

Hope

It was during the middle of last year that I first began thinking about “Hope”. As part of our Men’s Group bible study, we have a break between studies when we each share songs/items of music that resonate with us. One that I latched on to was the Stuart Townend song “There is a hope”. In a commentary on it, Stuart said that this was a subject that is not often talked about these days but is central to the gospel story and indeed, during Covid has become more pertinent to our thinking.

So then, when Tim first asked me some three months ago to take the services today, this subject was high on my list, and decided upon within a couple of days of being asked. I realise that Tim after that time, he has referred to the word a number of times in his messages on the resurrection and I am careful to try and not to go over again what he did.

There are lots of references to hope in scripture – somewhat over 260. **I promise not to talk about them all today.**

The timing of Tim’s request also pre-dated all that has subsequently been happening to Dorothy in particular, but these events have only served to strengthen its meaningfulness.

So, I would like to share a few of these scriptures that deal with Christian hope, in the hope that this might encourage each one who hears these scriptures.

I think that it’s important to understand that Christian hope is not just wishful thinking.

It’s even more than just a desire, even a deep desire, for some spiritual good for yourself or others. For instance, Paul “hoped” to send Timothy to the Philippians – very good but this still doesn’t totally hit the mark.

The hope of the Christian is strongly linked with faith in Hebrews 11:1 when the writer says “Now faith is **being sure of what we hope for** and certain of what we do not see”.

There is a certainty about Christian hope that goes beyond anything the world can offer.

So then, lets look at some of the scriptures that talk about this sort of hope.

Our hope is grounded in God

Psalm 39:7 (NIV) But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you.

Psalm 56:11 (NIV) In God I trust and am not afraid. What can man do to me?

It’s not a case of **what** am I looking for in this life to bring contentment, satisfaction, supplying of all my needs or greeds. It should be a case of WHO I am looking to. Our hope is in the One who made heaven and earth and who upholds the universe by the word of his power. There is no one greater than He. There is none can overcome Him. Is there any wonder that the Psalmist says In God I trust. Jesus reminded us that even the very hairs on our head are numbered. He (God) knows in advance what we need.

Hope is not dependent on us – what we do or how we feel - we are held by God’s great love and compassion

Lamentations 3:21-23 (NIV) Yet this I call to mind and therefore **I have hope**: Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

You know, the scripture also says that He (God) does not deal with us as we deserve. Instead, he remembers that we are as grass Psalm 103:8-14 (NIV) tells us

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

Hope is not dependant on us – what we are or what we are not, what we have done or not done but on God Almighty and His compassion towards us which never fail.

Nothing you can do
Could make Him love you more
And nothing that you've done
Could make Him close the door
Because of His great love
He gave His only Son
Everything was done
So you would come

Hope is an antidote to shame/disappointment

Romans 5:5 (NIV) And **hope** does not put us to shame (does not disappoint us), because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

My father used to say “While some people claim that Christianity has been tried and has failed, I think rather it’s just never been tried.” In 78 years of life, I have found that **when I seek to follow Christ and His word**, I have never found that I have needed to feel ashamed of what I have done or disappointed that I might have somehow missed out on some excitement or other which might well have led me away from the Lord. I can recall lots of times when I have not followed Christ and now have cause to be ashamed. I can tell you, the older you get, the more you have to remember. Better never to have done certain things than to now remember them with shame. How blessed to know, however, that the past has been dealt with at the cross. How blessed to let the hope within us keep us from all wrong.

Have you ever been ashamed? Was it ever because you were following Christ? Other people might like to hold us up to ridicule and shame but that's different and before God we are blameless.

Christian hope is an anchor for our lives

Hebrews 6:19 (NIV) We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,

What is this hope – the hope of eternal life in Christ – the fact that we have access to the presence of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

What happens when things start to go wrong – in a fallen world things will go wrong. When events seem to want to overwhelm us, hope helps us stand firm in our faith and trust in God.

Jesus likened it to building our lives on the rock – Jesus Himself.

