

HEAVENLY HOPE

C. D. Cole

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INTRODUCTION

The Bryan Station Baptist Church of Lexington, Kentucky, has undertaken the task of printing the writings of Dr. C. D. Cole of Mortons Gap, Kentucky. Dr. Cole has a great doctrinal mind and the Lord has blessed him in being able to put this doctrine in writing. His writings have been a blessing and a great help to me as a pastor and I feel sure that anyone who reads the books of C. D. Cole will be strengthened and greatly helped. We are printing these as a part of the missionary work of our church. Concerning other books by C. D. Cole, please see the back page.

Alfred M. Gormley, Pastor

The Bryan Station Baptist Church

CHAPTER I

THE HEAVENLY HOPE

"I live on hope and that I think do all who come into this world." Bridges. It is the writer's observation that of all the doctrine of the Bible, the doctrine of hope has received the least attention from preachers generally and from theologians in particular. In the index of subjects in one of our largest and most popular theologies, the word hope does not appear.

"Knowledge begins with definition," so spoke Demosthenes. And since we wish to impart knowledge, we will begin with the definition of the word hope. In the general sense, hope is the expectation of future good. Hope consists of two things: desire and expectation. It cannot be truly said that a person hopes for something he does not desire; nor can he hope for something he does not expect to receive. To desire something with no expectation of receiving it, is not hope but despair. And to expect something that is not desired is not hope but dread.

Hope may be further defined as a quality in the human soul that anticipates the future with a sense of peace and pleasure; peace and pleasure commensurate with the worth of the object hoped for. Hope is concerned only about the future; we do not hope for what we already see or possess. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that

we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:24-25). What is hoped for must be waited for.

Hope is one of the principal springs of human endeavor. Without hope men would never attempt anything. If hope deferred makes the heart sick, then to be without hope would take the heart out of every undertaking. Without hope of harvest the farmer would not plant and cultivate. Without hope of pay the miner would not hazard his life in the treacherous mine. Without hope of profit the merchant would close shop. Without hope of winning nobody would every run for office. Without hope of happiness lovers would never march to the marriage altar. In all the wedding cake, hope is the sweetest of the plums.

IS HOPE AN ASSET OR A LIABILITY!

This may seem a strange question in the light of what we have already written. But the question is not so one-sided as one may at first judge. It is a question whether, on the whole, hope has given more pleasure than pain. Hope, in itself, is a happy quality in the human mind, but it often ends in disappointment. So often we do not get what we hope for; or, if we do get it, it is found to be worth less than we had thought. All of us know that many things we have hoped for in this life have never been realized. Hope often lies to us. It holds out prizes that are never won. It promises pleasures that are never enjoyed. Hope makes us toil and struggle and then fails to pay off. Hope so often turns out to be a false prophet. Parents entertain high hopes for their children only to be disappointed by their sins and failures. Pastors have hoped for faithfulness in church members who have not lived up to their promises. Pastors hope for cooperation from those who never give it. And the hope of a happy home has turned out to be a lie with many a husband and wife. Expiring hopes tell

many a tale of sin and shame. And all this has caused one poet to write:

"Hope tells a flattering tale,
Delusive, vain, and hollow.
Ah! let not hope prevail,
Lest disappointment follow."

And Dryden, in a time of dejection, wrote:

"When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat,
Yet fooled with hope, men favor the "deceit,"

But the poet Cowley writes in defense of hope and says:

"Hope! of all ills that men endure,
The only cheap and universal cure,"

And Shakespeare writes that,

"The miserable have no other medicine,
But only hope."

Wordsworth expresses his doubt as to the worth of hope in these lines:

"Hopes! what are they? Beads of morning
Strung on slender blades of grass;
Or a spider's web adorning
In a strait and treacherous pass."

But Oliver Goldsmith says that,

"Hope, like a gleaming taper's light,
Adorns and cheers our way."

And so it is debated by the poets whether hope is a blessing or a curse. But the fact is, that all men have hope of some sort in some degree. As Pope puts it:

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast,
Man never is, but always to be blest."

Hope is the chief pillar of life. Hope supports the mind under all changes, trials, and difficulties. A man without hope would soon go mad. It is fairly safe to say that every suicide who leaves a note reveals that he has lost all hope for future good.

To be without hope is a sad expression in anybody's language. It is a sad thing to hear in the sick room when the doctor looks grave and indicates there is no hope for the patient. It is a sad expression in the business office when the manager wrinkles his brow and says there is no hope of profit. It is a sad word on the high seas when the captain of the sinking ship says there is no hope of saving the ship, and calls all passengers to put on the life belts and make their way to the life boat. It is sad for the politician when the returns show he has no hope of being elected to the office for which he campaigned.

