

Blessed Hope

By Rodney Nulph

How futile life would be without real hope! Hope is cause for joy (Romans 15:13)! Little wonder then why many in our world lack joy. Sadly, far too many people live day by day not ever discovering real hope. Real hope, in contrast to false hope, is anticipation, a surety. It is **not** a “wish” or “guess,” but rather it is a sure guarantee. According to God’s Word, real hope involves at least three concepts.

Firstly, real hope involves a **condition**. Hope can be lost by a person walking away from the truth of God’s Word. “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel...” (Colossians 1:23a). The conditional “if” is a serious part of lasting hope. My eternal hope depends upon my everyday obedience. If a person decides to walk away from hope, hope is gone until that person decides to come back. Thankfully, God is always waiting for the apostate’s return (Luke 15:11ff).

Secondly, real hope involves an **expectation**. Far too many Christians face each day as though they “may have hope” or they “wish they had hope.” However, real biblical hope is not a wish or a guess, but it is a promise! What kind of life would the Christian’s life be if we only guessed or wished for our eternal hope? John promised, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; **that ye may know that ye have eternal life...**” (1 John 5:13a). Our hope in Christ is as sure as anything of which we can be assured! “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2). “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” (Hebrews 6:18-19). If you are faithful to Christ, you must be “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Lastly, real hope involves a **foundation**. The difference between the Christian’s hope and the “hope” of the world is that the Christian’s hope is undergirded and protected by a sure foundation (contrast Ephesians 2:12 with Ephesians 2:20ff; cf. 1 Peter 1:3). The fact that Jesus is the Son of God secures and strengthens the hope of the one who belongs to Him.

Life can now be lived with joy and peace because of the hope we have in Christ. Oh that all would have this hope! **The difference between a futile life and a fantastic life centers on real hope.** “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” (Romans 15:13).

Following Jesus While Carrying Burdens

By Ralph Clevinger

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus gathered disciples by saying, “Follow me” (Mark 1:17; John 1:43; Luke 5:27). Each man left his old life to begin a new one following Jesus. Our Lord invited anyone to be His disciple by denying oneself, taking up a cross and following Him (Matthew 16:24). However, there were two individuals who did not heed the invitation during Jesus’ earthly ministry (Mark 10:21-22; Luke 9:59-60).

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the apostles (John 21). He asked Peter three times, “Do you love me?” Each time, Peter confirmed his love for Jesus. Each time, Jesus gave Peter a task to complete. After the third time, Jesus informed Peter of the type of death he would eventually suffer for Christ’s sake. Jesus invited Peter to “Follow me” once again. Peter saw John after he understood the suffering he would endure. He asked Jesus about John and if he would suffer the same. Jesus responded, “If I will that he remains till I come, what is that to you? You follow me” (John 21:22). In other words, “Focus on Me, not John.”

The apostle Paul encouraged the Galatian brethren to “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). Some of the brethren were overtaken in trespasses. They needed someone to help restore their relationship to Christ. Paul cautioned those who sought erring brethren to use a ‘spirit of gentleness considering themselves lest they also be tempted’ (Galatians 6:1). Later, he emphasized, “For each one shall bear his own load” (Galatians 6:5). Each of the brethren in Galatia had his own burden whether he struggled with sin

or not. Just because the Galatian brethren's burdens were not the same did not mean they did not have a burden to bear.

What a reminder! There are times in our lives when we desire *fairness*. We may look around and observe the perceived ease of others while considering the hard time we face. We may even judge others because they are not behaving in a way we would desire. However, as Jesus' disciple, we are to be following Jesus. We each have our own cross to carry (i.e., burdens), just like Peter, Paul and the Galatian brethren. **We lose sight of Jesus when we get overly concerned with earthly matters.** Let us maintain our focus on Jesus and help ease the burdens of others along the way.