

# The Blessed Hope (Sunday, May 20, 2001)

## [1 John 3:3](#)

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*And now, dear children, continue in Him, so that when He appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at his coming. . . . How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

1 John 2:28, 3:1, 3

In our study of this passage, 1 John 2:28-3:3, we have already examined a number of points. We have said that we are beloved of God, that we are born of God, and, therefore, that our behavior is godly. In this study we want to speak about the blessed hope of the church, which is the second coming of Christ.

In the Greek we find three words referring to Christ's second coming—*parousia*, *apokalupsis*, *epiphaneia*. In Titus 2:13 Paul says the church is waiting for its "blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our God and Savior Jesus Christ." And in 1 John 3:3 John writes, "Everyone who has this hope in him." What is the hope? The hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, of our seeing him as he is and of our being like him. The consummation of God's redemption will take place at that moment when Jesus Christ comes again.

According to the Bible, those who do not believe in Jesus Christ are hopeless. As a physician recently remarked, "The pagan's hope is in Jack Daniels and Jim Beam." Apparently this man has experience in watching people, particularly older people, use alcohol to drown out all painful issues in their lives. Such people's gods are dumb idols of their own hands, as Isaiah says. They give themselves wholly to eating, drinking, marrying, planting, harvesting, buying, selling, and finally, cruising and carousing. Such people's hope is only in this life and so they are to be pitied. They dread death and the judgment of God; therefore, they dread the second coming of Christ. But a Christian's hope is in the second coming of Jesus Christ.

### **What Is Christian Hope?**

Christians are people of hope because they have trusted in the living and true God. The psalmist says, "For You have been my hope, O Sovereign Lord" (Psalm 71:5). Jeremiah calls God, "O Hope of Israel, its Savior in times of distress" (Jeremiah 14:8). Isaiah says,

"Even youths grow weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:30-31).

Objectively, Christian hope has to do with the future things, the invisible realities, those aspects of our salvation not yet realized by us. It has to do with the second coming of Jesus Christ, with the disclosure of God's glory to the whole world. It has to do with our glorification and our obtaining a glorious body like unto His glorious body. It has to do with seeing Jesus Christ face to face and experiencing the fullness of our salvation. Subjectively, Christian hope is a heart attitude of eager expectation and longing for these things.

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul used an expression that gives a certain definition of Christian hope. In 1 Corinthians 9:10 he says, "Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest." A farmer works very hard. He gets up very early and he is out in the field plowing and planting, weeding and irrigating, fertilizing, watching, and waiting. Why does he do all these things? He has the hope of a great harvest.

In Romans 8:24 Paul tells us, *Tê gar elpidi esôthêmen*—"For we were saved in hope." What Paul means is that we were saved in the past and we are saved now, but the final installment of our salvation is not yet realized. Something more is going to happen to us: we are going to experience the grand finale of our salvation at the second coming of Christ.

What is the grand finale of our salvation? In Romans 8:23 we are told it is "our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." Now, take a good look at our bodies. Every day we are disappointed by what we see in the mirror. But if we are Christians, we will be filled with hope because we have been saved in the hope of adoption, which is the redemption of our bodies. We know from the Bible that one day the Lord Jesus Christ shall come, we shall see Him as He is, and He shall transform our lowly bodies to conform them to His own glorious body.

In 1 Peter 1:3 the apostle Peter tells us that God in His great mercy "has given us new birth into a living hope," or "a hope that is living" (*eis elpida zôsan* in the Greek), which is then described by him as an inheritance safely deposited in heaven for us. Peter then describes it as our salvation which is to be made manifest at the last time.

In other words, if we are Christians, then we can glory in the fact that God, by His mighty Spirit, has done a work in us by giving us new birth. But we must realize that this is not a complete work. We have been saved in hope of this adoption, this resurrection, this transformation, this redemption of our body.

We must also realize that Christian hope is not an illusion. It is a precious inheritance. It is safely kept in heaven until it is revealed to us. When that happens, we will enter into

this inheritance to enjoy it. "So we will be with the Lord forever," Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:18. This is our living hope.

We know what dead hope is all about. Suppose you were preparing for your wedding. Everything was planned, but all of a sudden the man decides he is not going to marry you. That is what is called a dead hope. Or suppose you got married and after fifteen years of trying to have a child, your wife gets pregnant. Oh, what great hope you will experience until, after only three months she miscarries. That is dead hope. Or suppose you were slated for promotion. You get all excited about it, only to discover after two months that the company is going bankrupt. Or suppose you were sick, but the doctor examined you and said there is no big problem and everything will be all right, only to find out later that you have a terminal disease and will die in six weeks. All of these are examples of dead hope.

