

Hope And Faith

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What do you think is the worst feeling a person can experience? Maybe fear? You know that paralyzing knee-knocking fear. How about loneliness? You know, being alone when you do not want to be can lead to a very depressing situation. But I do not think it is the worst feeling that a person can experience. How about desperation? You know, when you reach a point when you really do not have anything to lose and you are willing to take any chance because it does not really matter. But I do not really think it is the worst feeling.

What I think the worst feeling a person can experience is *hopelessness*.

You see, with fear there is the hope of getting out of that situation. With loneliness it can be depressing, but there is always hope of finding someone to be with. Even a desperate person has the hope of getting out of whatever situation they find themselves in because they feel they have nothing to lose, so they are willing to take any chances in hope that they will just get out of their desperate situation.

But when a person reaches the point of hopelessness, they feel there is no help for them, and I think this feeling of hopelessness is what leads many people to commit suicide. But, you know, we who are in Christ, we never have to experience hopelessness. We may experience fear or loneliness sometimes, and maybe even find ourselves in some desperate situations or even helpless situations, but never hopeless.

I was in a helpless situation one time (probably more than once), but as many of you probably remember, the district attorney from Manhattan, New York, had brought a case up against one of their inspection companies up there. Myself and another inspector were doing some work for them here in Colombia, and they brought some charges against us. They wanted to wrap us up in it to make their case look a little better. So they were planning on

extraditing us to New York to hold us there until trial. But the first time they tried to extradite, they messed up desperately on the extradition papers, so that threw them off.

But as time went on, they tried to redo it, and they tried to come after us. I got a call about two days from the Passover, in 2009, and we were told by a lawyer's office that they had called us to meet with them on the Passover day at either 3:00 or 4:00 that evening on Passover. And I am thinking, "Oh, no. Uh uh." There is no way I could get out of it. It was helpless for me. But what did I do? Well, I got down on my knees and I prayed, and I just laid it out to God. I just said, "You know, here's the situation. You called me, You command I keep this Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread." And I said, "But if they extradite me, if they take us away today at this meeting, there's no way I could keep it."

So I just left it in His hands. Well, the very next day, the day before the Passover, I get another phone call. Only this time it was to say that it had been canceled for two weeks. So then I was able to keep the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread and then something similar happened again at Pentecost. I got through that, and on it went until it was finally now over. But that was to me, just a helpless feeling. But I was not without hope.

I want to talk a little bit about hope today. What is hope? Is it a wishy-washy, maybe, or kind of unsure optimism about something? The modern idea of hope is to wish for something but without any certainty of the fulfillment. You know, to desire much, but with no real assurance of getting what you desire. You have heard people say that before. You probably said it sometimes in your life, maybe. Where you said "I sure would like to do that." "I would love to have that, but I'll never be able to have it." "I'll never be able to do it." You see, there is no real assurance of getting what you hope for.

But in Scripture, according to the Hebrew and Greek words that are translated for the word hope and according to the biblical usage of it, hope is an indication of *certainty*. Hope in Scripture means "a strong and confident expectation." Hope is akin to trust and a confident expectation. Let us open our Bibles to Romans the eighth chapter.

Romans 8:24 For we are saved in this hope . . .

Let us stop here just a second. I thought we were saved by grace through faith. Turn with me over to Ephesians the second chapter for a minute

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

Back to Romans 8 again. Let us start trying to put all this together. We will pick it back up in verse 24.

Romans 8:24 For we are saved in his hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait eagerly for it with perseverance.

Does that not sound familiar with the definition of faith? Let us look at that. Turn with me to Hebrews the 11th chapter.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

I want to look at a key word here that is going to help us understand the difference here. That word is substance. It is a compound of two Greek words that means "a setting under." In other words, a support. So faith is the support of hope. It supports it. Hope is what is in our heart, in our mind. We believe God's promises in His Word. We trust Him completely, that He is building a future for us, and that Jesus our Lord is going to return to this earth. That He is going to gather us from the four corners of this earth in a resurrection and that we will rule with Him in His Kingdom. That is our hope. Hope is the confident expectation, the sure certainty that what God has promised in His Word is true.

But what about faith? You see, faith is the support of hope, but it goes on to say it is also the *evidence*. See, faith is the evidence of the hope that is in us.

