

Our Hope in Heaven

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Date: 04 October 2015

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read in Colossians chapter 1. And I want us to read from verse 3.

Colossians 1 verse 3, We always thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

Particularly that part of what Paul is saying there where he's thanking God for the church in Colossae because of the hope that is laid up for you in heaven.

One of the many great features about the Apostle Paul was he was a great encourager. He was always encouraging the churches that he wrote to.

He could be quite blunt, of course, and he was never shy in telling them. If there were things that he felt, there were glaring errors sometimes, and he wouldn't mince his words.

[1 : 11] But that was always done in love, and it was always with the aim of building them up and encouraging them in the faith. And we find that although this church in Colossae was not a perfect church, yet the Apostle Paul is giving thanks for that church.

And we find that it's a feature in most of the letters that he writes that he thanks God for the various gifts and the various virtues that the church is displaying.

And I think that's a great thing to do because it's very easy to point the finger and to see the faults and the blemishes and the failings within people. And we have to be careful that we don't fall into that trap or into that category of highlighting people's failings.

Because the Apostle was very good at doing the very opposite, of highlighting their virtues. And he was building the church up in this way, and he was thanking God for their faith, for their love, for the hope, for the different things that they were displaying.

And following on from that, we find the Apostle, we find something of the prayer that he is praying for. Well, sometimes we wonder, what do we pray for?

[2 : 34] Well, if you go through this first chapter, like for instance, in verse 9, the Apostle says, And so from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you.

So what does he pray? This is just an example. That you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, and so on. I think this is a wonderful example of a prayer. And I think we should always be making use of God's word for our prayer.

Jesus taught us to pray. The disciples came to Jesus and said, Lord, teach us to pray. And I think it's one of the greatest ways, it is one of the safest ways to pray, is to base our prayer upon God's word.

Because if we are praying according to God's word, we're praying according to his will. And we're told in Scripture that if we pray according to his will, that he hears us and that he will answer us accordingly.

[3 : 48] So that is why it is so important that our prayer life is based upon, or in many ways based upon, if it's not based directly upon God's word, it's based upon the principles of God's word.

So Paul is thanking the Lord for this church. And this must have been, when they received this letter, it must have been so encouraging for them to see Paul highlighting these things.

He's highlighting their faith, as we said, highlighting their faith and their love and their hope. Faith looks, in many ways you could say faith looks upwards, love looks outwards towards others, and hope looks into the future.

Paul was often talking about faith, hope, and love. And in fact, I suppose you remember that great letter, in 1 Corinthians, he writes about love, he writes about these three great things, faith, hope, and love.

But he said, the greatest of these is love. Sometimes we ask why? Well, faith receives, hope expects, and love gives.

[5 : 01] And we're told, again in the Bible, that it is better to give than to receive. But it says, just I want us to think about this tonight, what the apostle is talking about here, and it's what he is saying to them, is true of every single believer, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

And I want us just to think a little about that tonight. First thing we have to ask ourselves is, what is Christian hope based upon? Well, this morning we were looking at the world's wisdom, and heavenly wisdom, and we could see the huge contrast between them.

What's the difference then between the hope that is in the world, and the hope that is in Jesus Christ? Well, in many ways, it might appear similar, but there's a huge difference.

The normal hope, what we would talk about, the hope of life, the hope of just what we're doing. Supposing, for instance, you say to yourself, well, you know, I haven't, but supposing I said, I booked a holiday for next year to France.

I'm going. I paid my money. I booked through this particular holiday company. I know the hotel I'm going to. I've looked it up. That's where I'm going. Everything is sorted.

[6 : 25] Everything is arranged. That's where I hope to go, because everything is sorted. And that's the way we operate in this life. However, even although I hope to go, that doesn't mean that I will end up getting there.

There's loads of things could happen that could prevent. Maybe, for instance, a holiday company will fold up. Maybe I will become seriously ill. There could be loads of things, the circumstances in your life could so change that everything you had planned and everything you had purposed and what you had paid for, everything, all of a sudden, it's of no use because life has changed.

And so, that's the way it is in the normal run of things. We can say, when we say, I hope to, it's no more than, I hope so. I'm hoping that it will work out, but there is no guarantee.

Christian hope is different because Christian hope is based upon reality. It is based not on ourselves. If our Christian hope was based upon ourselves, it would be no stronger, it would be no different to the hope so of going on that holiday next year or whatever you're planning to do.

But the Christian hope is based upon the living and through God and that makes all the difference in the world. Our Christian hope is based upon God the Father.

[8 : 01] In all, when you think about it, here is God, the living and through God, the creator of this world, the governor of this universe, the God who brought into being by the word of his power, the God who will one day wrap up this world in the way as we know it, who knows exactly when that is, who is moving everything to a predetermined end.

