and indeed of the whole creation, and this with a view to its future glory. Indeed this is the *locus classicus* of the Spirit, suffering, and the future glory. More than any other passage it is the *locus classicus* of hope! Verse 17 of this passage says we will be glorified with Christ provided that we suffer with him. In the context of this suffering, and the Spirit being within us, we look for the hope of glory.

The whole linking of resurrection with the future glorification of man is dealt with thoroughly in I Corinthians chapter 15, and so much so that we see we cannot really separate resurrection and the glory. This body has all the elements of corruption, and as such is placed into the ground. However it is raised in incorruption. In Philippians 3:21 Paul speaks of it as the body of humiliation. In it sin has made its home, and it has been subject to the

humiliation of sin's death, even to physical death. It is therefore sown (at death) in dishonour, but it is raised in glory. Philippians 3:21 speaks of it being changed to 'a body of glory'. It is therefore this hope of glory which takes from man his dread of death, and fear of impending judgement. He is to become a creature of remarkable glory, in the stunning likeness of the Son himself.

### The Hope of Inheritance

In Colossians 1:5 Paul speaks of 'the hope that is laid up for you in heaven'. He says, 'This is the hope that you first learned when the Gospel of truth came to you'. Hope then is part of the whole message of the Gospel. In a somewhat parallel passage in Ephesians (1:11-14) he also says they knew this truth when they believed. He infers that the Jews had hoped before Christ came, and had hoped on the Messiah to come. When he came they believed on him, and were sealed with (or by) the Holy Spirit of promise. Some translations have 'promised Holy Spirit', and others 'the Spirit of promise'. If the latter is the case, then it means the Spirit sealed them so that they would receive the promise at the end-time. That promise is of the inheritance. At the end-time they will acquire possession of it. We see then that the hope laid up in heaven is the objective inheritance which we will receive. Subjectively then we hope for that inheritance.

This is borne out in Ephesians 1:15-18, a passage in which Paul prays for the Ephesian converts. He says they need 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge



of God'. When they have this they will have their understanding lightened up, and they will truly see 'what is the hope to which he has called you, and what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints'. We note that 'the hope to which he has called you', and 'the wealthy inheritance of glory in the saints' are virtually synonymous. In Colossians 1:12 it is called 'the inheritance of the saints in light' i.e. God's people will come to an inheritance in the realm (or, place) of light, i.e. eternity. Colossians 1:13 shows that already the believing people of God have been transferred from the powers of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, i.e. they are out of darkness as their natural habitat and are in the new Kingdom which is the true place of light.

What is this inheritance? Peter describes it as the hope of the resurrection which leads to 'an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you' (cf. Colossians 1:5 'the hope that is laid up in heaven for you'). This surely means that glory of future being which flows from the resurrection, and which ensures that we shall be like him, not simply as some visual radiance, but as one having 'the body of glory', and being in character and state of that eternal quality which God has prepared for them that love Him.

Revelation 21:7 states, 'He who overcomes (or, conquers), I will grant him to *inherit all things*, and he shall be my son, and I will be his God'. The 'all things' is parallel with 'the world' which Abraham was to inherit (Romans 4:13) and 'the earth' which the meek are said to inherit (Matthew 5:5, Psalm 37:11). In I Corinthians 3:21–23 Paul states 'all things are yours', and says that this includes

things, past, present and future. He adds, 'And you are Christ's; and Christ is God's' so indicating the wonderful unity of all things.

The theme 'all things' is a fascinating study in itself. In Ephesians these 'all things' are to be ultimately unified in Christ (1:9–10), and they will be 'filled full' (4:7–10), whilst in Colossians they are created in Christ (1:16) and held together, i.e. have their true being in Christ (1:17), and although through sin they became seemingly disparate, will be reconciled in him through the death of the Cross (1:20).

Another way of speaking of the hope of inheritance is to speak of the hope of the kingdom or *inheriting the kingdom*. In fact the hope of resurrection and of the Kingdom are really one. In I Corinthians chapter 15, resurrection is the hope, and Paul says that 'flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom', meaning that only those who have come to hope's fulfilment—the resurrection and the glorified body—can enter. Humanity in its present state cannot inherit. I Thessalonians chapter 4, makes it clear that transformation from this flesh-and-blood existence to the eternal, glorified state will be instantaneous for those who are alive when Christ arrives, that is for 'those who love his appearing'.