EARTHLY HOPES ARE DYING HOPES

To hope only in this life is tragic. To hope only for things this side of the grave and eternity is most pathetic. And yet this describes the hope of the masses. A young man was being interviewed by an old preacher. He was asked what his plans and hopes were after he had finished high school. He replied that he would go on to college, work hard and graduate with honors.

"What then?" queried the minister. The young man said he would take postgraduate work in his chosen field, in the hope

of being one of the most capable and successful. "What then?" continued the old preacher. The young man revealed his plans to marry, settle down in some good town, work at his profession, make a lot of money, and move in the best society. "What then?" persisted the old man. By this time the young man was not so glib, but he went on to say that he would finally become old, and have to retire, but that he hoped to have a competence for his old age. "What then?" continued the older man. The young man dropped his head and said, that of course, he would have to die. "What then?" the old man continued. And to this, he had no answer, for all his plans and hopes were this side of the grave and Eternity.

There are triple doors to the Cathedral of Milan, and over each door is an inscription. Over one is carved a beautiful wreath of roses and underneath is the legend: "All that which pleases is but for a moment." Over another is a sculptured cross and underneath are these words: "All that which troubles is but for a moment." And over the great central door are the words: "That only is important which is eternal." What a solemn reminder! "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked shall perish" (Prov. 10:28).

ETERNITY WITHOUT HOPE

Hell is a hopeless place, the place of eternal despair. To enter eternity without hope in Christ is to remain forever hopeless. The hope of the rich man was soon dispelled as Abraham told him of that impassable gulf between him and the blessings of God. The rich man did not ask for much, but he did not get even the little water for his burning tongue.

When Napoleon was being crowned emperor of the French in 1804, there was one person in the huge throng who was neither overawed nor overjoyed by all the pomp and splendor

of the occasion. And that person was his old Corsican mother. During the ceremonies she was heard to say over and over again, "So long as it lasts." She knew that the glory that was her son's for the moment would end in despair. She realized that the crown being placed on his head was only a fading chaplet. She had no hope that his popularity would last, and we know from history that it did not last.

The saddest thing about Napoleon was not his defeat at Waterloo by the Duke of Wellington. It was not his exile and loneliness on St. Helena. The saddest thing in the history of Napoleon was that day in May, 1821, when he died and his soul entered that place of which Dante wrote: "All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

The hope of the writer is to challenge the reader to examine his hope in the light of eternity; or, as Peter puts it, give a reason for the hope that is in you. If your hope is built on anything other than Christ and Him crucified, such a hope will fail you in the day of judgment.

If some lost person, in the providence of God, shall take time to read these lines, let me warn him of the Christless grave and the fearful hell that awaits him.

My sinner friend, me thinks I hear the breaking of the waves on the shore of eternity. You must go down into these waves sooner or later, and it may be sooner than you think. What if it should prove to be a sea of fire to you forever? What if every billow in that sea of flame should break over you? What if you must be drifting forever across that fiery sea, with words of Divine wrath driving you on, never to find a haven? Dear friend, stop trifling with eternal matters. Put an end to your careless career! Take the place of a sinner and trust the One mighty to save, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lost friend, there may yet be hope. This is not the day of despair, for we are still living in the day of salvation. Not yet has the great key grated in the lock to shut you forever in the dungeon. It is said of Christ, "he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (Rev. 3:7). He can open Heaven to you. He is the one and only Saviour. Trust Him with your whole heart. Rest in His blood, for nothing else can cleanse you from your sins. Find shelter, through childlike trust, beneath His cross, where the lightning bolts of Divine wrath cannot strike. Look up to Him; yea, come to Him, for he has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Trust Him now, for there is danger in delay.

"This heavenly hope is all serene,
But earthly hope now bright soe'er,
Still fluctuates over this changing scene,
As false and fleeting as tis fair."

-Reginald Heber

CHAPTER II

FAITH - HOPE - CHARITY

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three" (I Cor. 13:13).

Hope is one of the three cardinal Christian graces. The hope of the Christian differs radically and in many respects from any and every hope the man of the world may have. In defining the word hope we have said it was the expectation of future good. But the Christian hope is more than mere expectation, it is the well-founded expectation of future, even eternal good. What hope the Christ rejector may have of eternal good is ill founded, and is sure to end in disappointment. Moreover, the hope of the unbeliever is at the best vague and uncertain. But the hope of the Christian is both sure and steadfast, and it goes with him all the way to glory. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (Heb. 6:19).

