

The Hope Laid Up in Heaven

“We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.”
—Colossians 1:3-5

should exude so sweet a perfume that their fragrance may be perceived by those who have never even laid eyes on us. It was that way with the early saints at Colossae.

Our characters should be like that of the brethren addressed in our text, so as to be spoken of

AS WE COME TO THE

close of another year in the school of Christ, it is important that we keep in proper perspective the most important aspects of our schooling. There are three graces that in particular seem to rise above all others and which should be conspicuous in us—faith, hope and love. They are each mentioned by the Apostle Paul in our opening text. These graces should be so obvious in us as to be spoken of and heard by those who have never seen us. They

without causing us to bow our heads in shame, remembering that this can never happen if we truly possess these three graces. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."—II Peter 1:2-8

We should be rich in faith, which is the root of every grace, and to this end we should pray daily, "Lord, Increase our faith." (Luke 17:5) We should strive to be full, even to overflowing, with love which is of God and makes us, through Christ, like him. We should also abound in hope, which should cause us to purify ourselves in readiness for our heavenly inheritance. We must see to it that not one of these three graces of the Spirit is a stranger to our souls. We must let faith, hope, and love live in our hearts.

ONLY TRUE GRACES SERVE US

Let us note the special character of each one of these graces as it exists in us. It is not every faith

and love and hope that will serve us, for we must realize that for everything precious there is a counterfeit, made so by the great Adversary, Satan.

There is a kind of faith in men, but ours is in Christ Jesus—faith in him whom the world rejects, whose cross is a stumbling block, and whose doctrine is an offense. We have faith in Jesus, the Son of God, faith and confidence in him who, having made atonement by his own blood, once for all, is now exalted to his Father's right hand. Our confidence is not in self, nor in any human instrument or in the traditions of men, nor is it in the teachings of human wisdom. Only in Christ Jesus is the faith of God's elect.

Our love, too, is special. While we are moved by sympathetic love and a desire to do good to all men, yet we have a special love unto all the saints. These the world loves not, because it loves not the Lord. We love the babes in Christ as well as the mature saints, and we love, too, those saints whose infirmities are at times more to be seen than their virtues. We love them not for their station in life nor for their natural weaknesses, but because Jesus loves them as he loves us, and because they love him. Our love sweeps wider, however, and includes the eternal future of all mankind in Christ's kingdom for which we all pray. In this way, the grace of love increases in range, as well as in number, toward whom it is shown.

Our hope, too, is special because it is a hope which is laid up for us in heaven, a hope of which the world knows very little or even cares about. The man of the world hopes that tomorrow may be as today, but more abundant for him. He hopes

for riches, or he hopes for fame. He hopes for long life and prosperity, and that the stock market thrives for his investment. He hopes for pleasure and for domestic peace. The whole range of his hope is within the compass of his eye. Our hope though has passed beyond the sphere of sight, according to the word of the apostle, "We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. 8:24,25) Ours is a hope that does not long for anything of this world, but which seeks that life which is to come and to be together with our blessed Lord as part of the church, head and body.

Let us speak more about this hope that we have. The connection of our study text seems to be this: the apostle rejoiced when he saw our earlier brethren at Colossae possessing faith, love and hope and he thanked God and prayed about them. Paul saw these qualities as seals of God upon them, so to speak, tokens that they were truly a consecrated, converted people, and his heart was glad. It is true also that we rejoice today, as Paul did then, to see our brethren adorned with the jewels of faith, hope and love, that their labor has not been in vain and that these ornaments of the present are as preparation for the future of eternity.

ONENESS OF OUR HOPE

We believe from the form of the language that the Apostle Paul has used in our featured scripture text (Col. 1:3-5), he intended to show that their love for the saints was produced in them by the

hope which was laid up in heaven, a vitally important connection. In verse five, the apostle begins by using the word 'for' which means 'on account of,' or 'because of.' We read, 'For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.'

There can be no doubt that the hope of heaven tends to foster love in all the saints of God. We have a common hope, so let us have a common affection one for another. We are all working with a view toward our heavenly home and to the many mansions there. Let us go forward in one loving company; since we hope to be together as one in heaven, so let us be together as one here on earth.

One is our Master, and one is our service, one is our way, and one is our end. Therefore, let us be knit together as one body. If faithful, we expect to see our beloved Lord face to face and be like him, so why should we not now love all in whom there is something of the character of Christ? We are to live together in heaven as his body members eternally so why should we quarrel with one another over petty things? We are to be forever with Jesus, our head, and partakers of the same joy, the same glory, the same love. Why now should we be less in our love for the brethren on this side of the veil? In the narrow way, we fight the same enemies, publish the same testimony, bear the same trials, and go to the same throne of grace as all of our fellow body members. We must love one another truly with no barriers or walls. Hence, it is not difficult to show that the hope which is laid up in heaven should produce fervent love among the brethren.

FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE ALL ENTWINED

In our featured scripture, Paul also connects the hope that is laid up in heaven with our faith, and he rejoiced because their faith was fostered by their hope no less than their love was. He commended all three of those sweet graces of the Spirit, pointing out that they were all entwined with one another and dependent one upon another. There would be no love we could have for all the saints if there was no love for Jesus; and if there was no love for Jesus, there would be no hope laid up in heaven. If we had no hope, it would also be certain that we had no true faith, for with no hope faith would be in vain. If we have at least one of these three graces, we would receive the others, for they cannot be separated. The three are set in the same gold setting, and none can break the precious seal. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity [love]." (I Cor. 13:13) Blessed are they who have these wonderful graces of the Spirit abiding in their heart.

