

## **The Elements Of Motivation (Part Three): Hope**

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These articles were originally precipitated by a major doctrinal change in the Worldwide Church of God in the early 1990s. Those in authority at the time adopted the concept generally described as "once saved, always saved," the notion that, once one accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, salvation is assured. This idea is true only if it is understood as having two major conditions attached.

The first is that those who accept Christ's blood for the remission of sins remain faithful in their commitment to Him. This faithfulness is loyalty to conditions, terms, persons, or agreements. The faith that saves is a living faith, meaning it is active, dynamic. Living faith works and produces within the person having it. This gives rise to the second condition for this idea to be true: Those who accept Christ as Savior must be growing, changing, and overcoming.

The doctrinal concept without these conditions makes salvation into nothing more than the acceptance or mental agreement with the proposition that Jesus is Savior. It totally fails to address the reason or purpose for salvation. God has a purpose in what He is doing, a great overriding purpose, a cause, for His calling, leading us to repentance, and granting us conversion by means of His gift of the Holy Spirit.

God's cause is His new creation. Notice II Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Galatians 6:15 adds a similar thought: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation." The apostle Paul is saying that the things that are truly important about salvation pertain to God's new creation of His image in us. He is creating sons and daughters in His image! We cannot afford to let this great, glorious, hope-filled truth wander far from our minds.

In I Corinthians 15:42-49, Paul writes of our glorious transformation already underway:

So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

### **Did Paul Believe in Works?**

The image Paul speaks of is not merely that we will be composed of spirit even as Christ is, but that our very nature and character be like His. If God desired that we merely be spirit, He could have made us like angels. Angels, however, are not God; they are angels. God is doing a work in us through which we will become like Him, not like angels.

His purpose requires that we cooperate. Though our part is very small by comparison to what He is doing, it is nonetheless vital. Notice how Paul draws this beautiful section of I Corinthians to a conclusion by drawing our attention to what it will take on our part to make God's purpose work: "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:57-58).

"Victory" is from the same Greek root as the word translated "overcomes" so many times in Revelation 2 and 3. Overcoming is being victorious over the pull of human nature against God in the self, Satan, and this world that tries to keep us from entering God's Kingdom.

Paul also exhorts us to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." His work is creating. Then, by using the words "your labor," the apostle draws our attention to our responsibilities. Our labor is whatever energies and sacrifices it takes to yield to the Lord so He can do His work. Scripture refers to God several times as the Potter, and we are the clay He is shaping. The difference between us and earthy clay is that the clay God is working is alive—having a mind and will of its own, it can choose to resist or yield.

Following initial repentance, finding the motivation to use our faith to yield to Him in labor, not just agreeing mentally, is perhaps most important of all. Real living faith motivates conduct in agreement with God's purpose. Clearly, God's purpose is that we grow or change to become as much like Him in this life as time allows. Paul's encouraging exhortation in II Timothy 2:15, 19-21 helps in this regard:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. . . . Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

Paul implies that the vessels (people) in God's house (Family or Temple) are not all of the same quality. But if we work and apply ourselves to purge and purify what is defiling and dishonoring, we can become a vessel of honor (I John 3:3). We all begin as vessels of dishonor. Even after the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us, we sin, thus dishonoring both Him and our character. From this dishonor we must be continually cleansed.

Philippians 2:12-13 makes it clear Paul believed in works. "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." God lays the responsibility upon us to work in partnership with Him as He works with and in us. The purpose of this work is not to earn salvation, but to allow God to do His creative labors in us and test us. He wants us to be prepared for His Kingdom, and at the same time, He wants us to glorify Him through the witness of our lives.

### **Fear, Vision, and Hope**

In the first two articles, we examined two motivators. First, the fear of God is a deep, heartfelt continuing respect for Him. Respect means "to hold in high regard." Our reverence moves us to defer

to His instruction in each area of life when making a choice. Second, vision or foresight comes as a result of the revelation of God. It is both a companion and producer of wisdom, prudence, judgment, and discretion. These virtues enable us to see cause and effect more clearly than our limited human experience normally would allow, and the resulting vision preserves life, protects us from harm, and helps us to achieve goals.