But the Bible tells us we who are Christians have a living hope! It is not a hope-so. The word "hope" in the English language has come to have the meaning of "hope-so," but in the Greek it means unconditional certainty. That is why Paul could write in Romans 5:5, "And hope does not disappoint us." This world's hope will disappoint us, but Christian hope does not.

In fact, this hope is so certain that Paul tells us we rejoice in tribulations also in view of this hope. It is not that we put up with troubles, but rejoice in them because our eyes are fixed on the invisible reality of our final salvation. So in 1 Peter 1 Peter says we rejoice with an inexpressible and glorious joy, even in the midst of fiery trials. That is the definition of Christian hope for those who have trusted in Jesus Christ.

### *The Content of Christian Hope*

What is the content of our hope as Christians? First of all, we must realize that the content is not exactly defined by what is going to happen to us. In other words, there is something greater involved in Christian hope than our salvation. What is that greater thing? The glory of God. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul writes about about Jesus Christ putting everything, excluding God Himself, under His feet, in subjection to him. Then in verse 28 Paul writes, "When He has done this, then the Son Himself will be made subject to Him who put everything under Him, so that God may be all in all."

But our salvation is a sub-idea under the large conception called the kingdom of God, the glory of God, the undisputed reign of God—this cosmic and global exhibition of this great glory of God, which everyone shall see. So in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 we read, "But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet." So our hope consists in our salvation.

In Titus 1:2 we read that this hope also consists of eternal life. Additionally, in Titus 2:11-13 we read, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the

glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Notice that phrase "the blessed hope." In other words, this hope brings blessing after blessing after blessing to us. Notice also that this passage affirms the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the great God, the Saviour, Jesus Christ. There is no other Saviour.

In Romans 8:18-21 we read more about the content of our hope. In verse 18 Paul writes, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Yes, we have troubles and tribulations. But our certain hope is that there is a glory that will be revealed in our being. In verse 19 we read, "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed." Hope here is the revelation, the unveiling of the glory of the people of God. In verses 20-21 we read, "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the One who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated. . . ." Another aspect of this hope is that the entire cosmos will be renovated. But not only will the creation be liberated "from its bondage to decay, it will also be "brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God," or "the glory of the liberty of the children of God." The outstanding aspect of our salvation is the glory of the liberty of the children of God—glorification, in other words.

The second coming of Christ is part of our hope. When the Thessalonian church asked Paul about people dying in the church, Paul wrote back, saying, "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep or grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope." Every unbeliever in Jesus Christ is without God and without hope. "We believe that Jesus died and rose again," Paul continued, "and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him." In other words, because Jesus died and rose again, we also will die with Him and rise with Him. Paul continued, "According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven. . . ."

Do you believe the Lord will come down from heaven? Do you live your life every day in the hope of it? Do you make your decisions, spend your money, and spend your time in the light of this glorious fact? And how shall He come? Paul writes, "with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." This is our hope. "After that," Paul continues, "we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." No more separation. The bride and the Bridegroom will be together forever. This is the great hope of the church. So Paul concludes, "Therefore, encourage each other with these words." What great hope!

In 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 Paul writes, "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable," that is glorification, "and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'" This is what our hope is all about.

In Philippians 3:20-21 Paul writes, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body." Jesus Christ has received all authority, and as the Sovereign Lord of the universe, He will use that power also for our sakes.

In 1 John 3:2 we find another aspect of Christian hope: "We shall see Him as He is." You see, no man has seen God as He is. Why? We have sin in us. But one day the sin itself will be removed and we will be given the first glimpse of Jesus Christ as He is. Then will all the longings of our human soul be satisfied. Man is not created to find satisfaction from drinking Jack Daniels and Jim Beam. No, he is created to live in the presence of God and worship him and rejoice in his presence. This is our living hope.

There is another component to our hope as Christians, one which we long to see take place. It is the defeat of all his enemies. If you are not a Christian, you must tremble at this profound statement from the pen of Paul: "God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power on the day He comes to be glorified in His holy people. . . ." (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

### ***The Basis of Our Hope***

In 1 John 3:3 we read, "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." On what is our Christian hope based? Is it based on some merit of ours? Is it based on our nobility, our education, our accomplishment, our scientific endeavors, our greatness, or our military power? Oh, no. The basis of our hope is Jesus Christ Himself. It has nothing to do with ourselves.