### *Sonship and Inheritance*

It is clear that the primary Heir is the Son. In Psalm 2:7–8 the King-Messiah-Son is told, 'Ask of me and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for your possession'. The Son is to be heir of all things. This is what is stated in Hebrews



1:2 where we read of '... a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things'. In his case he has created and sustained all these things. In Mark 12:7, in the story of the vineyard, it is the Son (Christ) who is the true heir of Israel. In fact he is the true Israel as against the false leaders who will not submit to the Father of the Son. Israel in the Old Testament is the true son, as is made clear from Exodus 4:22 and Hosea 11:1. In Matthew 2:14 the son of Hosea 11:1 is now the Son who is Messiah, Jesus.

The hope of inheritance is given to those who participate in the Son. In Galatians chapter 3, Paul equates men of faith with the sons of Abraham, and the sons of Abraham with the sons of promise and says that 'in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith' and so are '... Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise'. In Romans 8:14-25 Paul's theme is sonship of God under the Holy Spirit. He says that through the Spirit we know we are the children of God, 'and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with Christ, provided that we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him'. We see then that our heirship is *in Christ the Son*. As sons we will inherit, but not apart from the Son. In any case Galatians 3:26-29 shows that we are only truly sons when we are baptized into Christ and so put on Christ. Romans 4:13 shows us that the promise of inheritance of the world was made to Abraham, but this also included his children, so the true children of Abraham are the true children of God, and this is the promise to which Paul refers in Galatians chapter 3, by which we become heirs of the promise, i.e. of resurrection, eternal life, the glory of God and the Kingdom.

Such promises are entirely of grace. In Galatians chapter 3 and Romans chapter 4 Paul is anxious to preserve this truth. Yet, although of grace, we must not be deceived. In I Corinthians 6:9, Galatians 5:19-21 and Ephesians 5:5-6 Paul warns that we must not be deceived into thinking we have any hope of the Kingdom if we will not live after the manner of the Kingdom. Such a hope would be false and delusive. 'Only he who endures to the end will be saved' must spring from the inherent corollary, 'Only he who is saved will endure unto the end'.

### *The Hope and Suffering*

In Romans 8:17-25 the hope of glory, which includes the redemption of the body and the full glorification of man and creation, will not be achieved without suffering. Paul had told his Asian converts that 'through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God'. Colossians 1:13-14 indicates that Paul understood all the children of God to be in the kingdom of God, yet he also has this eschatological view, that the ultimate experience of the kingdom relates to present suffering. 'If we suffer with him [the true heir] we shall also be glorified with him.' Even the creation groans in convulsive pain, whilst the heirs, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, also groan within themselves, longing for the body of redemption in order to be rid of 'the body of this death' or, 'the body of this humiliation' (cf. Romans 7:23, Philippians 3:21). In II Thessalonians 1:4-5 Paul speaks again of suffering in relation to the kingdom of God. He speaks of '... all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgement of God, that



you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering'.

This theme of suffering is throughout the New Testament. Paul, however, calls it 'a light affliction', and says it is 'but for a moment'. He says that such suffering prepares us to receive a great weight of glory. Our suffering which may now *seem* so heavy is indeed as light as breath, a mere wisp of an entity as against the eternal 'weight of glory'. In some sense then suffering begets glory. It is the seal of the true heir, and not the cost but the way of his obtaining the inheritance. Peter speaks in a similar vein. In fact his first Epistle is really given over to suffering as its primary theme. Much of it is summed up in I Peter 4:12-14. Building upon the basis of Christ's sufferings and the principle behind them he says, 'Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you, but rejoice insofar as you *share Christ's sufferings*, that you may also rejoice and be glad *when his glory is revealed*. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you'.

