

On Hope

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- [0 : 00] Thank you, thank you. Just, I like this when people talk to me formally, at least.
- This is how this is going to go. This morning, there's going to be a very brief preface, then a bit of a lengthier introduction, followed by a brief prayer.
- That's the important thing, isn't it? And then the main body of a talk on today's announced topic. Hope, on hope.
- That's what we're going to do this morning. The Oxford Mini Dictionary, I know that's one that I believe most of you sleep with under your pillow, defines hope thus.
- Feeling, it's a modern dictionary. It starts off with the word feeling. Feeling of expectation and desire.
- [1 : 02] I always find dictionary definitions of things very interesting. Hope. So, feeling of expectation and desire. And then, in a mini dictionary, things have to be brief.
- It just gives one further bit of help there. You turn to a dictionary for help, presumably, and for pleasure, sometimes. It says then, person or thing, giving cause for this.
- That's hope. According to the Oxford Mini Dictionary. With that help in front of me, I then turned, I happen right now in my life, I don't usually have this, I have easy access to the Oxford English Dictionary.
- Oh, this is getting more serious. That's the big one, you know, with a magnifying glass. So, you're in the presence of a serious dictionary, when the OED.
- It's hard to get down off a shelf. You need help, you know. It says, it helps, it says, okay, let's define the word desire, says the OED.
- [2 : 14] So, it begins by saying, expectation of something desired. Begins that way. There's so many parts of it. You know, there's history of the word, and the big OED.
- It's so impressive. Expectation of something desired. And then a further bit, desire, desired combined with expectation. It's desired, but it's combined with expectation.
- Then it says, that there is, an obscure meaning. It tells you, there's obscurities.
- You have to learn the OED's short forms. OBS. Feeling, it is sometimes in the old use of the word, feeling of trust or confidence.
- Feeling of trust or confidence. And it tells you that that is a biblical archaism. Biblical archaism. It's personified, says the OED, very nicely.
- [3 : 19] It hope is personified as one of the three heavenly graces. I find that, that's beautiful. And for that, it references 1 Corinthians 13. That's nice for them to do that.
- Hopefully, the ambitious readers, the OED will then turn to a Bible and read 1 Corinthians 13. Now abide, faith, hope, and love. So, the following meditation on hope will combine two things as these definitions apparently do.
- But, this is just a reference to my two things. It rehearses, first off, I want to talk to you about obvious things about the word hope. Hope seems obvious. We know what hope is. So, when you've got to talk about something obvious, have Harvey do the talk.

It rehearses obvious things. I know how the committee works here. And for this, for this talk on some fairly obvious things, I will not apologize.

We need to be reminded more often than instructed. I hope you know where that comes from. I know you learned it once do.

[4 : 30] That's from the great Samuel Johnson. I've always often, I just treasure that saying of Johnson. It's the great justification, for instance, for liturgy. If you want to come to some religious gathering and learn new things, well, there's the kind of churches that cater to that.

But liturgy says you need to be reminded, not instructed. Here we go again, in a sense. And Johnson says that. Johnson was the writer of a dictionary, as you know.

So, he speaks with authority, doesn't he? Was it the first English dictionary came from? Samuel Johnson, I believe. He started that OED thing. It got out of hand, didn't it?

And then, secondly, this is very much an open-ended meditation. because, I'm qualifying what I just said to you, I do not claim to quite at all, if you will, understand hope.

And the more I've looked into hope, a little bit, poking around in the Christian tradition here and there, I've become more and more aware that I, getting a hold of hope is not easy, in terms of definition.

[5 : 42] So, I need your help in grasping what gospel hope is, hopefully with some precision, for all of our benefits, to benefit greatly in our lives by understanding what Christian hope is.

The preface draws to a close. But, I've been asked to tell you something about myself, so I wanted to make it relevant. Why hope?

Well, that's a good question to ask. Why talk on hope? This past week, I turned 60, should I tell you, 63, last Monday, at a birthday.

And I know, and you can say, Harvey, you look every one of those years. Some of you would be more gentle. But I did, I turned 63. And when you reach such an age, hope may be of increasing interest.

As you get older, you really do ask more pungently, I think, well, what am I now hoping for? There's a lot of things that are not a possibility anymore as you get older.