This article will examine hope that, like the other motivators, derives from the relationship with and the revelation of God. In many biblical contexts, hope is so closely related to faith that they seem almost the same. In fact, the verb form of *hope* is sometimes translated as "trust." Even though they share some similarities, there are differences.

I Corinthians 13:13 is probably the best known biblical verse on hope: "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Here, Paul lists hope as one of the "big three" virtues of Christianity. Whereas faith is the foundation on which the other two stand, and love is the object because it enables us to communicate, interact properly, and unite, hope is the quality that motivates, providing energy by keeping us in anticipation of greater and better things to come.

Hope, as used in Scripture, is not difficult to define. It appears as both a noun and verb, and conveys the absolute certainty of future good. I Corinthians 13:13 lists it with those things that remain, abide, or continue. In other words, even in the Kingdom of God, we will always be eagerly looking forward to some blessing or accomplishment as age upon age unfolds before us. This will occur because God's revelation never ends, as He Himself is an inexhaustible resource.

Ephesians 2:12 adds another dimension to Christian hope. ". . . that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Our hope is uniquely Christian because no other religion, no other way of life, can give its adherents a *certain* hope. Why? First, even though other religions may be moral in their teachings, they speak only from man's experiences. Second, their god is not living the life of God. Third, they have no expectation of the Messiah and all it implies.

The Bible leaves no doubt that our hope is a direct result of God's calling: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling" (Ephesians 4:4). Paul clearly links our hope with our calling, which is God's summons into His presence so that we may have a relationship with Him. In the context of the first paragraph of Ephesians 4, the implication is that this hope is a factor that unites us into one body. Our calling is an end to pessimism, negativity, and despair and the beginning of a confident, bright, and optimistic life filled with endless possibilities because this unique hope gives positive expectancy to life here and now and beyond the grave as well.

All men have hope occasionally, and some frequently seem hopeful. Many peoples' hope changes as often as the weather. The frequent fluctuations of the stock market indices often indicate investors' up-and-down confidence and hope about the future. Yet, our hope can be taken to higher level altogether because Christians can have *continuous* hope. Our hope is not a "mere flash in the pan."

### **God Is Our Hope**

It must be this way if it is to be of any value. Our unique hope is of such value and importance that Paul rates it right along with faith and love. Notice two important factors he links to hope in

Ephesians 2:12. First, in the time before God called the Ephesian Gentiles into a relationship with Him, they were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise."

The commonwealth of Israel could be either the nation or the church because under the Old Covenant ancient Israel established a relationship with God, received a small measure of His promises, and possessed the hope of the Messiah. However, the primary meaning here is the church; those who have made the New Covenant with God are the Israel of God and a holy nation (Galatians 6:16; I Peter 2:9). The New Covenant contains God's confirmed promises—confirmed in the life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah, Christ Jesus.

Being part of ancient Israel under the Old Covenant did not give a person access to many promises that would have given him reason to hope. The Old Covenant promised no forgiveness of sin, no access to God, no promise of the Holy Spirit, and no promise of eternal and everlasting life, all of which we have. We have continuing, never-ending hopes because the New Covenant ensures a continuous relationship. Our relationship necessarily involves the other part of Ephesians 2:12: Before our calling, we were also without God in the world. Our hope is not merely in the fact that we have made a covenant, but more importantly, with whom we made it.

The same apostle writes of the Gentiles' hope from a somewhat different perspective in Romans 15:4, 12-13:

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. . . . Isaiah says, "There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope." 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.

As before, the apostle reveals that our hope derives from our calling through the New Covenant and finds its ultimate source in God. Yet, God is more than the source of our hope: He *is* our hope. In verse 12, Isaiah refers to Him as the object of our hope. In Haggai 2:7, He is called "the Desire of All Nations," and in Romans 15:13, Paul calls Him "the God of hope," that is, hope's source.