There are three chief things which the Lord Jesus Christ is said to be unto believers: (1) He is our life. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4); (2) He is our peace. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph. 2:14); (3) He is our hope. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God

our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope" (I Tim. 1:1).

We trust the Lord Jesus for life and the life we have in Him is everlasting life. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). We look to Him for our peace with God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). And this peace was made by the blood of His cross. "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself" (Col. 1:20). And our hope for heaven with all its glories is based upon our faith in Him. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).

In this chapter we shall deal with three things:

- (1) The author of our hope, or who produces it;
- (2) The object of our hope, or what we hope for;
- (3) The ground or foundation of our hope.

The Author

1. The author of our hope is God. Hope is a Christian grace produced in us by the Spirit of God. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" (II Thess. 2:16). The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, so that our hope maketh not ashamed. "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). Furthermore, in Rom. 15:13 we read, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." God is here called the

God of hope because He is the Author of our hope. And Peter assures us that we have been begotten again unto a living hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Peter 1:3). Hope like all the other Christian graces, is born of God and not of the flesh, nor of the will of man. And the faithful God, who causes us to hope in His son, will not disappoint that hope.

The Object

2. The object of our hope is heaven with all its blessings. The things the Christian hopes for are all the heavenly blessings promised in Christ Jesus. This is a good place to be reminded that the word hope is used in a twofold way in the New Testament. The word is used both subjectively as an inner grace in the soul, and it is also used objectively in the sense of what is hoped for. "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Col. 1:5). We are told about the hope laid up for us in heaven, which has reference to the glories of heaven; all the things that will make heaven such a grand place. It is also a good time to be told that we cannot have heaven until we get to heaven. The blessed things we hope for are in heaven. Our heavenly inheritance is now a matter of hope. And in the other world we will possess this inheritance. "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Peter 1:4). There is nothing in the nature of this inheritance that will be subject to corruption: it cannot be defiled by anything from the outside; and its joy will be everlasting. Heaven will be no disappointment to the child of God. As to its beauty, it is represented by the most precious things of earth, the most precious things the human mind can conceive of: gold, pearls and precious stones.

Heaven will be a place of freedom; freedom from so many things which have cursed the inhabitants of earth.

There will be freedom from bodily pain. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4). These former things are the very things with which we are all most familiar. Everybody knows the language of tears. We are all familiar with pain and disease and death. But all these enemies of human life will be forever outlawed from the heavenly precincts.

There will be freedom from poverty. Heaven will be a place of plenty. We cannot but think of the large areas of earth where poverty is indescribable. And even in this land of plenty, the poor can be found in large numbers. But there will be no meat and bread problem in the Father's house; no housing problem in the new earth; no tumble down shacks over there; no health problem, where there is no more pain.

There will be freedom from fear. This world is a place of fear and more fear. As I write men's hearts are failing them for fear of the things coming on the earth. There is much here to make afraid. Wars and rumors of wars shall continue unabated to the very end. Diplomatic discussions in the interest of peace are warring words which make for deeper hatred and greater fear among the nations. The red horse of war, the black horse of famine, and the pale horse of death still ride furiously.

But in heaven there will be none to make afraid. The very word fear will be blotted forever from our hearts. The fearful words of earth will have no place in the dictionary of heaven.

There will be freedom from sin. Here is the word that pinpoints all that makes for pain, and poverty, and fear. Heaven will be a holy place filled with holy people.

The Ground

3. The ground of our hope is Christ in His mediatorial work. We delight to sing: "On Christ the solid rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand."

Without Christ every man is hopeless. Hope not founded upon Christ and Him crucified is only an idle dream. He who pleads anything before God except the Lord Jesus Christ will find no acceptance with Him. The only voice to which the God of justice will listen is the voice of the blood of Christ, that blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.

Consider the state of the fallen angels and we see what our condition would be without the redemptive death of Christ. The angels had nobody to stand between them and the God of justice and so are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the day of judgment. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (II Peter 2:4).

By way of warning, we shall now point out some of the shifting sands upon which many are building their house of hope.

