

Understanding Biblical Hope

Explore Your Faith Teaching Series - Explo-16 ©

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OUTLINE

Introduction

In a previous study, we examined the concept of covenant and its implications for us as the people of God, under the NEW Covenant, with Christ as mediator. We then examined the concept of ‘Authority’ and its place in our lives as covenanted people.

This study explores the biblical concept of **Hope, which springs out of our covenant relationship** (which, as we have already seen, has been sealed by the death of Christ).

The study examines and differentiates between the secular and biblical meanings of hope.

Hope is different from believing, but exists *because* of it.

The study explores why and how the Christian’s hope is **sure**, and how it enables the believer in the present life.

If you don’t have *biblical* hope, you are lost! We will see why in this study.

As in previous sessions, let’s remember that we are not simply concerned with an intellectualizing of concepts, but an understanding that enables a practical outworking in our lives! Simplicity is the key!

What is ‘hope’? Is it necessary? What is biblical hope? Where does it reside? Is it the same as ‘believing’? These are some of the questions that we will be answering in this session.

Hope (generally) appears to be a *psychological necessity*. Without it, we would never be able to envisage the future. It is something that resides in man without his even trying to understand why he entertains it! In other words, it appears to be a ‘natural’ inclination. In this general sense, hope can often be something that is an illusion, an imagining that is desperate, or feeble, or even futile (wishful thinking!).

In general, it is legitimate to see ‘hope’ as a *future expectation*, even if it be illusory! (For example, the hope of being rewarded makes ‘work’ worthwhile). Very often, current circumstances or even human endeavours, reliance on possessions or human capabilities condition hope. When we consider ‘hope’ in this secular form, it is easy to see why the world does not regard ‘hope’ as a virtue!

So what makes Biblical Hope different?

The essential difference is really in its *source*.

When the Bible talks about ‘*hope*’, it is not talking about *wishful thinking*. Many say, “I *hope* to have (something)” when what they really mean is “I *wish* to have (something).” Therefore, it is important to get a good grasp of what *hope* means to the Christian.

Hope can be defined as ‘a desire of something good, with a certain expectation of obtaining it’. **Biblical hope is *certainty*, not ‘probability’.**

Hope is real because it **is founded on faith in the factual content** of the **gospel**, which is:

1. Jesus **was delivered to death** on account of **our** sins;
2. Jesus **was buried**;
3. Jesus was raised from the dead **on the third day** (as the Scriptures foretold);
4. We are reckoned righteous by *believing* these facts (i.e., no longer condemned).

It is on this basis (faith) that we have HOPE.

Biblical hope *becomes possible* when there is belief in the living God who acts and intervenes in human life and who can be trusted to keep his promises.

Hope isn't the same as 'believing'; but hope stems from it! (E.g., Abraham's hope that Sarah would give birth to a son, despite their situation). Biblical hope is therefore inseparable from, but not the same as, faith in God. Biblical Hope is the certain expectation of the future reality of God's blessings, based upon the reflection of the activities of God's faithful actions, as revealed in the Scriptures.

Hope resides in the mind.

Jesus never *explicitly* taught his disciples about 'hope'; rather, he taught them not to be anxious about the future because that future was in the hands of a loving Father. He explicitly and consistently taught about 'believing'.

(Think about the resurrection of Jesus in the context of 'hope'; see 1 Pe. 1: 13, 21; 1 Cor. 15:19; Eph. 1:18).

What does hope hold for the believer? (In other words, what do we hope for?)

1. Hope in Christ is not limited to this world (1 Cor. 15:19), but for eternity (1 Tim. 1:1).
2. Being Christ's disciple carries with it the hope of sharing in his glory ((Eph. 1:18); this is already stored up in heaven (Col. 1:5) and will be realized when the Lord is revealed (1 Pet. 1:13).
3. Things not seen (Heb. 11.1)

That is, *future blessings / events* God has in store for believers (Rom. 4:18-21),

Which include:

1. Righteousness (Gal. 5:5); b. Salvation (1 Thess. 5:8) c); Resurrection of the dead (Acts 24:15); d) redemption of bodies (Rom.8: 23, 24); e). Eternal life (Jn.17: 3) and f). The return of Jesus (Rev. 22:20).

How can the Christian be SURE in his hope?

Because God's promises are sure (1 Pe. 1:21)

- Because of the work *being done in us* in preparation for Christ's return (Philip. 1:6).
- Because we **have** the hope of glory ('Christ in us', Col. 1:27).
- Because hope **does not disappoint** (Rom. 5:5).

How does hope enable the believer right now? (Is it worth having?)

1. Helps the believer to be satisfied with the temporary (momentary) and fleeting joys of this life (Heb. 13:14).
 2. Provides the stimulus (urge) to live a pure life (1 Jn. 1: 2-3) and enables cheerful suffering (i.e., encourages patience, steadfastness etc., Rom. 5:3-5).
- We can be patient because we are confident (Rom.8: 25).
 - We can be joyous (Heb. 3:6, as children).
 - We can rejoice even in suffering (Rom.5: 4; Acts 16:19-25) and in the liberation that all creation will enjoy from bondage to decay (Rom. 8:20).
 - We can endure because of hope in Christ's glorious return (1 Thess. 1:3; 1 Tit. 2:13).
 - We can rest perfectly secure in the knowledge of Christ and in his promise to come back for us. We have an anchor (Heb. 6:19).

Conclusion:

Consider this

IF ONLY FOR THIS LIFE WE HAVE HOPE IN CHRIST, WE ARE TO BE PITIED MORE THAN ALL MEN (1 COR. 15:19).

Remember *faith and hope go together; they are inseparable.* When you have faith, you have hope and vice versa. In fact, they are bound together with love, which "covers all".