[6 : 54] So I thought, well, what about, what am I hoping for? What are, what is hope? Are there lesser hopes, greater hopes? What does my faith specifically tell me I should keep hoping for?

And what is hope? I just, I want to deal with that this morning. End of preface. Introduction. Hebrews chapter 11, verse 1.

Let me remind you of that again. Folks all know that verse, don't you, in your Bible studies, in your own reading. Hebrews, the magnificent Hebrews chapter 11.

The first great verse of that wonderful chapter says, Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

That's precisely from our ESV Bible. Faith is the assurance. And then, this is Hebrew parallelism, isn't it?

[7 : 55] The author is saying something and then saying it again. Faith is the assurance. or it is the conviction. Assurance.

Conviction. Of things hoped for. Of things not seen. Just think about that verse a lot.

It will get deeper and deeper. It's a challenge to understand that. It's a great, heaven-given, Bible definition of faith.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. The conviction of things not seen. To us is given, this is Calvin, Jean-Covain, commenting on Hebrews 11, verse 1.

The great reformer. A man who deeply instructed people like Cranmer. Our prayer book is redolent of Calvin's influence. It's good to know Calvin if you're an Anglican because he's one of those hidden influences on why we say what we do in the prayer book.

[9 : 04] Why we have a liturgy that says the kinds of things that it says. Calvin says, to us is given the promise of eternal life, but to us, the dead.

A blessed resurrection is proclaimed to us. Meantime, we are surrounded by decay. He continues, a very Lutheran thing now for Calvin to say, we are righteous, and yet sin lives in us.

We hear of ineffable blessedness, but meantime, we are here oppressed by infinite misery. We are promised abundance of all good things, yet we are rich only in hunger and thirst.

What would become of us, he says, in response to his own rhetoric, what would become of us if we did not take our stand on hope?

What would become of us if we did not take our stand on hope, he says, today's topic? And if our heart, as he concludes this comment on Hebrews 11, 1, and if our heart did not hasten beyond this world through the midst of darkness upon the path illumined by the word and spirit of God.

[10 : 36] Calvin again, Hebrews 11, verse 1. Calvin's always sober-minded. Meat and potato stuff from Calvin. Good, solid meal.

None of that new French cuisine. Calvin here is preaching, isn't he? He's preaching. He seeks to move the heart. I found Calvin quite beautiful in his rhetoric there.

He's obviously, he wants to speak pungently to his hearers and readers. He obviously, he wants to instruct. And he seeks, obviously, there a realism, doesn't he?

You may disagree with what is called realism there. I would call it realism. I think he's attacking any kind of easy Christian elation there.

Let's look at the world the way it really is, seems to be saying. Perhaps some of the more spirit-filled movements that were coming alive at the time of the Reformation, he wishes to distance his hearers and readers from that kind of thing.

[11 : 39] The contrasts there are powerful, aren't they? Life is mentioned. Then he talks about we the dead. Resurrection is paired with decay. Righteousness is paired with sin.

Blessedness, neighbors, infinite misery. And then that last pairing, a kind of summary statement, what he said so far here, all good things followed by, oh, we are just rich in hunger and thirst.

Isn't the human condition sad, Calvin is saying there. No. There it is. This is not, I was going to say, Calvin would not make a very good TV preacher.

This wouldn't sell on TV. Here we see life steady and whole. He says, just look at the way it is. Life, resurrection, righteousness, blessedness, all good things.

Well, that's a kind of heaven, isn't it? Then again, death, decay, sin, misery, hunger and thirst. That's not heaven. What are we to do, we who live inside that second list, if you will?

[12 : 51] We've heard of the first list. What's to be done? How do we get into that heavenly second list? And Calvin says, what does he say? The gospel has provided a kind of bridge.

uniting these two worlds. And that bridge, he says, is hope. What would become of us if we did not take our stand on hope?

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. We are a hoping people. Where do we live now with the dead in decay and sin and misery and hunger and thirst?

Where do we wish to be? What do I desire? Why I desire? We desire life and resurrection and righteousness and blessedness. We desire all good things.

Again, how do I travel from the first to the second? The answer is to travel in, according to Calvin, and I think according to the gospel.

