

For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God. (Psa 38:15)

Today I want to talk a little bit about hope

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” (1Co 13:13)

Hope is a topic that gets a lot of discussion in the world, especially right now with these plagues of violence, fear and of course COVID running rampant. Preachers and pundits are obsessed with ‘giving people hope’ regardless of the situation they see around them and whether there is actually any hope to be had.

There is a distinct difference between the hope the world talks about and the hope of the Scripture. If you look in the dictionary at the word, you find the primary definition is “to wish for a particular outcome”. When we talk about hope in terms of Scripture, we aren’t talking about some fleeting thing of the flesh like a ‘wish’. The word translated ‘hope’ in the New Testament is *elpidzo* or *elpis*, Strong’s 1679 and 1680, and both words mean essentially the same thing, that is to “expect, confide, especially an expectation of eternal salvation”.

Hope is not a New Testament concept, and there are quite a number of Hebrew words that are translated ‘hope’ throughout the Old Testament. I’ve collected them all here for your reference with verses where the words are used.

- 982 - *baw-takh'*

A primitive root; properly to *hie* for refuge (but not so *precipitately* as [H2620](#)); figuratively to *trust*, be *confident* or *sure*: - be bold (confident, secure, sure), careless (one, woman), put confidence, (make to) hope, (put, make to) trust.

“But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.” (Psa 22:9)

- 983 - *beh'-takh*

From [H982](#); properly a place of *refuge*; abstractly *safety*, both the fact (*security*) and the feeling (*trust*); often (adverbially with or without preposition) *safely*: - assurance, boldly, (without) care (-less), confidence, hope, safe (-ly, -ty), secure, surely.

“Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.” (Psa 16:9)

- 986 - *bit-taw-khone'*

From [H982](#); *trust*: - confidence, hope.

“For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.” (Ecc 9:4)

- 2620 - *khaw-saw'*

A primitive root; to *flee* for protection (compare H982); figuratively to *confide* in: - have hope, make refuge, (put) trust.

“The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.” (Pro 14:32)

- 2976 - *yaw-ash'*

A primitive root; to *desist*, that is, (figuratively) to *despond*: - (cause to) despair, one that is desperate, be no hope.

“Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.” (Isa 57:10)

- 3176 - *yaw-chal'*

A primitive root; to *wait*; by implication to *be patient*, *hope*: - (cause to, have, make to) hope, be pained, stay, tarry, trust, wait.

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- 3689 - *keh'-sel*

From H3688; properly *fatness*, that is, by implication (literally) the *loin* (as the seat of the leaf *fat*) or (generally) the *viscera*; also (figuratively) *silliness* or (in a good sense) *trust*: - confidence, flank, folly, hope, loin.

“If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence;” (Job 31:24)

- 4009 - *mib-tawkh'*

From H982; properly a *refuge*, that is, (objectively) *security*, or (subjectively) *assurance*: - confidence, hope, sure, trust.

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.” (Jer 17:7)

- 4268 - *makh-as-eh', makh-seh'*

From H2620; a *shelter* (literally or figuratively): - hope, (place of) refuge, shelter, trust.

“Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil.” (Jer 17:17)

- 4723 - *mik-veh', mik-vay', mik-vay'*

From H6960; something *waited* for, that is, *confidence* (objectively or subjectively); also a *collection*, that is, (of water) a *pond*, or (of men and horses)

a *caravan* or *drove*: - abiding, gathering together, hope, linen yarn, plenty [of water], pool.

“And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.” (Ezr 10:2)

- 7663 - *saw-bar'*, *shaw-bar'*

The second form being used erroneously in [Neh 2:13](#), [Neh 2:15](#); a primitive root; to *scrutinize*; by implication (of *watching*) to *expect* (with hope and patience): - hope, tarry, view, wait.

“For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.” (Isa 38:18)

- 7664 - *say'-ber*

From [H7663](#); *expectation*: - hope.

“Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:” (Psa 146:5)

- 8431 - *to-kheh'-leth*

From [H3176](#); *expectation*: - hope.

“The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.” (Pro 10:28)

- 8615 - *tik-vaw'*

From [H6960](#); literally a *cord* (as an *attachment* (compare [H6961](#))); figuratively *expectancy*: - expectation ([-ted]), hope, live, thing that I long for.