Many hope in the mere mercy of God apart from the mediation of Christ. This was the best hope of the writer before his conversion. He reasoned that, while he was a sinner, God was merciful, and that a merciful God would not punish him in hell. He failed to consider that God is just as well as merciful, and that God might give him justice instead of mercy. He failed to see what he now sees with sunlight clearness, that Christ is the one and only channel of mercy. Christ is the only mercyseat to which the sinner may come and find mercy with God. God out of Christ is not merciful, but is a consuming fire. "Whom God hath set forth to be a

propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3:25). The word translated propitiation in Rom. 3:25 is the same word which is translated mercyseat in Heb. 9:5. "And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly." Let the sinner try ever so hard and live ever so good, he will not find mercy with God unless he trusts God's Son.

Some hope for heaven in their common honesty and civility between man and man. They base their hope on their good citizenship. They pay their debts and try to be good neighbors, and vainly hope they will come out all right in the end. These things are good in their place, but no good for salvation and a hope for heaven.

Others hope in their descent from pious and godly parents. They forget that salvation is an individual blessing and does not run in the veins. They do not seem to realize that the family circle can be broken in eternity.

And still others hope in the externals of religion. Their hope is in the church and its ordinances. It is surprising the number of people who have no other hope than that they are members of a church and have subjected themselves to the ordinances of religion. Now, the ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper, are precious and should never be neglected. But they are not precious as the ground of hope. They are blessed symbols of the gospel of Christ, who is our hope. They are preaching ordinances. They proclaim the death and burial and resurrection of Christ, "Who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

We cannot but believe that those who find Christ precious as Saviour will find delight in observing the ordinances of His

church. But the ordinances must not be allowed to take the place of Christ in salvation.

CHAPTER III

HOPE THROUGH GRACE

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God ... hath given us good hope through grace" (II Thess. 2:16).

The good hope is through grace. The word rendered good, according to the scholars, means unfailling, bright, genuine, and beneficial. The good hope will not be disappointed; its benefits will be forthcoming in due time. There is no good hope through human merit. All men are sinners and cannot merit anything good from God.

In this chapter we want to consider some of the leading characteristics of the Christian hope.

1. It is the hope of the gospel. "And be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23). The gospel, in the power of the Spirit, not only begets faith and love; it also arouses hope. The gospel not only points back to the cross to what Christ did there, it also points to His coming again and to what He will do for us then. On the cross our Saviour bore the guilt of our sins and took them away from us, and He is coming again to take away the shame of sin and restore us to the image of God. With the guilt removed we are now justified; when the shame is removed we shall be glorified. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall

be like him; for we shall see Him as he is" (I John 3:2). "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4). The believer looks back to the cross as the ground of hope and forward to the fruition of hope.

2. It is the hope of Salvation. "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (I Thess. 5:8). Here salvation is put in the future. There is a very real sense in which we are not yet saved; we only hope to be saved. Hope implies there is an aspect of salvation we do not yet have. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. 13:11). Faith brings deliverance from guilt of sin which is justification. Hope is concerned about the deliverance from the shame and annoyance of sin. Our salvation is in three tenses: past, present, and future. The believer has been saved from the guilt and penalty of sin, so that he is no longer condemned, but justified from all things. "And by him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:39). He is being saved from the damning power of sin because he is no longer under law but under grace. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). And the believer is yet to be delivered from the very presence of sin, because Christ is coming to make him like Himself. "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20-21).

3. It is the hope of righteousness. "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal. 5:5). While the believer has the righteousness of Christ imputed to him by

faith, he still hungers and thirsts after personal righteousness. And this aspect of righteousness is only a matter of hope. The righteousness we now have by faith has a hope attached to it: the hope that we shall be personally righteous, the hope of being perfectly whole.

There is still another aspect of this hope of righteousness: the hope of a righteous society. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13). This earth is filled with unrighteousness, "for the whole world lieth in wickedness" (I John 5:19). There is unrighteousness in every realm of human activity. There is diplomatic unrighteousness at conference tables where international treaties are treated as scraps of paper. There is political unrighteousness when vital issues are subordinated to party interests. There is industrial unrighteousness, both on the part of labor and management, in which the poor are ground down and robbed of the fruits of their labor. There is social unrighteousness in which a man's bank account, rather than his character, is made the standard of measurement. There is ecclesiastical unrighteousness when a man's personality, rather than the truth he lives and preaches is made the controlling factor. There is governmental unrighteousness when, for the sake of taxes, men are licensed to sell alcohol as a beverage and thus do untold harm to millions. Or when the law winks at gambling in the parlor while the gamblers in the alley feel its iron hand. But a better day is coming, for "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 23:5-6).