[13 : 54] We are called to travel in, if you will, that path that Calvin speaks of. To travel in, to live in the mystery, may I call it?

I will, the mystery of hope. What is the mystery of hope? What precisely is it? How do we live in it? I'd like to know more about this.

So again today, after a preface and an introduction, today, on hope. Let us discover what the gospel has to say to us as best we can, perhaps in a preliminary way, what hope is.

Let's, before we go any further, let's pray to the God of hope. Our God, we thank you that you have gathered us here on this Sabbath day to experience again with your people the great glory of the gospel.

And may we strive together to understand more of its mystery. Specifically, Lord, you know we desire to understand what you've told us about hope.

[14 : 59] Help us, Lord, to understand what you would have us understand in these things. In Jesus, our teacher's name, we pray. Amen.

Some very thoughtful people, as you know, in the ancient world, regarded hope as a curse. Hope has not always had a good press.

To attain any happiness at all, it was best to set hope aside and learn, rather, to love fate. That was regarded as wisdom in the ancient world.

There are modern exponents of this. The profound and largely mad Friedrich Nietzsche, believe that. Perhaps someone like, someone closer to our time, though recently late, Richard Rorty, believed that.

The famous French existentialist Camus, you know, something you might want to put on your refrigerator. He once said, he liked aphorisms, he said, be realistic, stop hoping.

[16 : 15] They are good fun, those French existentialists. Be realistic, stop hoping. Hope is for people. Julian Barnes, I love his essays, a nice pagan, modern, brilliant, sophisticated man.

Julian Barnes, somewhere, I didn't look up the reference, I've always liked it, but Julian Barnes says that the hope is for people who have stopped thinking. The heart is never really quiet, and it's best just to accept that as a given.

Hope, you see, deceives. Along life's way, you've probably at least tentatively believed that. Hope deceives. Core inquieta.

Do you like a little Latin in the morning? I do. Core inquieta. The restless heart. Its observation was not an Augustinian invention, but the great bishop of North Africa thought that to observe the heart ever so closely would benefit the believer.

He was a great believer in knowing the heart, wasn't he? Famously, Augustine. The heart is restless, core inquieta, until it knows God.

[17 : 40] Famously, Augustine said, guard your heart out of it are the issues of life. The heart is in quiet. We all know this.

But hope, again, was seen by many as simply foolish. The Stoics saw that a deep acceptance of what happened along life's way, that was wisdom, not to hope for something different.

In quiet heart is just what we're given. There is a kind of rising above ill fortune, especially ill fortune, by its deep acceptance, if you will.

And this yields a kind of happy nihilism, it's been called. A phrase which describes, has been used to describe, and I don't think he would have disagreed, the brilliant, the normative philosopher almost for our time in some ways, the late Richard Rorty's stance in the world.

He was called a happy nihilist. Others would call happy nihilism a kind of despairing calm. If I had to describe the real deep down worldview in our civilization right now, I would choose that phrase, happy nihilism.

[19 : 02] I think that's what a secular educational system unconsciously teaches its students to believe in. There is no meaning here, you know, but get on with it.

Embrace a kind of happy nihilism. Life is meaningless. We have a lot of great authorities in our culture telling us that these days.

Dr. Hill has quoted a famous Harvard cosmologist who said the more we find out about the cosmos, the more we see that it's pointless. Life is meaningless.

But unlike traditional nihilists who thought that nihilism was a crisis, we hyper-moderns, we late-moderns, we post-moderns, we should not worry about it.

Just accept the fact that life is meaningless and get on with your own little projects of creating your own meaning. That's why religion is making a bit of a comeback in our culture.

[20 : 04] You can have a private religion and give yourself some meaning. Or as Pascal saw so clearly a long time ago, there's never anything really new under the sun, is there?

Just, I'm paraphrasing Pascal, but he was famous for this kind of thinking, just divert yourself and then forget that it's all really pointless. There's the modern attitude that Pascal saw coming.

hope, I think, I would believe, that it's not merely of historical interest or fun to review what certain people are thinking in our culture right now, because I would believe that hope is best understood if not embraced too easily.

The case for saying no to hope, after all, has its own kind of strength, and it enables us to feel our way into much of the modern sensibility.