Without God, we and this world have no hope except the normal desires common to the unconverted, things like filling our bellies, getting a good sleep, satisfying our eyes and ears, experiencing thrills and excitement, and accumulating money, power, and possessions. None of these is intrinsically evil, but God wants our hopes to be exceedingly higher. Verse 13 supplies a major condition to having this high quality of hope and thus the motivation it provides—believing. Remember, faith undergirds all the elements of motivation, and thus they clarify why living faith produces growth of fruit.

I Peter 1:3, 21 carries this thought another step to show that we can abound in hope because we believe in the faithfulness of God, who gives us reason to hope:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, . . . through Him [you] believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

The strength of our hope therefore rises or falls on how dependable we perceive our expectation to be. The reasons we believe our expectation to be dependable are thus decisive to whether we will be motivated.

Ours is a living hope because Jesus Christ and the Father are alive. They exert sovereign control, and They cannot lie. Because our hope is revealed, grounded, sustained, and directed by God, we can know that all things work together for good for those who are the called and love God (Romans 8: 28). Our hope, then, should not be ephemeral wishes or dreams based on wishy-washy sentimentality, but the solid realities of God and His Word. Our hope flows from an inexhaustible Source, and therefore no trial should ever quench our optimism for future good. Hope is our response to His work in us expressed in trust, patience, endurance, and eagerness to continue.

### **More Reasons to Hope**

The Bible presents us quite a number of glorious things both to hope for and to stir up hope. Acts 23: 6 states the Christian's most commonly known hope: "But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, 'Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!'"

When I was a boy, the local volunteer fire company held an annual street fair to raise money. They usually raffled off a fire-engine red Buick Roadmaster for the adults and a similar fire-engine red Schwinn Roadmaster bicycle with cream-colored trim for the children. The bicycle had a horn built into the crossbar, a light mounted on the front fender, knee-action spring mounted on the front wheel fork, and of all things, a battery-operated radio mounted on the handle bars!

That bicycle was the end of the rainbow for me! But because the family had no money for such extravagant things, I had no hope at all of ever having one unless I won it. My only recourse was to buy a raffle ticket and hope to win it. Raffle tickets usually were a dime or quarter, so I would scrape together my pennies each year, buy a ticket, and hope. I never did win it, but that desire motivated me to do the only thing I could do to get what I hoped for.

This is essentially what Paul is saying in Acts 23:6. He was on trial because his hope of resurrection from the dead motivated him to do the things that put him on trial. Anticipation of good, the expectation of advantage of all he held dear, motivated him to be willing to suffer to achieve them.

II Corinthians 3:11-12 points to the change of administrations from the Old Covenant to the New as a strong basis for hope: "For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech." Unlike my extremely slim hope of winning a bicycle that hung on one raffle ticket among thousands, the potential of the administration of the Spirit is boundless, filling them—Paul's and his companions—with great hope that motivated them to be very bold in speaking.

Romans 5:1-5 casts hope in a similar light but for a different reason:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance,

character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which was given to us.

"Hope" appears three times in these verses, and it is tied to justification and the doors that open to us. In verse 2, hope motivates us to rejoice that we can look forward in positive expectation of God's glory! What an awesome opening that is to us! It is not the glory of a perfect human or even of angels, but of God! This is so hard for us to imagine because it almost sounds blasphemous. Is it any wonder that Christians can be optimistic about life in the face of all the evil we are aware of? The goal is so great that it is worth more than all the burden of being human, dealing with our sins and the repercussions of others' sins.

Our hope does not disappoint or bring us to shame because it is based in the reality of God and His promises. The common hopes of man may or may not come to pass because they are fragile and frail at best and in many cases utterly false. Yet, the believer's hope is no fantasy because it is firmly anchored in the person and promises of the Creator God.