### *The Hope and Maturity*

Suffering closely relates to maturation. This is seen in Romans 8:17-25. It is repeated in II Timothy 2:12, 'If we suffer [i.e. endure] with him we shall also reign with him'. In Philippians 3:10-14 Paul speaks in the one breath of sharing in the fellowship of his sufferings (cf. I Peter 4:13), and in the next of attaining unto resurrection out of the dead, and then adds that this will be the glorification of the

body, when Christ appears.

In II Corinthians 4:16-18 the one who is suffering looks at the unseen things, and not merely at things which are to pass away. It is the same in Colossians 3:1-5 where the true believer fixes his gaze upon the ascended and reigning Christ, and as a consequence puts to death earthly things that are not consonant with that 'citizenship of heaven'. In this steadfastness of suffering and obedience the true inheritor matures.

The writer of Hebrews speaks of a persistence which is inspired by hope. Objectively that hope, Christ himself, is already in the heavens, but for us it is an anchor dropped there for us to prevent us drifting away from the hope. With this in mind he urges, '... we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realising the full assurance of the hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those, who through faith and patience *inherit the promises*' (Hebrews 6:11-12).

At the same time, and in the same vein it is the mature person who comes into a full inheritance, or as Peter says, 'there will be richly provided [for him] an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (II Peter 1:11). In Revelation 21:7 God says, 'He who conquers shall have this heritage [i.e. 'all things'], and I will be his God and *he shall be my son*'. The true son, then, is the one who conquers. As the True Son, Christ conquered. As true sons the heirs are conquerors. See Revelation 2:26 and 3:21. Nevertheless one does not conquer without suffering, but then one conquers, not of oneself, but *in the Son*. Romans 8:35-39 shows that whilst we are being killed all the day long, and being accounted



as sheep for the slaughter yet we are 'more than conquerors through him who loved us', i.e. through and in the Son (cf. Philippians 4:13).

### The Hope of Salvation

Paul directly uses the term 'the hope of salvation' in I Thessalonians 5:8 where he says, 'put on . . . for a helmet the hope of salvation'. In Ephesians 6:17 he calls it 'the helmet of salvation'. In both cases he means salvation protects us from the Evil One, and since to him the hope of salvation and salvation are one and the same thing, we can see that he means on the one hand that the Christian has received salvation, and on the other that he hopes for its ultimate fulfilment. We saw in Romans 8:24 he says, 'For in this hope i.e. adoption as sons, and the redemption of the body *we were saved*. Now hope that is seen is not hope'. Hebrews 11:1 says that 'faith is the *substance* of things hoped for', i.e. by believing we are saved, but we look to its ultimate climax because the just live by faith, at this time, and not by sight. The body is evidently not yet glorified, but we live in the (sure) hope that it will be. Proleptically it is already glorified (cf. Romans 8:30).

Total salvation will be resurrection of the body, glorification of the same, and total being before God as His children personally, and His family corporately. At that time the body will neither be subjected to evil, temptation, or corruption. Hence the serenity of the truly meek who now inherit the earth. The tensions of which Paul speaks in Romans 7:13-25, and which are the daily experience of believers, will no longer obtain.

In the same way, in Galatians 5:5 Paul says, 'For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness'. This can be translated 'the hope of justification'. Romans 5:1 makes it clear that men of faith are already justified (cf. Genesis 15:6), yet Paul says, in effect, that we walk in faith regarding this, and have our hope or fixed assurance that in that day it will be pronounced, and faith will no longer need to sustain us. Now it is the substance of things hoped for, then it will be the whole of the thing hoped for. This is seen clearly in Romans 5:15-21. Paul speaks of the defeat of sin and death by Christ. He speaks of our justification through having Christ's obedience accounted to us. He says, 'If, because of one man's [Adam's] trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the *free gift of righteousness reign in life* through the one man Jesus Christ'. The free gift of justification causes us to reign in life. He must mean, in part, that we already reign in life. However it is also evident that the portion of reigning is but a first-fruit of the entire reigning when 'we shall reign on the earth' (Revelation 5:10).

We conclude then that the hope is of resurrection, glorification, the inheritance of all things which includes the Kingdom, and salvation. Seen from various angles they really constitute one whole which can be said to be 'the hope'. It remains for us now to see the present value, use and application of this eternal hope.