Calvin, for instance, that's why I like this quote from Calvin on Hebrews 11. He did not jump into hope precipitously. Excuse me for such a word.

[21 : 19] He doesn't just take the believer into hope. He says, well, what does hope do war against? It does war against the world as we experience it, really. As he dwells on a glory like Hebrews 11.

1, he slows us down, doesn't he, Calvin? He just slows us down and would have us look at the world that we live in. Yes, the creation is so often so beautiful.

Calvin thought of the world as a theater of God's glory. He loved God's creation. Friendship and love and the things of human culture may delight us and they should.

Christians should delight in God's creation. But humanity has become a profound question to itself. Who can deny this? We are alienated from ourselves.

Our origins and our meaning have simply disappeared. And our culture is absorbing this more and more as it unfolds. Death, decay, sin and misery, hunger and thirst are real and they appear to rule in the world.

[22 : 34] They just do. Calvin describes the world as it really appears to us, as we often experience it. Here's an approach that might help us here a bit.

I hope it does. Helps me. Why did the church, it's been asked many times, why did the church and its gospel move through the Mediterranean world and beyond with the success it did?

Historians are often quite perplexed at this. A person like Tom Wright, for instance, meditates on this. I'm not sure if he comes to any satisfying answers. Answers have been proposed, but the question remains quite open to speculation.

It is perplexing, it isn't obvious on the surface at all, why Christianity did so well in the ancient world. Joining the church often meant, to put it mildly, social alienation.

A trouble with a powerful state was a real possibility. Sometimes they'd come around to kill you for being a Christian. And the comfort and the real power and sophistication of an old culture might have to be abandoned.

[23 : 52] The ancient world had a lot of nice things to enjoy. But being a Christian alienated you from all these things. Jean-Luc Ferry, a University of Paris philosopher, not a believer in our faith, to put it mildly, has asked himself this question.

And I think he proposes an answer that is both startling and is extremely simple. I remember the first time I read this, I thought, oh, that's too easy, no, that can't be right.

But I see his point increasingly. Because his point was this. This modern atheist philosopher, this man who speaks for our own culture at this time, he looks at the Christians and he says this, the Christians grew in the ancient world because, he says, they offered salvation.

That's why the Christians did so well. He figured it out, this French philosopher. They're clever guys, those French philosophers. Those Christians, they were sneaky.

They started to go around saying to people, want to be saved? Want to be saved? See, this is a, I think at least on its surface, a perplexing answer, but I think it's profound.

[25 : 27] Did not ancient religions offer salvation? Surely they did. They weren't out there being used, if that's the word, by people for nothing.

Did they not offer a way of hope for people? No? The philosopher doesn't dwell on this too much, but I would think that the answer is that the ancient religions, and this is implied by his answer, obviously, Christians offered salvation, so the other guys were offering what?

Well, they were not really offering hope, not precisely, and that was the problem. What ancient religion offered, and this is interesting to know, it seems to me, because it impacts our understanding of what modern religion increasingly offers as well.

Ancient religions offered an experience of the transcendent. You say, well, that's kind of obvious, isn't it? Alone with the alone, as a Neoplatonist famous mystical expression, alone with the alone.

That is profound in its own way, but it leads to, I would assert, I won't argue for this now, it leads to sadness, to melancholy. In fact, it leads to hopelessness.

[26 : 57] Our faith is a hope-filled mystery. Where there is no hope, all that remains, is submission to fate, as the Stoics so clearly saw.

You should just submit to fate, or you may search for another transcendent realm, unconcerned with life in this world.

Hence, the usual charge of the tough-minded amongst us is that religion amounts to escapism. That's a truism. And it makes sense when you see, I want out of this world, I want to experience a transcendent realm now.

Goodbye world, I want out of here. It's hard to resist, last week we had some wonderful drawings on the board, so I want to have my go at them today too.

I'm not as, I can't draw, I'm left-handed, that's my excuse. It's hard to resist doing this kind of thing, so I'm not going to resist putting this in the form of line drawings. And I'm going to do it in, I hadn't really thought about, we'll give top billing to I consider the bad guys and we're going to be down here.

[28 : 11] But what I just described to you here is something like this, this is so profound a drawing. That's what I've just described to you. Life, life, history, is a stormy sea.