A WONDERFUL HOPE

Examining further the hope which is laid up for us in heaven we see, first of all, what a wonderful hope it is. Second, it is a secure hope; and third it is a powerful, influential hope. We speak of this hope as a marvelous hope, and it is if we consider that it is a great act of grace that we should have any hope at all. When father Adam broke his Maker's law, that there should have been any hope left at all should make our hearts rejoice with gratitude. Perhaps we all remember when we were a lost sinner in this world. It was as if the Devil had written on

our door lintel, 'No Hope.' It would still be that way today, if not that a loving hand took some hyssop and, by the sprinkling of precious blood, removed that inscription. "That at that time ye 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." (Eph. 2:12) That was our former condition, but how wonderful that it could be changed. We now have the blessed assurance rather than despair.

It is marvelous, too, that our hope is associated with heaven. If faithful, we will taste of the joys of heaven with our blessed Lord. Our hope is full of glory, for it has to do with the glory of Jesus which we expect to behold in its fullness. We hope with all saints for the same glory and the same power associated with the change of nature as New Creatures in Christ, and we even hope to sit upon the throne of Christ. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev. 3:20,21) What a marvelous hope we have, and it is not based on a presumption or mere credulity. Our hope and confidence is warranted by nothing less than God's Holy Word.

THE GRACE AND OBJECT OF HOPE

Paul's lesson concerning hope has two aspects. First, there is the grace of hope which dwells in our hearts and, second, the object of hope which is laid up in heaven. The lesson of both is intended. The

reason that which is laid up in heaven is not a hope except it be to those who hope for it. That is, no man has a hope laid up in heaven unless he has that hope within himself, and that hope governs his heart, mind, words, and actions. The grace of hope and its object are mentioned by Paul under one term and that teaches us that when hope is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit's influence it is in a sense the thing hoped for even as faith is the thing believed because it realizes and secures it. Just as faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, so is hope the substance of the thing it expects and the evidence of the thing it cannot see. Our hope is so substantial that the Apostle Paul speaks of it as though it was the thing itself, and was laid up in heaven. Many a person has a hope of wealth but that kind of hope is a different thing than being wealthy. It is like the saying, 'There is many a slip twixt cup and lip.' A person may have a hope of old age yet he may die tonight; so it is made very clear to us that the hope for long life is not in itself longevity. He who has the divine hope that grows from faith and love has a hope which shall never disappoint. Hence, Paul speaks of it as being identical with the thing hoped for, and describes it as being laid up in heaven. Truly we have a marvelous hope which long before its realization is treated as a matter of actual attainment and spoken of as a treasure reserved up in heaven for us. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."—Heb. 6:19

The hope that we have is a matter of divine revelation because no human could ever have invented

this blessed hope. It is so glorious it baffles the imagination of man. This eternal hope had to be revealed to us or we could never have known it. The apostle says, "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." (Col. 1:5) The Lord has promised this hope to us in the Scriptures. A window of heaven has been opened to us and we are bidden to look inside and hope for the time coming when we shall be with him forever.

HOPE CAME BY HEARING

Another thing that is so wonderful about all this is that our hope came to us simply by hearing the wonderful Word of God. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." (Rom. 10:17,18) This hope came not by our own works or by our own merit. We ourselves have done nothing to deserve it. We received the wonderful message simply by hearing it, then hearkening to God's Word, and believing it unto a new life in Christ Jesus. We heard in scripture that Jesus Christ opened the kingdom of heaven to us. We believed the message, and saw a way opened for us in his precious blood. We also heard what our Heavenly Father had prepared for those who love him. We have received indescribable joys, and we believe and trust in Jesus. All of our confidence is in the word which we have heard, for it is written, "Incline your ear; and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."—Isa. 55:3

By continued hearing and study, our faith is strengthened and our hearts are filled with inward assurance and joyful anticipation, resulting in our loving the Word of God so much the more. The substance of our hope is extraordinary, and it is not possible for us to fully describe all the phases of delight that are connected with our hope. Ours is a hope of victory, for with the Lord's help we shall overcome every foe, and soon Satan will be trodden under foot and bound. Our life struggle will end in victory if we stay faithful. "I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."—Rev. 12:10,11

WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM

We do not just hope for victory alone, but that perfection that each one of us will have at that time when we shall each be seen in the beauty of our new nature. "Now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."—I John 2:28,29

John then proclaimed, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we

shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”—I John 3:1-3

What an honor that we, as members of the fallen human family, shall be like our Lord Jesus and see him as he is. Then we will have no more propensity for sin, nor any trace of it having been in us. All we shall have then will be our perfect natures as spiritual beings, fully developed and sinless. We shall love God more, for we shall see him also and be presented to him by our head, Christ. We will certainly say in that future time, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”—Ps. 103:1-5

There is yet more of hope that will follow for those who are faithful. Such will have security from all danger, for there will be no evil in heaven, but peace, rest, and joy. Here we only see through a glass darkly, we only know in part, but there shall we see face to face, and know even as we are known. There will be no spiritual enemy to assail us. Neither the world, the flesh, nor the Devil will mar our eternal rest above. As we close out another year in the Lord, let us remember these words of the Apostle Paul, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”—Rom. 15:13, *New American Standard Bible* ■