In Romans 5:1-2 we read, ". . . we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And in verse 5 we read, "And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us."

What is the basis of our hope? The love of God demonstrated in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In verse 6 we read, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." In the Greek text this sentence begins with the word "for," meaning it is giving the reason that this hope does not disappoint us. What is the reason? It is fixed upon what God has done in Jesus Christ.

So we read, "at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." Christ died when we were powerless, when we were ungodly, when we were sinners, when we were enemies of God. The truth, then, is that our Christian hope has nothing to do with what we are or what we have done, but it has everything to do with God the Father and God the Son. It has everything to do with the incarnation of Jesus Christ, for His person and His work secured this hope for us. Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. That is why John wrote, "Everyone who has this hope in Him. . ." Jesus is the basis of our hope.

### *The Pledge of Our Salvation*

As we said already, our Christian hope has to do with the future salvation. However, God has given us a guarantee which we enjoy now. And as we enjoy this foretaste of heaven, our hearts are looking forward to the fullness of it.

What is the guarantee God has given? We read about it in Romans 5:5, where Paul wrote, "And hope does not disappoint us. . . ." Our hope is not going to disappoint us, because even now we are experiencing something. What is it? "because God has poured out His love into our hearts." Here we find an interesting Greek word *ekkechutai*, "poured out." It is in the perfect tense and speaks about a mighty effusion of something. It is not a little something being poured out but it is a huge, massive outpouring. And what is being poured out? Not our love for God but God's love for us. Now, we know that our love for God fluctuates, but God's love never changes. So this is speaking about God's love for us poured out in mighty effusion and the perfect tense of the verb means we are always in the condition of being filled with His love. There is no change taking place. God's love for us is always full. And who is the agent of this outpouring? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the down payment, the deposit, of our salvation, the guarantee that the full payment is coming. That is why Paul can write that hope will not disappoint us. We have received the pledge of the Holy Spirit. We received the firstfruit which points to a great harvest that is coming.

If you are a Christian, you have received the Holy Spirit, who has poured out God's love into your heart. This hope affects the whole person. This is why we rejoice in tribulations also. We experience the constancy, the unchangeableness of God's love for us through the Holy Spirit.

This Holy Spirit is called *arrabôn*, which in modern Greek has to do with an engagement ring. So we can say that God has already given us an engagement ring, a symbol pointing to a wedding that will take place in the future. There is a wedding day coming and the bride is getting ready. She is not questioning God's love because she already received the wedding ring of the Holy Spirit!

In Romans 8:23 Paul tells us, "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." You see, we have the engagement ring, the Holy Spirit, and yet we live in a

body of sin. What are we doing while we wait? Groaning for that day in which we will experience the fullness of our salvation.

In Romans 8:11 we read, "And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through the Spirit who lives in you." That is why Paul could write that "the hope does not disappoint us." That is why he could say, "We rejoice in the midst of sufferings."

When God gives us an engagement ring, we can rely on one truth: He is faithful and He will do what He has promised. A man may change his mind, a woman may change her mind, but God is faithful and immutable. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

### ***The Production of Hope Through Suffering***

The fifth point we want to examine is the role of tribulation in bringing about hope in us. In Romans 5:2 we read, "Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

Paul says, "because we know." You see, Christian people are not feeling-driven people. They are knowing people—knowing God's process, God's plan, God's desire, God's purpose. They are learning people, always striving to learn the real thing, which is God's truth. The Bible tells us, if we are Christians, we have the mind of Christ; thus, we learn, we know, and we study. So when he studied the program of God, Paul came to this realization: We rejoice in tribulations and trials—even fiery trials, as Peter says—yet even in the midst of fiery trials, we can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Is Paul speaking about an experience we will have in heaven? No! He is speaking about rejoicing in this life on earth now. And if, in the context of fiery trials, we can rejoice with inexpressible joy, can you imagine the type of joy that awaits us when we are glorified?

So he says, "We rejoice in tribulations, in trials, in pain." These tribulations must be interpreted, not as punishment that God has meted out for disobedience, but as trials that we experience because we are Christians. For Christ's sake, therefore, we experience troubles, trials, persecutions, and opposition of the world and the enemy.