Didn't that, didn't that evoke for you a stormy sea? I am good at that, aren't I? Life's a stormy sea. Who denies this?

Perhaps you're going through a stormy sea right now in your life, I don't know. And we may say, with the Stoics perhaps, learn a wisdom which is consistent with that storm.

Or, seek another realm where nothing changes. the divine is never changing.

That's why you seek this golden realm, the ancient world of the never changing. The divine is never changing. It had different names, the fullness.

[29 : 13] Aristotle had a sophisticated philosophical name for it. There was this stormy sea where we all live, history, our lives, and we seek another realm.

The Stoics say just accept it down here, but ancient religions said no, seek another realm. Seek the other realm where nothing ever changes. There you go.

It has some family resemblance to biblical religion, but not much really, it seems to me. The Christian worldview, its elemental structure, if I may call it that, which is there even when it's not thought about, the kids in our church school today are being taught what I'm next going to draw for you as you wait with anticipation for my next drawing.

Even when you're not thinking about it, biblical religion just carries this with it, this picture of the world which is different than that first drawing. Biblical religion goes like this, the Bible is like this, it's a completely different thing than that.

Biblical religion sees history as fallen, but it still has meaning in it. It sees it as fallen and yet good.

[30 : 42] There is good and there is meaning in history. not because the Christians and the Jews thought this through, but because the God they believe in has conferred upon history meaning.

I just want to anticipate something here now. Revelation, at the end of the Bible, Revelation chapter 4, I was reading that the other day, John sees before the throne, do you remember this in John's gospel?

A sea of crystal. before God's throne, a sea of crystal. A strange, even a bizarre image.

It means just there or the book as a whole certainly means at the end, that last book of the Bible. Get this in people like Richard Bauckham and I think Oliver O'Donovan reads this too.

Remember John's theology is poetic theology given in images so it teaches profoundly as you fight your way into the meaning.

[31 : 51] It's poetic theology. The sea of crystal before God's throne simply means, if there's anything simple in that book, that the God of Israel is going to bring the chaotic sea of history into perfect, serene meaning and glory.

Do you believe that? And I saw before the throne a sea of crystal. Sea. A stormy sea made serene and beautiful.

That's what the God of the Bible is doing. See the difference? The stormy sea of history is being spoken to by God and he's going to bring it into perfect beauty and bring into it, if you will, a perfect meaning.

Why this horizontal line? Why would anybody call Bible religion from Genesis to the apocalypse?

Why do we say this? Well, in the simplest terms, it goes like this. Heaven, if you will, appears to Moses. What does he do? What does heaven do?

[33 : 14] It makes a promise to Moses, doesn't it? Oh, to Moses, yes. Heaven appears to Moses and makes a promise, or if you will, repeats a promise.

May I paraphrase heaven's voice? I told Abraham, says this presence in the burning bush, that through him, I'm going to bless the nations. the nations that are living in this storm of history.

I'm going to bless them, said the voice at the burning bush. Now, he says, I continue this project. So, promise creates expectation.

Promise creates hope. There's meaning here, Moses might have said to the burning bush. Yes, hope believes that a future state of affairs will come about.

Moses, I'm affirming my promise to Abraham. I'm going to set the nations, I'm going to put them under blessing.

[34 : 23] Our faith is more, more than a promise, hope, expectation system, but it's never less than that. God says to Moses, I am through you, I'm blessing the nations.

Through you, I'm doing this great work. We might just, as we unfold this a bit, we can certainly believe that Abraham and Moses did not fully understand the promise made to them.

They would have understood it at a certain level. Yes, the God I've met is going to bless the nations. Abraham knew. Moses knew that God was going to set Israel free from her slavery.

There is a promise by God to be with Abraham. That's a beautiful thing. To know God is the glory of our humanity. And Abraham began to know his creator.

God to know, is it Bruce Walt says that to believe in a God means that you have identity conferred upon you and security.

[35 : 39] Abraham meets a God, that's what he would have thought of him as a God, who gives me an identity. I come from this God, and he's going to give me my life meaning and security.

That's what a God is for. You can say it that way. God confers those things. And this Abraham receives and Moses receives a ministry of exodus freedom if we can call it that.

