

# ONE HOPE

By

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*“YOU were called in one hope.”* (Eph. 4:4)

After the first pair had ruined their relation to the Creator by disobedience, the promise was given that one would come to crush Satan, the destroyer (Gen. 3:15). The loss of their deathless state was seen by Adam and Eve as “nakedness”, and it took the skins of animals slain by God to cover them. So they were able to live and labor in hope that one day they might be clothed with immortality (I Cor. 15:53). This is the “one hope” that gives incentive and purpose to life.

Job, who forever stands as the demonstration of man’s suffering in this world, bore such suffering with patience because he had hope that there would be a resurrection in which he would stand as a whole man, a new creature, and see his Lord face to face (Job 19:25-27). He patiently served God in spite of all his suffering, because he understood that the Creator had a magnificent purpose toward which He worked.

Paul, in his crucial defense before Governor Felix, said, “So serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets; having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:14-15). Arraigned before King Agrippa by his accusers, the Jews, Paul said, “And now I stand here to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers unto which promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain; and concerning this hope I am accused by the Jews, O King! Why is it judged incredible with you, if God doth raise the dead?” (Acts 26:6-8).

The hope of Israel, including all 2 tribes (the doctrine of the “10 lost tribes” had not been invented yet) was that Messiah would come to conquer death, and make possible the resurrection. The true hope was not for political power, land control, economic and social freedom, but for the purpose of God to be fulfilled which was promised first to Adam, then to Abraham, to Moses and repeated over and over by the prophets. The “striving day and night” had to do with attendance to the commands of God, in order that they might be found faithful and eligible for this resurrection.

The hope centered on the purpose of God. No other hope has any chance of fulfillment. Man “has sought out many devices” but he can bring none of them to final and permanent fulfillment. Only the Creator, who holds every man’s breath in His hand, and who has all power, can bring to pass a full and permanent plan. God proposes an eternal man! This is what He set out to make — “in our image.” As a demonstration of this eternal man, He raised Christ from the dead, and glorified and exalted Him as the one “who only hath immortality” (I Tim. 6:16). The purpose of Christ’s death was to remove sin by meeting

the penalty Himself, so all God's people might be raised up and made immortal like Jesus. (1 John 3:2, Rom. 8:29). Christ pinpointed this as God's purpose when He said, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholds the Son, and believes on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:39-40).

It is the hope we hold which gives us incentive to put forth the effort to attain it — not that we can attain a resurrection to eternal life by our works, and this is not what Paul meant when he spoke of "striving" for this hope — but the effort and the striving are necessary to build the faith which is essential to the right relationship with God who fulfills the hope. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). But not merely by hearing. The hearing must be united with obedience (Heb. 4:2), and this is where the striving and labor comes in.

Modern man generally has lost sight of this hope. He delves into ESP, witchcraft, spiritualism and mysticism. Public schools are offering courses in mysticism, literature of the supernatural, transcendentalism, and other forms of the occult. Schools which outlaw the teaching of the Christian faith offer these pagan religions, none of which hold forth the hope of fulfillment of the purpose of God. The result is a generation where crime and immorality prevail. Millions of able-bodied people are on the welfare rolls simply because they have no desire to strive and labor. Where hope is not based on God's purpose, there is no chance of it being fulfilled; such a hope, whether it is religious or secular, amounts to no real hope at all, and "where there is no vision (hope) the people perish."

Even in the churches in the past two decades there has been a clamor for spiritualism, beginning with the signs and wonders of speaking in tongues, and running the gamut to extra-revelations and witchcraft. Where there is no laying hold of the real purpose of God, and the striving for the true hope, false doctrine rushes in to fill the vacuum, and those who are not grounded in the purpose of God are deceived.

Ironically, many in the church have given up the hope Paul preached and have adopted the false hope held by Paul's persecutors, the Jews, who were concerned only with national and political prosperity, rather than the achievement of Christ in His death and resurrection. They who "had no king but Caesar" (John 19:15) were quite willing to forfeit life in order to gain the whole world, and would kill Paul as they had Jesus, because he abandoned Judaism and preached a spiritual Kingdom available to all races, and the hope as eternal life rather than land boundaries.

The hope of Israel, according to Paul, was not a patch of Land in Palestine, to be won by shedding the blood of the young and brave, but rather the resurrection to immortality in a new earth, won by the shedding of Christ's blood.