It is the hope of His calling. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his

calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18). "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:4). Here is a twofold hope: God's hope and our hope. When God called us with the call of salvation, He had a definite purpose to glorify us and fit us for His holy presence, and since this was to be in the future it is referred to as the hope of His calling. And since the glory to which He called us is future in our realization and enjoyment, it is the hope of our calling.

Our calling, like our salvation, may be viewed from three angles. As to the past "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (I Peter 2:9). Concerning the present. "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (I Thes. 4:7). "But as he which hath called us is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (I Peter 1:15). "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (II Tim. 1:9). These verses emphasize our personal obligation to holy living. And as to the future we are told "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (I Thess. 2:12).

So the hope of HIS calling is His expectation of finding in us the glory to which He called us. And the hope of OUR calling is our enjoyment of the glory to which he called us. One of these days all of His people shall hear Him say, "Come enjoy the glory I meant for you when I called you."

5. It is the hope of glory. "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2). J.B. Phillips renders it: "Here we take our stand, in

happy certainty of the glorious things He has for us in the future." The man of the world may have more for the present, but the Christian is the only person with a future. The Christian is happy in his hope of being conformed to the image of Christ.

The hope of the atheist is that when he dies he will be like the horse or cow in death and be done for. The best hope of some is that when they die they will go to a place called purgatory and after so much prayers and payments and suffering, finally reach heaven. But there is little or no glory to such hopes as these. The glorious hope is that when we are absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord.

6. It is a living hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). Ours is a living hope in a dying world. It is no poor, pale ghost brightening and then fading; fainting and then reviving and then fainting again.

The poor worldling has his hopes, but they are dying hopes. The hope of the false professor is a mere illusion. A false hope may give as much pleasure as the true hope while it lives, but all false hopes will die in disappointment. A man puts his hope of heaven in his own character, or good works, or church membership, and is as happy as the man who has no hope except in Christ who put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. But the time will come when the hope of one will come to an end and the hope of the other will be realized in heaven. Every sinner needs to place his hope in someone who will not disappoint him. And such an one is Jesus Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

7. It is the blessed hope. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). The blessed hope is the hope of Christ's return. With His return all the things for which the believer longs and prays and struggles will be realized in happy enjoyment.

In all earthly hopes there is an element of unrest and uncertainty. He who hopes to become rich cannot be certain that his hope will be realized. He who hopes for continued good health cannot be certain that he will not soon be smitten with some fatal malady.

CHAPTER IV

HOPE WITH A FUTURE

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15:19).

It is a lesson hard to learn that the material and physical blessings of this life are not part of our salvation. These blessings, involving wealth and health, come to men indiscriminately; to the lost and saved alike. They come in the general providence of God. "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). Jesus Christ did not die to save us from the temporary effects of sin, but only from its eternal consequences. He did not die to keep us from being poor in the material things of earth. He did not die to guarantee us good health. Physical healing is no more in the atonement than is economic security. The writer believes in an atonement that actually atones, and if physical healing is in the atonement, the believers would never so much as have a headache. Bodily redemption is indeed in the atonement, but for the redemption of the body we must await our Lord's return. Believers may pray for health and for material blessings; not on the ground of the death of Christ, but according to the sovereign pleasure of God. John says that if we ask anything according to His will He heareth us.

Paul felt that he had a very poor salvation if he got all of it in this life, which ended by his head being chopped off by a Roman soldier. The martyrs had a sorry salvation if their hope ended with this present life. And we ourselves, who have suffered little for the sake of Christ, have a short and sorry salvation if it is limited to this present life. Our Father's plan is for us to bear the cross here and wear the crown yonder. If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him.

Paul is arguing the necessity of the resurrection to justify our salvation. If there is no resurrection, those fallen asleep in Christ are perished. Christ's resurrection was necessary in order to save us, and our own resurrection is essential to our salvation.

One of the chief errors of God's people is that they are not willing to wait for their inheritance; not willing to wait for the hope laid up for us in heaven. We put too much emphasis on physical and material things here and now. Esau could not wait for his birthright; he despised it because it was something future, and bartered it for a mess of pottage. He satisfied his stomach at the expense of his soul. He traded his glorious inheritance for a temporary snack.

CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT

To be content does not mean that the believer should do nothing to improve his lot on earth. This would preclude any effort of any sort for any purpose. This would paralyze all industry. But when the Christian has regulated his life by the word of God, in any or every business undertaking, he should be content with the results and not murmur or complain. Paul said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). It was something he had learned, not a natural virtue. "Let your conversation be without covetousness and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I

will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). "And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content" (I Tim. 6: 8).