And he actually lived to see that event, didn't he? But did Abraham and Moses know, to put it in very short form terms, because I want lots of time for discussion today, Abraham and Moses, could they possibly have anticipated that what God really meant, what he finally meant, as he enters into relationship with Abraham and Moses, I know I said in the preface, and I'll remind you, I'm saying obvious things today, you know this, that what God finally meant, was he was going to bring about an exodus, a blessing for the entire cosmos, through you I will bless the nations, turns out to mean that the whole creation waits in eager expectation for the revealing of the children of God, who said that?

You know, Paul to the Romans, and Paul was thinking, yes, God started a little promise, a little bit, I call it that, a promise to a guy named Abraham, a Bedouin wanderer in the Middle East, way out there in the desert, then he met Moses and he got his people out of slavery, so what?

The New York Times might not even bother to cover this, but the day is coming when even the New York Times won't be able to ignore the fact that God is now saving the entire cosmos out of its slavery to sin and bringing it into perfect freedom.

[37 : 41] That's what God meant. The whole thing is a promise, expectation system, may I call it that? God created the world, he makes promises, he creates hope, and he's bringing it to a meaningful end.

There's none of this, oh, I wish I could find God today. No, God says, here's how to know me, I make promises, I create hope, live in that.

I'm the Savior. Here's how I'm going to save you. Here's how I save you. I'm telling you again what you already know. There it is.

All of this makes me want to ask again, what is hope, therefore? I don't want it to be, I want it to be as unabstract as possible.

I want to feel its power. Our whole faith is a hope-filled, waiting expectation for the redemption of all things.

[38 : 46] So says Paul to the Romans. Hope is our participation now in what is expected then. God says, leave this stormy sea of history.

Leave aside all this religion stuff that you're tempted to get involved in and live with my story. This is the salvation story.

Jean-Luc Ferry, I think, got it right. The Christians came to a world dominated by this and started to say, this is the true story. And that's why it started to take off in the Mediterranean world.

There is a message of real hope. It's a real story that God is telling in the world. Might the challenge with hope be stated as this?

I'm going right to sort of the core of the questions I've been trying to ask and why I understand, I increasingly see that I kind of understand biblical hope but I don't know if I understand it very deeply.

[39 : 53] I hope to be in heaven now and I desire a contentment with life and hope now. How do I put those two things together?

I hope to be in heaven now. I hope to jump into, if you will, Calvin's second part of his list. Resurrection, blessedness, all good things.

Yes, I want that now, hope. But I also need to learn to live with contentment with life in hope now. Is there not at least in appearance a tension between hope and contentment?

There is, at least on its surface. Biblical religion presents you with this tension. Contentment and hope. There are strong definitions out there of Christian hope.

How about hope is, get this from Oliver O'Donovan quoting a German theologian. German theologians know a lot, folks. You better listen. Hope, says one theologian, is a passion for the impossible.

[41 : 02] And the Christians unleashed that into the world. Do you have in you today a passion for the impossible? In some sense, you should.

That sounds extreme. When I read it, it is extreme. But it is produced, it is prompted by simple, intense pondering on our Lord's resurrection.

Jesus rose from the dead. And he creates in the world, therefore, a passion for the impossible. Calvin's right.

Yeah, I want resurrection. That's my hope. I don't want to be dead forever. It's lousy being dead. I'm told. Or it looks bad.

And Christians went out into the ancient world and said, we've got a message for you, world. Jesus has been raised from the dead and he wants you to be raised from the dead too.

[42 : 06] That is hope. That is salvation. religion. This kind of religion never gets around to really saying that. Do you want to know God now? Let's see if we can find him.

Alone with the alone. Yeah, doesn't work. a passion for the impossible. On the other hand, it is not usual, this is what I want to say to that theologian in creative dialogue, it is not usual to think of contentment as a passion.

Do you have a passion for contentment? The Bible highly commends contentment. Do you have a passion for contentment?

Somehow in our faith, these things go together. At this point, I am still working at it, to put it mildly. We wrestle with things like this.

hope lives in an interval, obviously. Hope is an in-between thing. This interval is interesting to try and define.

[43 : 13] Of course, it is better to seek it out and to live there. If I read our Calvin quote, he also equates life in Christ as life in hope.