## 4. The Present Living in Hope

### MOTIVATION OF HOPE

If there is no objective hope, e.g. 'the hope that is laid up in heaven', then there is no reality to hope, and so no authentic motivation for the action of the believer's subjective hope. It can almost be said as an axiom that as deep is the understanding of, and faith in, the objective hope, as deep then will be the power of motivation within the believer. Naturally this motivation will be opposed and contested by all that is evil. Evil seeks to destroy the truth that God is 'the God of hope' (Romans 15:13), since hope is already the anchor of the soul, and that anchor is cast into the Eternal Harbour, anyway (Hebrews 6:19), in the (objective) form of Jesus himself who is our hope. He has entered there.

In order to strengthen motivation we have to follow two principles: (a) increase the knowledge of the truth (Titus 1:1) of the objective hope, and (b) increase the knowledge of the truth of the promise (or promises). In practice this is done by the Spirit. When the Spirit works then the demands of patience, sobriety and vigilance which are the accompaniment of hope are then sustained. Before developing the two principles let us look at the Spirit of hope.

#### *The Spirit of Promise*

Theologically the Holy Spirit is the Agent of creation, redemption and the ultimate restitution of all things. He is

the Spirit who always was in the past, and who is in the present and who will be in the end-things. In Hebrews 9:14 he is called 'the eternal Spirit'. Faith relates to things past and things present, but hope primarily to things future. The Spirit makes them as though they were also present. The Old Testament promises pointed to him as coming in a new epochal manner, and this was fulfilled at Pentecost. He was thus called 'the Spirit of promise', or 'the promise of the Father' (Galatians 3:14; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5). In Ephesians he is 'the Spirit of promise' (or 'the Spirit of the promise'), and although this could mean, as above, 'the promised Spirit', yet the context shows that it is related to the promise of the inheritance. This is reinforced by Ephesians 4:30 where the Spirit is again said to seal us for the day of redemption.

In Romans 5:1-5 we see the Spirit is the Spirit of promise, love relating strongly to this promise. In Romans 15:13 it is through the power of the Spirit that we become buoyant in hope, and in Galatians 5:5 it is through him that we hope for justification. However in Romans 8:23-30 it is the Spirit who enables us to wait with patience. Having given us his first-fruits he encourages us to look for the day of redemption and sonship. He intercedes within us when, in relation to the end-time, we do not know what to pray.

#### *The Principle of Objective Hope*

Above we have seen what we hope for, these being resurrection, glory, inheritance, salvation, and so on. Whilst we can recognise these things theologically, we have need to make them practical, related, and personal.



For example, we have the Son saying he is going to prepare a place for us, and also that he desires that we should be with him where he is, to behold his glory and to have the love of the Father in us. We need to recognise these elements insofar as we can. In I Corinthians 2:6-14 Paul speaks of the glorification which God planned for us from before time, and how stunning this is, and how the Spirit has to teach us these realities. Revelation 21:7 says we are to inherit all things, and 5:10 that we will reign on the earth.

When then we see all the elements of the objective hope, and soak ourselves in them, then we realise the powerful dynamic of them. This future is always coming towards us, and as we hasten towards it, we, too, experience the reality of rich motivation. Time for us is not open-ended but purposeful with a rich and beautiful goal. The peak of this will be to see the Son who is not ashamed to call us brethren (Hebrews 2:11, cf. Romans 8:29). The future nature of this hope is made present by the very objective hope—Christ himself—dwelling within us personally (Galatians 2:20) and among us (Colossians 1:27), i.e. 'Christ in you the hope of glory'. Ephesians 3:16f. makes it clear that it is through the Spirit that we have this present indwelling of 'Christ our glory'.

In a day when we are told to leave 'airy-fairy' things, and to 'get with it' where men are, we have somewhat despised the future unseen realities. In doing so we are not biblical. Someone has said, 'the best citizen of time is the citizen of eternity'. Hope is a great moral and ethical drive. However material and crude medieval conceptions of the future life were, we need not, therefore, throw out the

baby with the bath-water. Ideologies have faith that they will arrive at the golden-age, and sometimes they have little on which to base their hope. This is not the case with the true Christian.