CHRISTIAN JOY

The believer is to be happy in this life, but this happiness is not to be based upon physical and material blessings. Here is one reason why the saints are not happier: they are trying to find happiness in the things of earth - in the things that would make the world happy - in such things as wealth and health and worldly amusements. But Christian joy is a fruit of the Spirit and is based upon spiritual and eternal blessings.

The believer is to rejoice in the Lord. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe" (Phil. 3:1). He is to be happy that he has Christ. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. 1:30). But none of these is material or physical. They are spiritual and far more valuable than anything material or physical. In one of the Chapman-Alexander meetings, a poor paralytic was wheeled down the aisle and placed in front of the platform. The song leader looked down at him and asked for his favorite number. As quick as a flash, the helpless man replied, "Count Your Blessings"

The believer is to "rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). To have our name in the Lamb's book of life is so much better than to have it make the headlines or appear in the social column or Who's Who's.

We are to rejoice in hope. To rejoice in hope is not to rejoice in the possession of something, but in anticipation of something good. "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation"

(Rom. 12:12). If we will rejoice in hope of future good in heaven, we will be patient in times of trouble and adversity. We are to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. In our present conflict with sin we can be happy that the warfare will soon be over and we will reflect the glory of God in our very person.

We are to rejoice in tribulation and persecution, not because they are good in themselves. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17). "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:12).

A mother and little daughter stood near the tracks watching the train go by. "That train goes so fast," said the child. "Yes, that is the Lightning Express," replied the mother. "Does that train go to heaven, too?" inquired the child. Life is much like the Lightning Express. Is the train of your life on the way to heaven and eternal glory?

NOT A BED OF ROSES

The Christian life here on earth is not an easy life. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. As a general rule the Lord's people do not have the carefree and easy life men of the world enjoy. The Lord's people have conscious obligations that do not bother the world. Men of the world are free and easy - they have no church to support with its constant calls for money and time. They do not have to be pestered with a pastor who wants them to honor God with their lives and with the firstfruits of their increase. The Christian life is no bed of roses.

The lost man does not have to endure chastening from a heavenly Father. He knows nothing of the discipline that is necessary to a heavenly character. Every Christian ought to

thank God for being more concerned about his character than his comfort. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous" (Heb. 12:11).

The prosperity of the wicked puzzled David, and was about to make a skeptic of him; but when he went to God's house and learned about their latter end, he understood. " When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end" (Psa. 73:16-17).

PAUL'S EXPERIENCE

Paul was not only speaking of the saints in general, but of himself in particular, when he said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15:19). These words are far more significant in the light of his experiences than ours. What did Paul get in this life? From his heavenly Father he got a thorn in the flesh, and other disciplinary experiences, to keep him humble. From the churches he received little, and from the Corinthians not a penny; he even robbed other churches to serve them. From false apostles he received slander and bitter opposition to the truth he preached. From weak-kneed brethren he met with neglect and lack of appreciation. From Demas, his fair weather friend, he got a cold shoulder. Demas forsook him in a pinch. From the Jews he received five beatings of thirty-nine stripes. Paul was a Roman citizen, but what did he get from the Roman government? He got free board in a dungeon for awhile and then the headman's ax. Paul faced perils everywhere: "In perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that

which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (II Cor. 11:26-28).

Paul triumphed over all the grievous and painful ills of life because of his hope of a better day. He had pinned his faith and hope to One who would not disappoint him, but after the ills and sorrows of life were over, would receive him into glory. How miserable he would have been apart from the good hope through grace.

Theodore Roosevelt and an humble preacher came home from a trip abroad on the same ship. A great, cheering crowd was on hand to greet the president, but nobody to welcome the preacher. For a moment he was resentful, and then he said to himself, "I am not home yet." Let the humble servant of God remember this when he feels tempted to envy the world's heroes. He may be assured of a welcome when he is received into the everlasting habitations.

CHAPTER V

PERFECT HOPE

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 1:13).

Human salvation is a long-range project. God does not fit men for heaven overnight, or even in a fortnight. Salvation is a long, drawn-out process, when considered in its fullest sense and in its many aspects. The race, in the first Adam, fell through one offense; the new race, in the second Adam, is saved from many offences. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:12-19).

As an experience, salvation has its beginnings in the new birth and is fully realized in glorification, when the believer is settled with Christ in glory. And the whole project is a gracious work; it is grace from beginning to end.