We take our stand, he says, on hope. Hope is our meaning now, somehow. Now, tell me how to get there. Hope is our meaning now.

Hope is our depth now. Augustine said, get to know your heart, really deeply. And in there, Augustine actually thought like this, he may have been a bit dangerous almost, that you'll find God in your heart.

Get to know your heart. hope is our depth. Be prepared to give an account, says an apostle, you know this verse, to give an account for the hope that is in you.

Augustine would have loved such a verse. Hope in the Christian life normatively shows, apparently. and people say, what is that in you that I'm seeing?

[44 : 27] What are you hoping for? Haven't you read the sophisticated people who tell us to stop hoping? It's a joke hope. It's false.

It lies. It is deceptive. Have nothing to do with it. It is not wise. The Christians march into the world and say, hope. We have hope.

Hope is how we define ourselves. Wish I understood it better. That religion which seeks transcendence now, that top thing, that brilliant drawing that you can get a copy of later.

That religion which seeks transcendence now, which seeks at its best, it seeks a better country. As the letter to the Hebrew says. I don't think it's despised in our faith.

I don't think Christians have to despise other religions. That is not wise, I'm sure. But what we do is we announce to it that we redirect it, if you will, to hope.

[45 : 32] It's better to live in hope now than anything else. Again, do we understand hope? I ask myself, do I understand hope as it lives so wonderfully in the gospel of Jesus Christ?

How am I to know, for instance, when my hope has become presumption? There are dangers in hope. It's one of the reasons maybe we back off from it.

How do you know when hope is not merely presumption? Are there lesser hopes to be entertained in life? When you reach, for instance, the incredible age of 63, 63, what do I hope for now?

You know, are there lesser hopes that I should still hold on to? And I don't want any, we don't have to have conversations specifically about that way. But what do you hope for?

What does the gospel say I should hope for? You know, Camus would say, get real, stop hoping. He's a smart guy, Camus, a smart cookie.

[46 : 39] But my face says, no, no deal, you can't do it. Despair is not an option for the Christian. We are hopers. We're filled with this stuff. Hope, are there, again, lesser hopes to be entertained?

And should we desire them along with the greater, even I would like to call them the strange hopes that the Christian faith boldly announces? Resurrection from the dead.

There it is. What a hope. should hope be understood? I'm headed towards the end here, I promise. Hope, I think, should be understood as a time of trial.

It leads you into, I'm guessing here, I think so. Hope is a time of trial. After all, hope is waiting. What happens when waiting becomes much waiting?

Hope has its issues, you know? What happens? Is not the wisdom literature in the Bible a warning that life is frequently perplexing? And it may obviously challenge your hopes.

[47 : 48] You know, often life is filled with loss and sadness. Calvin's quote proposes that you not forget about that. Man was made for trouble as the sparks fly upward, says a wisdom writer in Israel.

Life is filled with trouble. You've got to fully acknowledge that, if you will, and then say, I stand on hope. This is both these things are in Scripture.

Surely, hope tips the balance overwhelmingly. It is, is it, our passion? I hope, even for guys who start getting older.

I hope different I think hope is maybe the crucial power constantly to present to the aging. How do we realize hope as a real power as we physically dwindle?

How does hope become a felt power? I take it it should be a changing us power. These things we know.

[48 : 59] Hope that God is really present should change our awareness of the world, should it not. Our Father, at the 730 service, we prayed it a couple times, paid real attention to it today.

Our Father in heaven means our Father present now. The one who confers hope. He's present in invisible power, able to change things.

He's able to make all things perfect, whether it's now or later. Always this God, our Father, is our hope.

Specifically, He is our hope. We step along life's way in this hope. Promise, again, I'm getting towards the end, promise brackets all of Scripture, just very briefly.

I am the Lord your God. God to Moses in Exodus. There is the founding promise of Scripture. I am the Lord your God.

[50 : 09] If that doesn't create hope in you, nothing will. I, the Almighty One, the Able One, I am your God. I give you your identity. I give you security.

I give you a future. I am your God. hope in the Bible should be seen as behold, I make all things new.

That's what our God says He's going to do. He's going to make all of history, all of your life into that perfect, beautiful, serene glory that He wants it to be, that sea of crystal.