### *The Principle of Promise*

We have dealt with this already, in large measure. The New Testament saints based their faith on the fulfilment of the Scriptures by Christ in his incarnation, life, death and resurrection. Yet neither the Old Testament prophets, nor the prophecies of the New Testament have yet been exhausted. As we have seen, many of those promises relate to the end-things, the things of hope. Just to scan the word 'promise' in the Scriptures is to see that nothing will come which has not been promised, and all that has been promised is the firm basis for our hope.

We conclude then that as the Spirit leads us, and enables us to understand, so our hope grows firm, and real. What we need to see is what this hope motivates us both to do and to be.

## **LIVING IN HOPE**

We have seen that our 'hope of sharing the glory of God', and inheriting 'all things', and having our bodies of humiliation changed so that they are 'like his body of glory'—among many other things—have a powerful tug towards the future and evoke a strong motivation to reach that goal. Hence hope is an enormous power in the present. For example, when our bodies are diseased, or we



are wearied in them, or weakness is a burden, we can see that this will one day end, and be supplanted by a new body of glory. When temptations assail us through the body we can similarly think that temptation one day will cease. If loneliness invades, then we can think of the ultimate family, the Father and the Elder Brother, and the many children of God. In this way hope is a present dynamic.

Many things, however, work against hope. Unless we live continually in faith and see things as they really are, and so, really will be, we must revert to faithless reasoning which lands us back with things as they dismally are to sight. Also Satan and his forces fiercely hate the plan of God, and oppose it. They seek to delude our minds, or to threaten us away from fulfilment. So we battle in hope. This is why Peter advises, 'Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, *set your hope fully* upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ'. In this case 'the grace that is coming to you' is the motivation, but the action is 'setting the hope fully'. The background is 'girding up the mind' and 'being sober'. Hence in I Thessalonians 5:8 we have the same sort of context, the hope of his coming. In this context Paul says, '... let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet *the hope of salvation*'. The thought of seriousness and sobriety is in I Peter 4:7, 5:8, Ephesians 6:14 and other passages. Romans 13:11–13 speaks of sobriety, and in the context of the end-things. In respect to this, Paul says, in Romans 15:4, 'For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that *by steadfastness* and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have

hope'.

Steadfastness, patience, and diligence are all conditions under which hope—in the personal, subjective sense—flourishes. In Romans 8:24–25 Paul says, 'For in this hope *we were saved*. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, *we wait for it with patience*'. He means, 'The action began in the objective hope—Christ himself—and our hoping continues in the context of patience. Because we know its reality we will wait for it with patience. This same principle is found in Romans 15:13, 'May *the God of hope* fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit *you may abound in hope*'. Believing strengthens the experience of hoping.

I John 3:1–3 speaks of the hope of being like Christ, the Son. It then says, 'And everyone who has this hope in himself, purifies himself, even as he is pure'. He who knows he will be pure, i.e. hopes for that day, now begins to be what he will ultimately surely be. Likewise in Titus 2:11–14 the principle that grace has already begun to discipline us, and in the midst of this discipline we are 'awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ'. In II Peter 1:10–11 obedience and motivation are of the one piece, 'Therefore brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your calling and election, for if you do this you will never fall; so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'. Also in Hebrews 3:6 the writer says, 'we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and our pride in our hope'. Some manuscripts add, 'to the end'.



In Hebrews 6:9–20 the writer has a remarkable passage in which he is persuaded that his readers are not negative or apostates. He seals his argument on the basis of promise, saying that God has sworn by Himself, and so His oath is immutable, and their (objective) hope indisputable. He says, 'We desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who *through faith and patience inherit the promises*'.

By now we can see that one works at hope. The objective hope is complete. It is laid up in heaven. Our response, belief and action concerning that hope is what we ought to be about, now. This brings us to the term 'patience'. What does it mean? Trench calls it 'a long holding out of the mind'. It surely must mean that the reality of the end inspires endurance through faith in the meantime. In Romans 5:1–5 we see that we start with hoping to share in the glory of God. Paul says, 'More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us'. Paul means that when we commence in hope it takes us through many experiences which can only strengthen hope. We always know that hope is not delusive because *we have the actual love of God in our hearts* and that reassures us that it is not all fanciful or illusory.