So Paul says, "We know. . . ." In other words, we can rejoice in our sufferings because we know the plan and purpose of it all. Where did Paul know this from? From God's word. So he writes that tribulations, trials, and pain produce endurance. Endurance in this context does not mean a patience of passivity but of activity. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 Paul writes about the Thessalonians' "work produced by faith, labor prompted by love, and . . . endurance inspired by hope." So there is the ability to endure pressure, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the ability to be extremely productive. In other words, Paul is

speaking about active endurance. In fact, when you study the life of Paul, you notice that he himself was most productive at the same time when he was suffering the most. Christians endure. We don't fall. We stand under pressure because the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

If tribulations produce perseverance, what does perseverance produce? Approvedness. That is what the Greek word means. Who is doing the approving? God. In the English translation it says character, but it means having God-approved character. Another term we can use is holiness.

Finally, we are told that character produces hope. Hope has to do with the world to come—the invisible, eternal realities; the hope of the glory of God. So, then, in the life of God's people, sufferings have a role to play. It is an ingredient that is necessary in bringing about perfection in our lives. Suffering is the way God turns our faces away from this world to focus on the world to come.

In Luke 13 we read about a woman who was bent over and unable to straighten up for eighteen years. What was the only thing she could see? The ground. This was a work of the devil. You see, the devil causes people to bend downward and worship creation rather than the Creator.

Through sufferings, then, God's hand reaches out to us and turns our heads away from creation to the Creator. Or, to use another analogy, a professional photographer will use his hands to focus a camera. When he looks through the lens, everything may look at little cloudy at first. So he must focus the camera until what he sees becomes crisp and clear. In the same way, through sufferings the hand of God focuses our souls toward the eternal, toward the authentic, toward the everlasting, toward the glory of God, toward our salvation.

Paul says we rejoice in tribulations. We can do so because we are people of the word and understand God's plan. God has determined to make us conformable to His Son so that He will have a people who will enjoy eternal life with Him. He is going to make it happen. There is no problem He cannot handle; every rebellion will be dealt with. He has purposed it and so it will happen.

What, then, is the role of pain and suffering? It helps us to focus on God. In Colossians 3:1-2 we read, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."

Suppose you go to a doctor and when the report comes back, you learn that you have a serious disease that is going to kill you. I think you will have a different way of viewing reality from that point on. It will be different from the previous way of living. All of a sudden, the hand of God comes and focuses your vision. Now it is all crisp and clear. And if you are a child of God, from that point on you will begin to think about God and heaven more earnestly. You will begin to get into the word of God, and the word of God

will no longer be boring but bring you great comfort. Prayer will go from being a boring activity to being vital communion with God. As death approaches, the focus will get clearer and clearer.

### *Conclusion*

John said, "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure." Let me ask you, then: Where is your hope? We need to examine ourselves and see whether it is placed in God or in this creation.

The unbelieving world hopes only in this world; therefore they are of all people most to be pitied. What is the final answer of some? Jack Daniels and Jim Beam. Get drunk, in other words. That is the final refuge, the final hope, for many people. But Paul said don't get drunk with wine but be filled with the Holy Spirit.

What about you? Is your hope in God? If your hope is in anything else, it is going to be taken away from you. Your wife will be taken away from you, your children will be taken away from you, your husband taken away from you, your investment taken away from you. All of a sudden these things will be gone, for they are not eternal.

"Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself even as He is pure." What was the hope John was speaking about? The parousia, the coming of the Lord. What was the hope? That we shall see Him as He is. What was the hope? That when we see Him, we will be like Him and will remain with Him forever and ever. That is the Christian's hope.

Yes, we are dying. We need no proof to convince anyone of that. But if we are Christians, we are also living, for God has given us the gift of eternal life. This is the greatest gift God can give us, making those who are rebels, ungodly, and wicked to be children of God and permitting them to live in his presence forever and ever.

*Where, then, is your hope? Is God your heart-consuming concern, that you can look at death itself and say, "O Death, where is your sting? Where is your victory?" We should not easily conclude that we are Christians on our way to heaven. If these things do not make any impression on you, it means you are not a Christian. What, then, should you do? Cry out to God! The Bible tells us, "Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." When you do so, the love of God will be poured out into your heart by the Holy Spirit and you can rejoice at all times, even in the midst of great sufferings.*

*May God help us all to put our hope and trust in Him today that we may look forward to the day when we experience the fullness of salvation through our Saviour Jesus Christ!  
Amen.*