Grace never leaves any believer stranded on the sands of time. Grace never abandons any project. The grace that justifies will surely glorify. "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30). He who makes his calling and election sure may also be assured of a home in glory. With faith in what Christ did at His first coming you may hope perfectly that He will finish the work in you with glory at His second coming. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). Men begin and fail to finish. As one drives over the country he sees unfinished projects here and there. Years ago the government proposed to dig a canal across the middle of Florida from the Atlantic to the Gulf. The work was actually begun, but soon abandoned. And there are the abutments to bridges never built over the canal that was never dug. And these abutments stand as silent and solemn monuments either to the folly of human wisdom or to the lack of human power. But human salvation is a Divine undertaking in which there is neither lack of wisdom nor of power. Grace flowing through Calvary is mightier than all our sins. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). The

grace that put us in the way will take us all the way to glory. Grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace in the fruit.

FAITH AND HOPE

Faith and hope are much the same, but like the sides of a coin, they face in opposite directions. Faith looks back to the cross and reaps justification; hope looks forward to the throne and reaps glorification. Salvation in its present tense is by faith; in the future tense it is by hope. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8:24).

Hope presupposes faith. Logically faith comes first and hope follows. Apart from faith in Christ and His cross there could be no real hope of glory. No man has any true hope of heaven who does not trust what Christ did at Calvary. All hope built upon faith in anything save the cross of Christ is a vain hope.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). The Greek word translated substance means literally, that which lies under. So faith is under hope to support it. Faith is the foundation of hope. Or, as some render it, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for." It is like this: God makes a promise, faith depends upon what God says, and hope looks forward to the fulfilment of the promise. Hope has nothing to rest upon except God's word. It is said of Abraham "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be" (Rom. 4:18). "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:5-6). When Abraham was childless, with no hope in the laws of nature, God pointed him to the stars and told him his

seed would be like them for number. Abraham considered the circumstances and saw no hope of a child, but he believed God and hoped for a posterity. And this faith was reckoned unto him for righteousness. And this marks the day of Abraham's salvation. Later on Abraham's faith was severely tested and found true. In Gen. 22, he is told to offer his son Isaac in sacrifice, the very son through whom his descendants should come. To every purpose and intent, Abraham killed Isaac. "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:19).

In the verse before us (Heb. 11:1) faith is further defined as "the evidence of things not seen." The word for evidence is better rendered "conviction." It is like this; God speaks of a coming event for which there is no precedent, and nothing in nature to indicate such a thing. But faith takes God at His word and is convinced that it shall be as God has spoken. This is illustrated in the case of Noah. Noah is warned by God of a coming flood, and is promised safety in an ark. By faith Noah took warning and built the ark. He must have met with sneers and ridicule from his neighbors, as they reasoned from science and history the impossibility of such a thing as the world being destroyed by a flood of waters. There was no precedent to such a thing and no signs of a coming flood. "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen. 6:8). "And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him" (Gen. 7:5). "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7).

PERFECT HOPE

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 1:13). This makes it an exhortation to perfect hope. It does not refer to the duration of hope, but to its quality. It is not how long we hope but how well we hope. Just as faith can grow, so hope can improve its station in life. And the stronger the faith the brighter the hope.

1. Having girded up the loins of your minds. Here is one condition of perfect hope - the loins of the mind must be girded. The metaphor fits in with the Eastern or oriental dress of Peter's day. A man wore a long, flowing robe that would tangle his feet when he ran or worked, so that it was necessary to gird it up and belt it around his waist. And that is what Peter says must be done with our minds if we are to hope perfectly. The mind is like a long, flowing robe; it has the tendency to hang so loosely that the briars of sinful and foolish thinking will catch it and hinder our progress in spiritual things. We use different metaphors today with the same meaning. We would say, "Put on your thinking cap," or "use your head," or "pull yourself together." Robbed of all metaphor or figure it means, "Put your mind to work when you are occupied with religion."

Here is one of the greatest needs in religion today, the need to think. Most of us live more on frames and feelings than on the truth about Divine things. We go to church to feel rather than to think. Feeling has its place, but feeling not based upon truth is dangerous.

Failure to think will keep us in the crib and high chair spiritually. The present day tendency in every realm is for a few to think for all. The thinkers produce the mechanical devices and the rest use them as mechanical brains.