Storms do come, we are not absolved of them - Dorothy and several others in our congregation.

In all of this “He’s our rock, He’s our fortress, He’s our deliverer, In Him will I trust”

Hope sustains (closely related to anchor)

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you **hope and a future**. Spoken to the people of God during their exile in

When I think of how hope sustains, I think of **Corrie ten Boom** who endured the horrors of Ravensbrück concentration camp. Her sister died there. Despite the suffering, she was sustained and was able to tell people for the rest of her life :-“There is no pit so deep, that God's love is not deeper still.” God forbid that we should ever have to endure such horror but should we have to do, we can trust God to sustain, whatever the future holds.

It helps us deal with sorrow and loss

1 Thess 4 :13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no **hope**.

When loss comes, we inevitably feel out of control, bereft even BUT, for the Christian, grieving is not like those who have no hope.

My family

Hope is a purifying agent

1 John 3:2-3 (NIV)

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, **we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.** All who have this **hope** in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Holiday in UK - If you are sinning – STOP IT

Hope is a source of joy

Roman's 12:12 Moffatt New Testament "let your hope be a joy to you; be steadfast in trouble, attend to prayer,"

Roman's 5:2 Let us rejoice in our hope and the confident assurance of experiencing and enjoying the glory of [our great] God

There's a Joy in hope Do any of you remember singing those children's song "I've got the joy joy joy joy..... " I met Jesus at the cross roads."Down here my sins forgiven, up there a home in heaven, Praise God that's the way for me" These were songs of joy.

Our hope is a thing of joy – when the chips are down, we need to remind ourselves of our hope.

Hope is a source of blessing

Titus 2:11-13 (NIV)

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 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 appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

What does blessed mean? The Greek definition of the word "blessed" comes from *makários*. This describes a believer as being in an enviable position for receiving God's provisions (favor) – as being an extension of his grace. This happens with receiving the Lord's inbirthings of faith (*HELPS Word Studies*).

Hope is INTERNAL and ETERNAL

Colossians 1:27 (NIV)

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

What gives us final assurance of glory - the words "Christ in you."

Everything else is external - this is internal. When all arguments are done, one thing that cannot be denied for Christians is that Christ is in me. What does it mean that Christ is in me?

When I was around 18 years old, there was the day that I invited Jesus Christ into my life to be my Saviour. Dorothy did the same when she was much younger.

When we do this, a transaction takes place between God and us. His Spirit enters our lives and in a sense Christ is born in us. As we yield to God's Spirit, so Christ grows in us and it His presence in our lives that begins a transformation that ultimately results in glory in His presence when we shall be like Him. Christ **in us** is our guarantee and hope of glory. It's His life in us that trumps all arguments.

Many millions down the centuries have experienced this and for them, the hope that we have been talking about is real. The recent copy of the Eternity newspaper told us of just two.

One of the Bali 9. Came to Christ while in prison on death row. This wasn't a vain hope that doing this might get him off. He had done wrong. He knew it. His punishment was just and inevitable. Whilst he wasn't forgiven his crime here, and had to bear the punishment, he came to know that when he faced the judgement seat of God, there was one who took his punishment upon Himself at the cross and here, the guilty may go free.

As firing squad rifles were raised, they broke out into song 10,000 reasons

And on that day when my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending
10,000 years and then forever more

Bang, and they were there!!!!

Woman in cancer scam

It could, of course be that someone here this morning has never invited Christ into their lives and so does not know this hope, has not started this journey to glory.

Revelation 3:20 (NIV) Jesus, speaking to the church in Laodicea (and, I believe to us here and now) said, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. "

If this is you and the Spirit of God is speaking to you, I encourage you not to delay. You might simply pray "Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for dying for me so that my sins may be forgiven. By your Spirit, I ask you now to come into my life and make me your child. In your names I ask this. Thank you Jesus"

Song which expresses some of what we have been thinking about

“There is a hope”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_yv5yGZnBc

Be careful to notice the words as you sing.