

THE POWER OF HOPE



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When we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour we are born by the Holy Spirit with the very nature of God dwelling within us. Paul, the apostle, summarises this...

“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” 1 Corinthians 13:13 (NKJV).

With this wonderful reality, many times we emphasise, and concentrate on, the importance of faith because we know that *“without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6)* and we definitely know that everything of our new nature stems from love (*1 John 4:8; Galatians 5:6*). But hope is often neglected. The “hope” referred to in the scripture is of tremendous importance in our walk with God. It is not “wishful thinking”. It is not a “maybe”. As Hebrews 11:1 declares...

“Now faith is the substance [realization] of things hoped for, the evidence [confidence] of things not seen.”

In other words, without hope it is impossible to have faith!

HOPE IS VISION

Hope is seeing the reality that lies ahead for us as believers in Christ. It affects the way we live. Having hope is having a vision and without it has a very negative effect on our lives:

“Where there is no vision, the people perish...” Proverbs 2:18.

Because of what we SEE ahead, hope has a great outworking in our lives as we wait for it to come to pass. The Scripture says hope inspires *endurance!*

“We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” 1 Thessalonians 3:3.

The greatest example of hope at work is given to us in Hebrews chapter 11, describing who we call “the heroes of faith”. Did these heroes see miracles happen because of their faith? Yes, many did, and it is recorded



as an encouragement for us. But that is not the only message of Hebrews 11. These great men of faith had great hope! Their eyes were on...

“a city with foundations whose architect and builder is God” (verses 8-10)...“a better country – a heavenly one” (verses 13-16).

We think of Moses as the great man of God standing up against Pharaoh and having the glorious experience of being face to face with God and receiving the Covenant for Israel. But Moses also experienced suffering, humiliation and disgrace because of the choice he made:

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.” Hebrews 11:24-27.

Many of the heroes of faith saw God perform great miracles through them in the Godless days in which they lived...

“And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again” Hebrews 11:32-35.

All of us love to read about that. How we would love to be like that and see that happen today. Many of us pray for this. God also desires us to move in faith like that so that He will be glorified in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. But the heroes of faith not only experienced miracles in their day they also experienced great suffering:

“There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawn in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and ill-treated – the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground” Hebrews 11:35-38.

The Lord's commendation for these heroes of faith was not for the miracles they experienced but it was for their faithfulness in the midst of the trials they faced:

“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect” Hebrews 11:39.

We personally have been greatly moved and challenged as we again read the accounts of these great men and women of old. No words of ours can describe their heart for God, their faithfulness, determination, and endurance in the face of horrific persecution. The realisation that, in Christ, we have been grafted into them as our spiritual heritage, our spiritual ancestry (*Romans 11:17*), stirs within us the desire to follow faithfully in their footsteps. We know this is only possible by the enabling of the Lord but we can learn from the key that made it possible for them to stand strongly in the midst of the evil age they lived in.

The key was their focus.

Because their eyes were firmly fixed on the heavenly vision they saw, they were able to strongly stand in the face of awful opposition and persecution. Their eyes were steadfast on the eternal glory that was ahead.

THIS IS OUR DAY!

The writer of Hebrews goes on to use an illustration of a relay race that has been running through the ages...

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...” Hebrews 12:1.

We, the Body of Christ today, are finishing the race that the heroes of chapter 11 began. The baton has been passed on to us and they are “cheering us on” as we take our turn in the arena of faith. As we now run our lap of the race we are exhorted to keep our focus firmly fixed on what is ahead - the finishing line.

“...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” Hebrews 12:2.

There is no greater example of endurance and victory in the midst of great suffering than the Lord Jesus. But notice - it was for the joy set

before him that He willingly endured the cross. That joy was the joy of seeing multitudes come into the Kingdom of God, back into relationship with the Father and the blessing of the eternal glory He has planned for us. This is what the heroes of faith saw and, with their eyes firmly fixed on this glorious reality, were able to stand against anything that challenged their faith.

What they experienced we are seeing happening in many countries of the world today. Reports come daily of Christians being tortured and dying for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Testimonies also come of great miracles of deliverance and of visions of the Lord as they face death. These are the modern day heroes of faith. We need to pray for these precious persecuted ones.

BE READY

We also need to understand that the virus of persecution is spreading and we need to be ready. We ourselves are challenged by these heroes of old and of today. Their understanding of the Gospel is great. They see more than the fact that their sins are forgiven by their faith in Jesus and that they are going to Heaven. They see beyond to the glory awaiting them in the Presence of the Father, to a city filled with redeemed people in the glory of God, and to an eternal future beyond our imagining.

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” Romans 8:17-18 (KJV) (see also 2 Corinthians 4:17).

Our prayer is that all of us will grow in our understanding of eternity and all it involves. May our eyes be firmly fixed on Jesus and the wonder of all that awaits us. May this so affect our lives that nothing else will distract us from it. May we be ready for whatever comes. We thank the Lord for the wonderful gift of His Holy Spirit who has been given to enable us to fulfil all His purpose for us.

**We pray this for all of
us in this day in
which we live.**

AMEN!