The tendency is to read books that require no thinking. This is why the newspaper and popular magazines are so avidly read while the classics are ignored. This is why popular books of sermons are read while theology goes unread. If we are going to cultivate perfect hope concerning the future we will have to do some thinking over what Christ has already done. A perfect hope will not result from wrong or loose thinking on the question of the atonement. Christ on the cross was rendering satisfaction to Divine justice, so that God might be just in saving the sinner. On the cross Christ was meeting the demands of a Surety and paying our sin-debt. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). The substitutionary and satisfaction theory of the atonement is the only theory that rests on righteous principles. As our substitute Christ bore the penalty of our sins in His own body. Christ is not only mediator between God and men; He is also the mediator between a just God and a merciful God. In Him "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10). In the death of Christ, God was just towards sin and gracious toward the sinner. Salvation is a gift to us because Jesus paid it all in the coin of His own precious blood. Call it slaughter house religion, if you please, but the Bible says. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 8:22).

Another condition to perfect hope is to be sober-minded. The mind can be intoxicated with other things besides beer and whiskey. It can be intoxicated with pleasure or fashion or business or some hobby. We need to do more sober thinking on eternal matters.

There is the tendency to live on stimulants both physically and spiritually. Much ill health physically comes from what we eat. And it is the same spiritually. There are religious stimulants that have no real food value for the Soul. The pulpit is too

often a bar where stimulants are served, instead of a table where food is spread.

To be sober does not mean to be sour and gloomy or always in tears. It does not forbid laughter and joy, but foolish talking and vulgar joking and frivolous jesting so prevalent in these days. To be sober means to shun the superficial and artificial and aim at reality. To be sober means a deep experience of the grace of God in Christ.

MORE GRACE TO COME

We are exhorted to hope perfectly in the grace being brought to us at the second coming of our Lord. Salvation is by grace from beginning to end. Grace planned the way, provided the way, put us in the way, helps us by the way, and takes us all the way to glory. Peter thinks of the apocalypse of glory, which is the crown manifestation of grace, as rushing towards us through the ages, and it will be here some day. So certain is this grace that Peter thinks of it as being on the way.

How glad we are that there is more grace to come! We are not self-sufficient; we cannot walk alone; we cannot make our way to heaven; grace must bring heaven to us. Grace will come and perfect God's purpose concerning us. We shall yet be conformed to the image of God's Son. Someone has said that God was so well pleased with His only begotten Son, that He determined to make every other son just like Him. It will be glory for us when we shall see Him as He is and be like Him.

HOPE'S PURIFYING EFFECT

John tells us that this hope of being like Christ has a purifying effect. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). Does this mean that God's people, here and now, can be as pure as Jesus Christ

actually and literally, No; in aim and desire, Yes. In the absolute sense, No; in the relative sense, Yes.

The hope, the well founded expectation of being like Him in heaven makes us want to be, and strive to be like Him here on earth. He who really hopes to be like Christ yonder will try to be like Him here. God will reward us eternally by making us what we now want to be. This earth is the training ground for heavens activities. We practice here for the performance there. It is here we acquire our love for God: there we shall enjoy Him to the fullest and forever. And this wicked world is the very kind of place to be in to make us long for heaven. Too many of us want to be on dress parade instead of being in the training camp or on the firing line. He who thinks he can love the sinful things of this world, and all at once have a love for God in heaven when he leaves this earth has a sad surprise awaiting him. There is no magic in coffins and shrouds and graves to make men different from their former selves. Death will indeed release us from fleshly hindrances and limitations, but it will put no new desires in us. If we never learn to love God on this earth, we will never learn to love Him after we leave here.

Now hope in the general sense, just the mere hope of heaven as a place of beauty and plenty, will not make us very holy or very active. The mere desire to reach a land of gold and pearls and precious stones will not make as very godly. Many are lusting after such things who have never been born from above, and have no interest in Jesus Christ. And I think it is this thing about hope that has led the poets to criticise and ridicule. It has been said that hope may smile and wave her golden curls, but she is not in the way of doing much work in the world. But the hope of being like Christ, the hope of perfection will make any person a much better person.

"Hope on, hope on, O troubled heart

If doubts and fears overtake thee,
Remember this-the Lord hath said,
He never will forsake thee;

Then murmur not, still bear thy lot,
Nor yield to care or sorrow;
Be sure the clouds that frown today
Will break in smiles tomorrow."

"Hope on, hope on, though dark and deep
The shadows gather over thee
Be not dismayed; thy Saviour holds
The lamp of life before thee;

And if He will that thou today
Should'st tread the vale of sorrow;
Be not afraid, but trust and wait;
The sun will shine tomorrow."

"Hope on, hope on, go bravely forth
Through trial and temptation
Directed by the worth of truth,
So full of consolation;

There is a calm for every storm,
A joy for every sorrow
A night from which the soul shall wake
Too hail an endless morrow."