As mentioned earlier, the activity of God among us produces hope. This is drawn in part from verses 3-4, where Paul says that trials, borne while God is part of our lives, produces perseverance, character, and hope. Because of this hope a person is never embarrassed through failure because God, who is our hope, never fails. God loves us, and He communicates His love to us through His instruction, fellowship, and discipline. Through these, we come to know Him and His faithfulness. As our admiration for Him grows, these things motivate us to purify ourselves to be like Him (I John 3:1-2).

Paul compares the hope of salvation to a soldier's helmet:

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. . . (Ephesians 6:17)

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. (I Thessalonians 5:8)

The helmet protects the head, the part of the body most vital to quality of life. It is the thinking part where choices and judgments are made, where attitudes reside and surge forth in conduct. It is the part that holds knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and memories of life's experiences, that determines the kind of life we lead. It is that part where Satan aims most of his fiery darts.

In this metaphor, hope is not an offensive weapon but a defense; it is a motivator to protect us from losing sight of the glorious end of God's purpose. Why? The only thing that can really defeat and destroy us is for us to give up. Jesus says in His Olivet prophecy, "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). Hope's fruit is not just an optimistic and positive outlook but also the drive to persevere, to endure come what may, to propel one forward. Only the hopeful will do this. The hopeless will give up.

So powerful is hope's action that Paul says in Romans 8:24-25 that we are saved by it! "For we are saved in this 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 eagerly wait for it with perseverance." This in no way conflicts with his declaration in Ephesians 2:8 that we are "saved by grace through faith," because both faith and hope are necessary for salvation. Faith primarily operates in the present as visible

evidence of things hoped for but not yet seen. Hope, though it is also operating in the present, primarily does so with reference to the future. Paul then says that, if a person has hope, he is motivated to wait patiently for what he hopes to see. The hopeful are motivated to endure whatever it takes to receive what they hope for.

### **Reason for High Hopes**

Hebrews 6:9-20 expands considerably on the foundation of our hope and its function:

But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters to Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

It has been said that the quality of a person's hope is the measure of any man. Abraham's hope is the illustration here. By this estimation, he was a great man because one cannot possibly hope in anything greater! In Romans 4:18, Paul says of Abraham, ". . . who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations." His hope was so strong that, in spite of having no physical reason to hope for descendants through Sarah because she was beyond childbearing years, he nonetheless hoped to the end. When Isaac was born, his hope was vindicated because he had placed his hope in God.

The writer's hope for the Hebrews is for the better things that accompany salvation. Better than what? The context of the chapter shows he feared they were falling away. He desires them to have the full assurance of hope to the end or, put another way, the full development of hope. Why? So that they will overcome the lassitude he detects in them and begin carrying out their Christian responsibilities.

He wanted them to be diligent and in earnest about their responsibilities to God in heaven all the way to the end—to be fully, spiritually, enthusiastically energized in going about their Father's business. They were on the verge of aimlessly drifting away. No longer were they thinking much about the hope that once burned in their minds and drove them on. Other interests and concerns had pushed the thrilling excitement of our great hope aside in mundane pursuits. Our minds must be systematically refreshed with study and meditation on our hope, or we will fall into the same spiritual torpor the Hebrews did. A movement, ideal, or visionary dream that does not inspire hope will not grip the hearts of people to give themselves in sacrifice and accomplishment.

A number of years ago, Frank Sinatra and others made popular recordings of a song titled "High Hopes":

Next time you're found with your chin on the ground,  
There's a lot to be learned so look around.

Just what makes that little old ant  
Think he'll move that rubber tree plant?  
Anyone knows an ant can't  
Move a rubber tree plant.

But he's got high hopes, he's got high hopes,  
He's got high-apple-pie-in-the-sky hopes.

So any time you're getting low,  
'Stead of letting go,  
Just remember that ant.  
Oops, there goes another rubber tree plant.