He wants you to be with Him alive forever. That is the Christian hope. I told you I'm telling you obvious things today, repeating them. I won't apologize.

Therefore, faith, wherever it develops into hope, is the final paradox of it all, I think, what makes you want to struggle with this issue.

[51 : 17] Hope causes perhaps not rest, but unrest. Not patience, but impatience. That divine passion for something to change is in our faith.

Those who hope in Christ, says one theologian, I think, very provocatively, but very beautifully, those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is.

No. But begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world. Yes.

We are in conflict with this stormy sea. It always wants to convince us that it will have the last word. But God says, no, I will have the last word.

I will subdue that stormy sea of history, and I will make it beautiful. I will make your life beautiful. I am the Lord your God. Behold, I make all things new.

[52 : 26] That is our God. It's a warning. I say this to myself. It's a warning, if you will, to the mere conservative. There's only so much we can do, only so much we can hope for.

We shouldn't be unrealistic. Sometimes the unrealistic people, the dreamers, are on to something. We can't just exclude them. We don't want presumption, but we can't exclude the passion for a difference that God wants to make in our lives.

Lewis, famously, C.S. Lewis, as you know, broadly understood, but I think accurately understood, he called his conversion surprised by joy.

The famous title of that famous book. But you know the whole line, he's quoting Wordsworth there, and it's profound, surprised by joy, impatient as the wind.

God can be the one who provokes impatience in you. Want change, hope more, I can do more for you, I can do more with you, believe greatly, hope greatly, cor inquieta, I love that little phrase, cor inquieta, it may be, it may reflect at times the promptings of our God.

[53 : 51] You're too quiet, you're too content, let's change things, I've got a great future for you. Much to think about, and to be desired is the gospel of hope.

I should conclude, so we draw to a close, with a bit of a warning, but again a warning that you know, but it's worth repeating to ourselves frequently, always there is a danger in some theology and in much, perhaps very much spirituality, and that danger is simply this, we begin to think that the whole narrative of our faith is about me and God, alone with the alone.

we go back to a kind of brilliant, mysterious, alluring, beautiful, and essentially wrong mysticism.

Alone with the alone. Me and God, I'm saved, I'm going to heaven. No, it's not about that. Me and eternity, no. And in this, we forget, in this air, that there is one mediator between us and our creator, and that is a man named Jesus Christ.

We get into hope, into a relationship with our God, through a mediator. There is no one else who can do this. Jesus Christ is the mediator.

[55 : 18] Christ Jesus, as the New Testament says, is our hope. Just one passing word, the Gospels display, love this of late, this language, from Richard Baucom, a St.

Andrews University New Testament scholar. The Gospels, he says, display a novum. Really, I went to Latin today. A novum, you know how to spell novum?

N-O-V-U-M. The Gospels display a novum. They witness to a unique person. They are not precisely an argument.

Not precisely. They are a witness. They witness. Unbelief tries to read between the lines to find another Jesus in the Gospel because it rejects the witness as it stands.

That's all unbelief ever really does. Mountains of scholarship, libraries filled with books, written by people who cannot endure the Gospel, the man portrayed in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

[56 : 35] And so they try and find another Jesus in there somewhere. They reject it. The witness of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John says, in witness, if I put it that way, here is a man we met.

This is who he is. This is Jesus. As John Ladd, the New Testament scholar, put it, I think it couldn't be put more beautifully, the Jesus of the Gospels is the presence of the future.

That's who Jesus is. They met our future back there in Palestine when Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea. They met the future of the world in Jesus.

He is the world's only future. He is our future. He is therefore our hope. So, let us, when our hearts are quiet, and even when our hearts are unquiet, learn to live in this hope.

Jesus Christ is our hope. He is our future. Take you out of that stormy sea, put you in the way of that sea of crystal where he makes all things new and confers upon you eternal life.

[58 : 03] I wonder what that is. I can't wait to start to find out. That's what I wanted to say to you. Those are my questions about hope. And so, let me say a word of prayer and then your feedback, please.

Lord Jesus, teach us what hope is and form it in us as the power surely that it should be in us. And we thank you that you are doing this for us.

We pray, our Father, we pray in the name of your Son, our hope, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.