What we keep needing to remember is that the glorious hope is so wonderful that what the world calls patience is indeed nothing. Just as Jacob worked many years for

Rachel and thought of it as no time, so we, seeing the Pearl of Great Price, will think no sacrifice to be a sacrifice, and no time to be really any time at all! That is why Paul can add (Romans 12:12), 'Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer'. When one *rejoices in hope* then one has seen hope as a joyful thing. We have seen negatively from I Corinthians 6:9, Galatians 5:19–21 and Ephesians 5:5–6 that if one lives in sin, fleshliness and darkness, then one ought not to delude oneself about hope. It is not good moral living which makes hope, but hope which, truly understood, makes good moral living.

Paul also says that hope inspires boldness (II Corinthians 3:12). When we know the end we do not fear in the present time. We look for ultimate freedom (Romans 8:21, Galatians 5:5), and it is this which breeds patience, endurance, and character. We can see then that hope, far from being a thing in the distance, is an ever present power to stimulate obedience and true living.

## FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

We often find these three linked together, and it is important that we see how and why this is so. In Hebrews 11:1 we read that 'Faith is the assurance (substance) of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen'. What is hoped for is true and certain. In faith hope drives its assurance (Hebrews 11:1), whilst hope abounds as the believer is filled with all joy and peace in believing (Romans 15:13). Again in Titus 1:1–2 the faith of the elect



is 'in hope of eternal life'.

In I Thessalonians 1:3, Paul links 'Your work of faith, labour of love, and steadfastness of hope'. In II Thessalonians 1:3-5 faith is growing and love (for one another) is increasing and all of this in the light of their hope of the Kingdom, for which they are suffering. In Romans 4:16-25 faith is not weakened by the seeming impossibility of the promise which in this case was that Sarah would bear a child. Indeed Abraham 'hoped against hope', meaning that the more difficult the promise the greater his faith and the more sure his hope. In Romans 5:1-5 the elect are justified by faith, have hope in sharing God's love, and this hope is strengthened and activated by the love that is poured into their hearts. In Ephesians 4:1-6 we have 'one faith', 'one hope of your calling' and love is to be the order of the unity of the Spirit. In I Thessalonians 5:8 we read of the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet which is the hope of salvation. The classical saying of I Corinthians 13:13 is 'So abides faith, hope and love'. He has already said that faith without love is nothing, and also, doubtless love without faith is not true love. Galatians 5:6 speaks of 'faith working by love'.

What then, does it mean that 'faith, hope and love abide'? Since Paul says 'the greatest of these is love' he must mean that in some sense faith and hope subserve love. Since God is love and not faith or hope, love is the most theological thing of all. It is love which believes and love which hopes (I Corinthians 13:7), and not vice-versa. The faith as truth is something which is an entity in itself, and faith as trust in God must be unceasing. Sight, eventually, can only substantiate and seal faith. Likewise

hope. Objectively the hope laid up in heaven must abide. However the working of faith, hope and love are continuous, here at least, whatever they may or may not be in the world to come.

Our conclusion is then that hope is always in relationship with love and faith. *Hope is never on its own*. That is why we are not disappointed in hope since love is with us and assures and reassures us of the outcome of God and His creation.

### HOPE AND THE ETHICAL LIFE

In II Corinthians 1:7 Paul says, 'Our hope for you is unshaken'. He means that he and his companions have not merely, selfishly hoped for themselves. Where hope is, love is, as we have seen. Hence the hope that is laid up for us, is laid up for others. We must share our hope with them. In I Peter 3:15 it is written, 'Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence'. It may be that that other person enquired, not perversely, but seeking a solid hope for himself. To share the faith, the Gospel is also to share the hope, since it is the Gospel of hope, especially the hope of salvation. In this sense then, love demands a sharing of the hope.