It is what we do. It is how we live our lives. Let us just continue a little bit here in Hebrews 11, in verse four. You see, it says "by faith," and you will see that people acted on something.

Hebrews 11:4-5 By faith Abel offered God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous [Do you see? That was the evidence.], God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony that he pleased God.

Now we understand that he was not taken to heaven, as some believe. If you did a study into this, you would see that Enoch was a preacher and the people in that society at that time, remember, they were extremely evil. And if would God would have left him where he was they would have probably hunted him down and killed him. God moved him and put him to sleep Himself because he pleased Him and he had completed his work.

Hebrews 11:6-8 But without faith [that is, without the support of your hope, or the evidence of the hope that is in you] it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe [that is the hope] that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became the heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out of the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

There are several more of this mentioned in here, but I think that is enough. We get the idea. Drop down to verse 13.

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith [because they showed God, they put forth the evidence by what they did in their lives that they had the hope and the belief and the trust in God], not having

received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were assured of them [that is hope] and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on this earth.

In other words, a biblical hope is not an escape from reality or problems. It does not leave us idle or drifting either. If our hope is biblical and based on God's promises, it will put us in gear. It has results. For one thing, it changes how we live our life. Turn with me now if you will over to I Peter the second chapter.

I Peter 2:1-12 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to Him as a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. [Those spiritual sacrifices are done in faith. That is what we do.] Therefore, it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." Therefore to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient [that is, those who do not believe], "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone," and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you [brethren] are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but now are the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works [And the good works is what? It is the evidence that is our faith.] which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

See, our hope leads us to change our life, and it puts us in action, and that action is what we refer to as a life of faith. But it also changes what we value. Hope, if biblical, makes us more heavenly minded rather than earthly minded. Flip over, if you would, to Matthew 6. John [Ritenbaugh] has covered the subject lately, so I am just going to read through it quickly. I am not going to cover much on this particular thing, but it changes what we value. It is also written in *Forerunner* about where your treasure is. But verse 19 says,

Matthew 6:19-21 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

So, where is our treasure? In asking this, we will answer the question, "Where is our heart?" Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Whatever we value, whatever we hold valuable is where our heart is going to be.

Another thing is, it affects what we do with our lives. You know, with our talents, our time, and our resources. Now, let us flip over the Titus 2 and see how it should affect us in our lives.

Titus 2:1-8 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that older men are to be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given too much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works [our faith]; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say about you.

See, it affects what we do in our life.

Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope [that which is in our heart, that is what we believe and what we are hoping for] and glorious appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

That is our hope. You see, the Christian life, if it is grasped according to God's truth, is a magnificent obsession with an eternal hope. You see, it is a hope that does not lead us to any type of escapist attitude, but to the pursuit of life on a whole new dimension. You know, there are a number of warnings also in the Scripture against putting hope in anything other than the Lord our God. Because these things will leave us ashamed, they will leave us frustrated, disappointed, and in ruin. Our God is called the God of hope. This means He is the source of all real hope. If we are going to have hope, that is, that confident expectation, it must come from Him, for He alone has the power to give it. And we will see this in Romans 15.

Romans 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I Peter 1:13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the grace of life.

Brethren, on what have you fixed your hope? We have to ask ourselves is, does our life prove it? Does it prove that we believe what God says? Do we show forth the evidence? Does our faith support our hope? If it does, it is going to show forth the evidence in our lives in what we do and what we are. Because it has to change who we are, has to change what we value, and what you are doing with your life. Because hope works in conjunction with faith. They go hand-in-hand.

Several years ago I gave a sermon at the Feast on mercy and I wanted to show how compassion and mercy work together. See, compassion actually differs from mercy in that compassion is about an emotional connection that is within us that moves us toward an action, while mercy is about the action itself. Hope is what is inside our hearts, in our mind, our dreams, and belief in God's promises of a resurrection into a better life and world, which we will rule with our Lord and Savior. And this is what moves us toward an action, while faith is about the action itself. Faith supports the hope and is the evidence to God that we believe and trust in Him.

We will close with the scripture that we began with in the beginning in Ephesians 2. I am going to add something in here. We do not add to or take away. All I am doing is putting it all together so that we can see how it all works hand-in-hand.

Ephesians 2:8 [where it says] For by grace you have been saved [and we will add here—in hope] through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.