This is the God that our hope is based upon and in. And that makes a huge, huge difference to everything. Our hope is based in Jesus Christ.

That's what we read there in verse 27. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

So our hope is based upon all the promises of Christ and all that Christ fulfilled. Because we look to Calvary, to the cross of Jesus Christ, what he did on that cross.

We look to the tomb that's empty. We read about his rising from the dead, his resurrection, and his ascension, and his intercession for us in glory, and all the promises that he has given to us.

[9 : 26] And Jesus is the truth, the absolute truth. So our hope is based upon what he did.

And that's extraordinary. Because everything that he did on the cross, he didn't do for himself. He did for us. That's why he came into this world.

He came in order to do for us what we couldn't do. And so our hope, Christ in you, our hope is in him, but he is in us.

This is a wonderful thing. And so this is why our hope has a real foundation. It's not flimsy. It's not uncertain.

It is sure and it is guaranteed. And then that hope is given to us by the Holy Spirit. See, the Holy Spirit, he ministers to us. And the Holy Spirit ministers with our spirit, reassuring us of the Father's love to us in the Son, of the Son's love to us in laying down his life for us and rising again.

[10 : 36] And so the Holy Spirit is communicating this to our hearts. So we know it. We know it's real. We know that we have a future. That's one of the wonderful things of being a Christian is you know where you're going.

And that makes such a difference in life because so many people don't know really where they're going. Sometimes people don't even think about it. They don't stop to think about it.

They just go on. But in the quiet moments, people often wonder, why am I here? What's it all about? What's the purpose in everything? And sometimes there's, although people, you might look outwardly, life seems to be going really well for them.

There's often despair in people's lives. What's it all about? Is the grave the end of everything? Am I going to work myself right throughout life for all this and then just, that's it?

But you see, the Christian has this hope. Because it comes up, it's not in any way, it's not arrogant. There cannot be any arrogance or pride in it because it's not of ourselves.

[11 : 44] We didn't do it. There is no superiority whatever within the Christian it is just this quiet assurance that is given to us by the Holy Spirit who is ministering to us of this hope that is within our hearts through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what is it then that we hope for? Well, there's loads of things we hope for. One of the things that we hope for with regard, because we're told about this hope, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

And I think that's taking us on. Because although we're grounded in this world and this world we're caught up in all that happens and we're engaged and involved with the world and we're in the world and we're not of the world but we're, this is where we are just now.

But side by side with that there is in our hearts the thoughts of heaven. The thoughts of what's ahead. And there's all this hope.

So what do we hope for? What are we expecting? Because hope and expectation go together. That's the difference. Again, you hope for something in this world but it may not, the expectation might not be fulfilled.

[13 : 06] You know, some of the things when you look back over your life that you were looking forward to, you know, things in the past and you were anticipating and you were hoping, oh, you're really hoping for this and longing for it and it happened and it wasn't what you thought.

The hope and the expectation didn't match because we were expecting something great and it didn't happen like that. Well, the reverse almost is through here. What we're hoping for, the expectation, yes, it'll be fulfilled but it'll go way beyond what we even expected.

So, what is it that we're hoping for? Well, the first thing, obviously, that we're hoping for and longing for is the day when we will be forever with the Lord and I would say straight away this is a dividing mark between the believer and the unbeliever.

It's a very clear one. You ask a lot of people, what do you want when you die? A lot of people will say, oh, I'd like to go to heaven and they genuinely mean that. But if you ask a little further, you'd say, well, what is heaven?

Where is heaven? What is heaven in your thinking? And for a lot of people, heaven is not something that they've really thought through. It's a place in their mind that's better than here on earth but it's often kind of dreamy.

[14 : 30] It's a place that everything is good but they're not basing it upon anything other than sort of maybe their own imagination of what it might be.

But the Bible shows us many things about heaven. But one thing that heaven is, it is full of Christ at the very center of heaven will be the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we're shown pictures of that in Revelation of how the Lamb will lead us and He will feed us. The Lamb is going to be at the very center of the believer's life in glory. And it's a follow on from here.

In this world we see but by faith. And sometimes we don't see very well at all. Sometimes we struggle if we're honest.

Sometimes we struggle. But the thing is within your heart there is this, there's a desire, there's a longing. For one day where you will really see Jesus.

[15 : 33] Where all these things that are holding back. The Bible describes it as in Corinthians that we see through a glass darkly. You know, sometimes you'll see a dark glass or some of these dark bottles and you try and see through it and everything is kind of fudged and very dim and sort of you just can't see very clearly through it.

In many ways that's how it is for us. We know who's there. We know what we're going with. But we're longing for the day when that will be gone and we will see clearly.

We'll see Jesus. And those who have really, and I believe this, those who have really, really longed to see Jesus in this world and those who have really, really longed to be with Jesus in this world will be with him.