Paul's reference to "All Israel" specifically referred to the 12 tribes, because it was fleshly Israel that was trying to destroy him and the gospel. Later, in his letters to the

Romans and Galatians, he wrote that all who are of faith are the children of Abraham, and are of Israel (Rom.9:6-8, 30-31; Gal.3:16). Israel certainly does not include unbelievers. Jesus said, "If ye believed Moses ye would believe me" (John 5:46). This is to say that all who reject Jesus have also rejected Moses, who clearly promised the coming of Christ as superior to himself (Deut. 18:15). So all who reject Christ are rejecting both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. How in any sense could they then receive the promise to Israel? They can not. The promise is to the spiritual children of Israel, not to those who merely wear the name.

The modern church gives lip service to the doctrine of the resurrection, generally acclaiming the fact that Christ arose from the dead. But usually the doctrine ends there. There is little connection between this fact of Christ's resurrection, and the general purpose of the church. Even at funerals, when the church is brought into confrontation with death in its most cruel and gruesome reality, the usual effort is to persuade the survivors that it didn't happen, that the lost loved one is not really dead, but is more alive than ever. The message of Paul concerning hope was not to negate the fact of death, but to pronounce the solution to death in a resurrection.

**The resurrection.** The resurrection of Christ is the evidence that all shall be raised. The word of Christ, which called the world from nothing into being, is the word that called Lazarus from the tomb where he lay in putrefaction. By the same word of power, in the last day, he shall recall all the dead from the dust, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting death (John 5:28-29).

It is this hope that makes labor worthwhile and causes men to present their bodies to Christ as living sacrifices. Everyone, except the willfully ignorant, knows that man is created to be in God's image. But everyone also can plainly see that he falls far short of the glory of God. The doctrine of the world is to try to hammer out something from the broken pieces that gives pleasure and a sense of security and success in this life. To do is to build on the sand. The doctrine of Christ is to lose one's life in obedience and service to Him, because He will fashion anew this body of humiliation and conform us to His own image when He comes. To build on this hope is to build on the rock. (Phil. 3:21).

Many who profess Christ have been persuaded that true Christian faith is supposed to supply them with perpetual healing, continual ecstasy and miraculous signs that daily prove that Christ is living. They say that a Christian is supposed to experience a life of glory now, and not have to wait for resurrection. But Paul knew better. He preached that we are to endure hardship and suffer affliction patiently, knowing that our afflictions work for us an eternal weight of glory to be ours when Jesus comes again (2 Cor. 4:17).

A soldier in combat usually does not wear a big grin and talk of how he is enjoying himself. But he does fight and suffer hardship because he has hopes of an end to the war, when he can go home to enjoy the victory. Christians are at war with the hosts of spiritual powers, with sin and evil in the world. But we fight and endure because we have hope, hope of victory over death and the grave and hope to enjoy that victory with Christ in a resurrected and immortal body. Therefore we fight with purpose and not, as Paul says,

“beating the air,” the way the faithless live, frustrated and hopeless. For example, India has suffered in bondage for centuries following mystic spiritualism, similar to modern yoga and transcendental meditation now taught in some public schools. It is strange that in the U.S.A. where churches, supposedly preaching the gospel, abound to superfluity, the populace is turning to these pagan religions which breed hopelessness.

Equally false is the hope of Utopia, the belief that under the right circumstances and under the right leadership the world will come to a point of perfect peace and prosperity, so that every person will be able to enjoy all pleasures of the flesh which his heart craves. Men, both religious and irreligious, are willing to barter their lives to gain this kind of world. It is championed by various groups under names such as “World Tomorrow,” “United Nations,” Atlantic Union,” “British Israelism,” and “Destiny.” To all this Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world,” and through His apostle He said, “Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory” (Col. 3:2-4).

The hope Christ sets before us in the resurrection is the purpose for all our striving to enter in through the strait gate. It is the reason we discipline ourselves, that we may be renewed in the mind, so as to be transformed (Rom. 12:1-2). It is in looking to the Christ, the example of resurrection, and beholding His glory that we “are transformed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). The transformation leads us through trials and tribulations and afflictions, but the end is always in sight, through Christ, who has already achieved it.

There is a sure enough future, a future designed by God Himself, purchased for Christians by Christ’s death and guaranteed by His resurrection. It is God’s own eternal purpose and nothing will defeat it. Therefore we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

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