When troubles call and your back's to the wall,  
There's a lot to be learned, that wall could fall.

Once there was a silly old ram,  
Thought he'd punch a hole in a dam.  
No one could make that ram scam!  
He kept buttin' that dam!

But he's got high hopes, he's got high hopes,  
He's got high-apple-pie-in-the-sky hopes.

So any time you're feeling bad,  
'Stead of feeling sad,  
Just remember that ram.  
Oops, there goes a billion kilowatt dam!

So keep your high hopes, keep your high hopes.  
Keep your high-apple-pie-in-the-sky hopes.

A problem's just a toy balloon.  
They'll be bursting soon.  
They're just bound to go "pop"!  
Oops, there goes another problem, kerplop!

The song illustrates in a melodic way that hope motivates one to overcome even huge obstacles to get a job done.

The Hebrews were going through a hardship that is never fully explained. Whatever it was, through it they had regressed from a higher spiritual level. Oftentimes, we can do little but endure our hardships patiently. We simply cannot change much in this world, and it does us well to accept what we cannot



change with hopeful resignation (Ecclesiastes 7:13-14). Patient endurance is in itself a worthy work because it is at least an exercise of self-control.

In America, government officials are sworn into their positions, promising to uphold the office and the laws of the land. We become dismayed because over time so many of them break their vows. Governments promise that their money is good; banks, that their customers' savings are safe, stockbrokers, that their counsel is sound; and insurance companies, that their policyholders will receive their due. These assurances fail all too often in bankruptcy or fraud. After enduring a number of these failures or observing others experience them, we become skeptical, perhaps even cynical.

Our hope, however, is in a Being and a government whose promises are absolutely faithful because it is impossible for Him to lie. Our hopes do not lie in our courage, intelligence, or even the finest of human qualities but in God's promises. He assures us in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

The danger the Hebrews faced is unknown, but whether or not we consciously recognize it, we, like the Hebrews, are in danger. We may not be in a physical danger—threatened by religious martyrdom, imprisonment, disease, or great loss of income—but we face spiritual dangers. With its manifold temptations and distractions, the world is constantly pressing in on us to turn us out of the way. Our human nature inclines us not to see things from God's perspective. Our pride seduces us. Our passions, temper, and other weaknesses trip us up, causing failure and despair. What does a person do when he realizes he is in danger? Does he not make for safety as quickly as he can?

That is precisely the advice of Hebrews 6:18: ". . . by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope that is set before us." The author may have had the Israelite cities of refuge in mind as he wrote this (Numbers 35). They were places of safety for those who killed another accidentally. Yet, the killer's only hope was to get to a city of refuge before the avenger of blood got to him! The refuge for those in the Hebrews' spiritual condition involves hope. The Greek word translated "set before" pictures hope lying before us like some inviting treat for us to take.

These people were in danger of falling away through their lethargic, lukewarm, careless, and lazy reaction to life and what it dealt them, yet they possessed the greatest hope a human could possibly entertain! As time passed, it had blurred in their minds almost to non-existence. They were forgetting it!

The author then describes hope as an anchor for our lives. Even as an anchor keeps a ship from drifting onto the rocks, hope keeps us from idly drifting to our spiritual destruction. Hope keeps us safe. It is a major stabilizing force for the whole of life because it has hold of something that does not move despite the tempests around us. Our hope is anchored in Jesus Christ, who as High Priest has entered in our behalf into the heavenly Holy of Holies beyond the veil. Though His blood justifies us, His life saves us. Because He lives, intercedes for us, and watches over our lives to bring us into the Father's Kingdom, we have hope.

Hope motivates, and its primary function is to enable us to endure. We know that our wonderful goal is sure because our hope is in God, who is absolute and all-powerful. If we are to be saved, the means to fulfill this must come from God. The relationship established through God's calling, Christ's sacrifice, and our making of the New Covenant with Him provides that means. Now we must do all we can to fulfill our part of the relationship.