Because you know, that is not a natural desire. If tonight the desire in your heart is that you want to spend eternity in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, I would say to you that that is a desire that has been given to you by God.

It's not natural. The natural person sees no beauty in Jesus that they would desire in. The person without faith, they have no interest in I shouldn't say the person without faith because there are people who are searching for Jesus.

[17 : 00] But normally many people there's no particular desire for Jesus. But the believer has. That's where you want to be in his presence.

Tonight you would love to see Jesus. You would love in some way that heaven would be opened and that you would be given a clear vision of him.

But you know something, we couldn't take it. In our natural being, in our bodies here in this world, we wouldn't have the capacity to cope with a standing in the presence of the risen, exalted, glorious saviour.

When Jesus revealed himself as that risen saviour to the apostle Paul, he fell down blinded. when Jesus revealed himself in this glory to the apostle John, in the Isle of Patmos, John fell down before him as one dead.

We do not have the capacity as sinners to stand before his glorious presence. But that will change a death who will be brought in to his presence.

[18 : 13] And so there is this great desire within our heart to see Jesus, to be with Jesus, to be in his presence forever.

Again, we have in our heart this hope, this longing for the day, the desire where we will be free from sin. Because sin has shackled us and dragged us down right throughout our life.

how often we groan, how often we moan because of our sin, how often we disappoint ourselves. Wouldn't it be wonderful where we will never have to say, as the apostle said, the good that I would, I do not, and the evil that I would not, that's what I do.

Because that's exactly how it is. In glory, nobody will ever say that. Because nobody will ever be doing evil. Everybody will be doing only good.

And we long for that. That's part of the hope that is in your heart and in my heart tonight. Because there's sin in everything, everything that we're involved in.

[19 : 30] Sin is always there. We also long for the day when we will give perfect service to the Lord. That's another thing that's in our hearts.

Part of the great hope that we have. That we will be before the throne and that's part of what glory will involve us, serving the Lord. But it'll be perfect. It's never perfect here.

Because even when we do anything and everything that we do, we still feel so much a sense of failure.

failure. And you know, it's a funny sort of thing because we're complex. We can swing from one extreme to the other. In service, people can be filled, puffed up with pride and seeking to take glory to themselves rather than giving glory to the Lord.

Or we can be absolutely crippled by a sense of our own inadequacy and our own failure and our own utter uselessness to the extent that we just pull back from serving altogether.

[20 : 42] But there'll never be anything like that in glory. Self won't be there. Our motive in service will be completely clear and pure.

Just as we're talking about this morning, that purity. In this world, there's so much deception, there's so much that's wrong. There it will be absolutely clear and pure.

We also look forward and hope for the day when we will be delivered from every kind of trouble. And this world has been filled with so many troubles. Yes, there's a lot of blessings and so on, but when we think of all the sorrows and all the crosses, all the losses, all the bereavements, all the pain, you just go through all the different things within your own lives.

It'll be amazing to be in an environment where there will be no pain. Just think about it. Because it's part of life. Everybody experiences pain, whether that's pain within your body, whether it's a physical pain, or whether it is pain within the mind, pain within the heart, through the griefs and the sorrows and the anguish and all the different troubles that we go through in life.

life. Isn't it wonderful? None of these things ever, ever again. As we were thinking there two or three weeks ago about arriving in glory, where sorrow and sighing will flee away.

[22 : 15] It's not just that it won't be anymore. It's not that it's like a gradual fading away. It is instant. It's immediate. It couldn't be quicker. It's gone.

And that's part of the wonder, part of the great hope that we have. We'll be freed from every enemy, everything that has threatened us and hurt us here, all the temptations, Satan tempting us and where we're battling with all these different things, freed from every doubt and every fear, where the king of terrors will never reign again.

No more death. You know, when you go through the book of Revelation, part of glory is highlighted to us in negatives, that there will be no more. And that's one of them, death.

No more death. Wouldn't that be extraordinary? You know, that's part of the extraordinary or the amazing contrast between heaven and hell. Because hell is described not only as death, but the second death.

death. That's one of the descriptions given. And death is so, so awful. Just, it's ugly. There is nothing that you can say about death and say, oh, that's good.

[23 : 37] It's not. It's not how we were originally made when God made us. It was not to die. But of course, the fall brought death in.

And death is ugly. It's an enemy. It's described in the Bible as an enemy. But we're told that through Jesus Christ, it is the last enemy. Because he has defeated it.

And that'll be part of the wonderful, wonderful thing that we're looking forward to. You know, in this world, it's part of what makes it so sad. As we read about in Psalm 103, you know, the place that once knew him will know him no more.