In another sense, as we have seen in passing, hope is a great motivation to personal holiness and ethical living. In I John 3:1-3 we saw that 'everyone who has this hope (sonship and likeness to Christ) purifies himself, even as he (the Son) is pure'. In II Corinthians 6:14-7:1 those who



wish to be called the sons and daughters of God must separate themselves from evil, and cleanse themselves. In I Peter 1:14ff. there is the same motive. We will call Him Father, so we must be holy, whilst now sojourning in this world. In II Peter 3:10ff. the hope of the new heavens and new earth must inspire us to be the kind of men and women that entrance into such a world will demand.

Perhaps even more explicit is the passage of I Timothy 4:7-10. In this Paul says, 'Train yourselves in godliness...godliness is of value in every way, as *it holds promise for this present life, and also for the life to come*. For to this end we toil and strive, *because we have our hope set on the living God*, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe'. Paul is saying clearly that true ethical living in the now-time is both inspired by hope, and relates to that (ultimate) hope. What a person will ultimately be must condition what he is now, and what he does now.

The hope means we do not have links with the world-system. I Corinthians 7:31 speaks of the changing modes of the world, and I John 2:16-17 says the world is passing away. In Hebrews, Abraham looks for a city to come, eternal and substantial, and hence develops his life-style in accordance with that. The principle which motivated Moses to spurn the pleasures of Egypt was 'the recompense of the reward' (Hebrews 11:26). Ethical living then, is powerfully motivated by the future hope.

We have seen that hope does not exist outside the triad of faith, hope and love. Hope is even more than faith, and faith is no less than obedience. Obedience which is true is always motivated by love (John 14:15, II Corinthians

5:14, cf. I John 4:19). In this sense each of the triad does not work without the other two. Thus the ethical is based upon and derives its action from the triad. Hope then is essentially productive of the ethic. The writer of Hebrews, as we saw in 6:9-20, makes demands for work and effort based upon the hope. In the Old Testament, in Israel, obedience was based upon the covenant, and related to the law and the sacrificial cultus. The writer of Hebrews is anxious to emphasise the fact that the new covenant surpasses and supersedes the old covenant, and this being so we may conclude that ethical inspiration and motivation will also be of a better order. 'On the one hand, a former commandment (the law) is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); on the other hand, *a better hope* is introduced through which we draw near to God'. Christ is of course a better mediator than Moses because he mediates a better covenant. In Hebrews 8:1-13 the writer compares the two covenants, and says in effect that the new sanctuary, worship, and cultus makes the old effete. At the heart of this covenant is forgiveness which is the dynamic for obedience. Out of this 'better hope' comes a better way of life.

We conclude then that the true ethic, in context with faith and love, proceeds from hope, especially the better hope. The 'full assurance of hope' (Hebrews 6:11) sets one free from fear of death, and fear of this life, to glorify God by his deeds (Matthew 5:16).

## HOPE AND THE NATURE OF PRESENT ACTION

We have one final matter to determine. Is the hope of



that which is to come a determinant for the kind of present action which *will effect that end*? By this we mean 'Do we have to assist in effecting the conclusion of the eschaton?'. In practical terms, 'Do we have to bring in the Kingdom? Do we have to defeat evil, and accomplish what God is about, or at least seek to assist God in what He is about?'. The answer must surely be, 'Yes and no'. How then, and why then must it be 'Yes and no'?

Since the primal couple were cast out of Eden, and the way to the tree of life was guarded, man has sought to make his utopias. By nature of the case many of them are secular, since he has rejected God and His plan. Such utopias are doomed, even if they were to come to some initial fruition. Whilst attaining these utopias takes up much of man's thought and time, and brings misery in its attempts, yet secular utopias are nowhere near as dangerous as religious utopias. The attempt to build Babel was an attempt to oust God and set up a safe kingdom. Apart from the much debated mention of the millennium in Revelation 19 the Scriptures give no indication of a utopian kingdom. The pictures of a Messianic kingdom, such as in Isaiah 11, 65, and 66, correspond to the ultimate peace of the world in Revelation 21 and 22. For the rest the eschatological passages of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 speak only of unrest and tragedy mixed with terror for the days preceding the parousia. The books of Daniel and the Revelation have similar patterns. The old liberal view of a kingdom gradually being established as the leaven of the Gospel spread through the world is belied by the drastic, cataclysmic and catastrophic nature of history under the hand of Messiah. Revelation 5:1—21:9

must be seen in this light.