How true that is. You know, just so many people who are so much part and partial of our lives are no longer there. Never be seen again in this world. It's just, it's part of what brings a bleakness to life.

It'll never be so in glory. Nobody will ever be saying, well, we're so and so today. Nobody will ever, ever be lost or disappear from glory.

[24 : 43] The prospect is wonderful. people. But we see also, the last thing that we really highlight here is because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

That's where our hope is. It's in heaven. And that's really important for us because it is safe, it is assured, it is secure, it is guaranteed. If you have something that was really, really valuable, you would want to put that somewhere safe.

if you had something that was incredibly precious, you wouldn't just sort of leave it lying around. You would make sure that it was in a secure place.

And that's part of what we have in this, that it's in our hope is in heaven. We're told elsewhere that our life is hid in Christ.

Isn't that wonderful? If you want to hide something safe, where better could you hide it than in Jesus?

[25 : 45] And that's what happens to a Christian. Your life is hid in Christ. So no force, no power, no enemy, nothing can ever get to you.

That's part of the wonder of it all. But here we have our hope is in heaven. And that means that it can never, ever be stolen or taken away.

And sometimes you'll see in the news people who have experienced terrible burglaries, or sometimes people have experienced their house has been demolished through fire.

I remember seeing a couple outside a mansion, it was a beautiful mansion that was years ago, and they were distraught and they said, we have lost absolutely everything.

And so they had. And their lives at that moment, they just felt, it was just utterly empty. That's the way they felt at that moment, standing outside the shell of this, what had been a magnificent house.

[26 : 48] We have lost everything. But you know, the believer will never, never say that. No matter, and I know people have lost many, many, many things that are so precious.

But you know, this is something that cannot be lost, our hope, because it is in heaven. It's hidden in Christ. You are hidden in Christ. Your life is there in him.

It can't be spoilt. There's no moth or rust. It cannot feed away anything. It is so secure. So the question we have to ask this tonight is, what about you?

Where is your hope? Where is your life? Where is your treasure tonight? If it's only in this world, can I remind you of this one fact? That whatever the world gives you, it's only on loan.

Because it's going to take it back. You're only going to have it for a while. And then that's it. Jesus Christ, when he gives life, he gives it forever.

[27 : 59] It's called eternal life. And eternal life doesn't begin the moment you arrive in glory. It begins here. The life you have, it's a life that never ends. The start of it is here.

When you come to faith in Jesus Christ, that is it. Nothing stops, severs, cuts, breaks. It is forever.

forever. It couldn't be more straightforward. The choice is carrying on in the world without Jesus, but having to remember that whatever you have, it's only for a wee while.

Whereas having Jesus, then you have forever and ever and ever. if you live without Jesus and die without Jesus, we're talking death.

We're talking eternal death. And everything that's horrible in death. If you have Jesus, then death is out of the picture. Death is no more.

[29 : 08] The contrast couldn't be greater. I hope tonight that you will all accept Jesus. Let us pray. Lord, our God, we ask that you will bless us.

And we pray that we may indeed realize and understand how great you are. We give thanks, O Lord, for this great salvation.

And we give thanks tonight as we worship the living and true God. That God, the Father, couldn't do more because he gave all he could give his own beloved son.

And that the Lord Jesus Christ couldn't do more. He gave himself entirely for us. And we pray tonight then that all of us may not just simply appreciate what was done, but that we may rest our life, our hope, our future in Jesus.

Lord, bless us as a congregation. Bless us at a time of vacancy. mercy. We pray for that wisdom that we heard about, that that wisdom that we might be filled with the knowledge of your will and spiritual wisdom and understanding, particularly at this time, so that you will lead us and direct us and show us the way to go.

[30 : 28] Wash away from us our every sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Our concluding item of praise is Psalm 130 from the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 130 where the psalmist is speaking about his hope in the Lord, his hope in the word.

Psalm 130 from the Scottish Psalter. Page 421 the whole psalm, the tune is martyrdom.

Lord, from the depths to thee I cried, my voice Lord, do thou hear, and to my supplication's voice give an attentive ear. Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgivenesses that feared thou mayest be.

I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope is in his word, more than they that for morning watch, my soul waits for the Lord. Psalm 130, the whole psalm, the tune is martyrdom, Lord, from the depths to thee I cried.

[31 : 33] Lord, from the depths to thee I cried, my voice Lord, do thou hear, unto my supplication's voice, give an attentive ear.

Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, but yet with thee.

Forgiveness is that feared thou mayest be.

I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope visit his word.

More than they that fall morning watch, my soul wait for the Lord.

[33 : 21] I say day, more land, lay thou to watch, the morning light to see, let Israel hope in the Lord, for with him mercies me.

And plentious redemption is ever found with with him.

And for all his iniquities he Israel shall redeem.

now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forever more. Amen.