In the midst of all this the Gospel must be preached. It is the Gospel of hope, but the hope of 'the grace which is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ'. That is why we are 'awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ', and 'we wait for it with patience' because it does not yet obtain. In fact 'it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that *when we shall see him* we shall be like him'. That is why 'we show the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope to the end'.

What we must recognise is that *in no way do we make that hope*. It is objective. Christ is our hope and he has gone from us into the heavenly Sanctuary. He is our hope-anchor already behind the veil. On him depends our resurrection, glorification and our inheritance. Nothing we can do here can make that so, or, in fact, detract from it. Furthermore, he is Lord of history, and is working out history (I Corinthians 15:24–28). God Himself is eternal and never in the process of becoming although He is always in the process of effecting His plan (cf. Ephesians 1:9–10, 3:7–11, Acts 3:21, Revelation 10:1–7).

What work, then, other than being light, salt, and 'sheep in the midst of wolves' should occupy us? The answer is that to be light, salt, and 'lambs in the midst of wolves' is (a) to proclaim the Gospel to every nation and to the ends of the earth, and (b) to live as lights in the world, i.e. 'to do good unto all men', and to love our enemies, and live the true godly ethic.

What then of liberating imprisoned mankind? What of changing the nature of society? What then of a *good use of*



*the sword?* Do we interpret proclamation as simply religious evangelism? Do we allow the world to be ruled by oppressors? Is our godliness to be a ghetto godliness? Do we reject involvement in social action?

Every one of these questions is emotive. Each has deep implications. Each implies the Christian man, unless he is in such action, is setting his hope totally in another realm. He appears to be denying a rich use of the great powers that lie in God and the Gospel. Any answer to these must be set in the context of a true biblical eschatology. Man's creational obligations to love his fellow man and to care for him are as old as man's history itself, and none may opt out of these obligations, even if many do. Again, the Christian ethic demands that we do good unto all men, and what that good is has to be worked out in discernment. Yet the whole structure of the Christian ethic puts limits on modes of help, principles of operation. To quote the simple words of Jesus in relation to violence, 'He who lives by the sword must die by the sword'. He meant, 'Put up the sword when it comes to the Gospel!'. His sermon on the mount contains guidelines to a very powerful ethic, which is at the same time the ethic of peace.

Having said all this we refer back to '*Hope and the Ethical Life*'. Hope is the great dynamic for present living in holiness and godliness and love. However, in the same context hope is something which *comes* at the revelation of Christ. Whilst II Peter 3:12 speaks of '*hastening* of the day of God' by holiness of living, this is only the contra to God being long-suffering and giving opportunity for repentance. In no way does man's ethical obedience or his kingdom-shaping hasten that day. Whilst the people of

God are fellow-workers with Him (I Corinthians 3:9) they may do only what He plans and only as He guides. He gives no *carte blanche* to his church to do what it thinks best. If this were the case then it would bring hope to fruition as against 'the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ'.

## 5. Conclusion as to Hope

We conclude then that the great hope of Christ, his coming and the end things, and our participation in them is what strengthens the believer. The goal of the entire people of God, and the full family of the Father, with the view of the City of God, and the healing of the nations is so moving, so dynamic as to encourage the sons and daughters of God to the very end. Life can only be fully lived in the knowledge that there is no (ultimate) death.

Most of all it is 'the God of hope' who is revealed to us. It is His Son, our hope laid up in heaven, and His Spirit, the one who evokes hope by inflooding the love of God, who sustain us in love. For this reason we look to the days of glory, freedom and worship of God, as He planned in His wisdom, for us, before time, and for our glorification.





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*Geoffrey Bingham is an Anglican minister. His experience as soldier, prisoner of war, farmer, writer, teacher and family man, as well as theologian, has given him grounds for writing material which is Australian in tone, and relevant to the society in which we live. Some have found his books life-changing.*