“For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth.” (Psa 71:5)

That's a lot of words to be translated as 'hope'. It solidifies for me that the English word 'hope' is incomplete to articulate the true meaning in this context, and we must be careful not to lose ourselves in the watered down meaning it has in today's English.

If you look at all of these words and try to synthesize a complete view, I think you come to the conclusion that hope is a patient expectation of an outcome, with confidence, full trust and belief that it will, without question, happen; specifically it is the belief that the souls of those who have their names written in the Lamb's book of life will be resurrected from the grave and joined in His eternal presence at a future date; those who have hope are hoping for this outcome. Focus on the idea of expectation, of certainty. This kind of hope drives behavior.

Scriptural hope is not some empty, vague generalization of a desire. It is not some inarticulate fuzzy feeling or a general want of a material thing. It has nothing to do

with chance, luck or karma. The hope I'm talking about is entrenched in absolutes – absolute assurance, absolute trust, and absolute execution – because it is not based on the feeble abilities of man to accomplish this glorious thing, but rather provided by and made up of Christ Himself.

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;” (1Ti 1:1)

The phrase “which is” in this verse is interpolated, meaning it isn't in the original, so what Paul is articulating to Timothy is that Christ is Himself **our** hope. I emphasize the word ‘our’ for a reason that I'll come back to in a bit. Christ is the only hope that His people have – not their works, not their worship, not anything; and if you aren't one of His people, you have no, absolutely, unequivocally, no hope as it relates to your soul.

Paul expounds on this idea in his letter to the church at Colosse

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” (Col 1:27-28)

This may be the most comprehensive definition of hope found in Scripture. There is so much condensed into this passage that I don't know I can unravel all of it. But at a high level we have a number of crucial concepts for us as it relates to hope. In this passage we learn that

1. Christ and salvation is a mystery that is both rich and glorious, and that God (meaning the Father) would have known among not only the Jews but also the Gentiles. See verse 26, how the mystery has been hid from ages and generations, but is now, through the word, being made not just known but manifest (or clearly apparent). It is important to understand that the mystery of heaven and the sovereignty of God is not hidden from men in the general sense – the scripture as we know it is in all languages, available for all to read and know, unlike the oracles of God that were given expressly and immediately to the Jews. What this lays out in no uncertain terms is that Christ's coming wasn't strictly for the Jews, but this new branch of the tree exists and His sacrifice is applicable to men of all tongues and tribes, nations and kindreds, not just the descendants of Abraham.
2. The mystery Paul is speaking of is the mystery of Christ in us. Not in some weird Catholic way that sounds like demon possession, but perhaps better translated ‘revealed among you’ or ‘fully revealed to you’. This is the crux of the matter here. Christ is revealed as the hope of all the saints to gain a more enduring substance, a true possession, to end their pilgrimage and be granted a seat at the right hand of God. He is the only true hope, the only actual way to gain that

entrance to everlasting life. This does NOT say that Christ gives hope to all men. This is only a hope for those who want nothing of the world and seek that heavenly city whose builder and maker is God. This is not all men, this is not men generally, and this message has no meaning to anyone who is happy to live in this life and soak up the things of the flesh.

3. Christ is both the object and the source of this hope. He does this the same way He is both propitiation and propitiator. He provides the hope to us as already having been resurrected and ascended to God's right hand on high. He provides hope as our forerunner. He is also a chief part of that which we hope for – to be in His presence for eternity.
4. See here how Paul distinctly makes the point we aren't talking about willy-nilly hope scattered around like salt on popcorn. We preach the hope that is Christ, but we warn all men FIRST as part of that preaching, and allow for teaching as it is found appropriate to do (see Jude verses 3, 22 and 23 for more clarity on this point).

One of the things I take away from this as it relates specifically to our public ministry is that hope is not a thing that can be handed out to others.

Hope is not a new M&Ms color, a new flavor of Skittles, it isn't a symbol or a bracelet you can wear. It isn't a phrase, a tract, a pamphlet you can give someone to read and they suddenly have it. It isn't a message on a sign, it isn't a song, it isn't a slogan on a T-shirt. Hope is not a material thing – it is the source of that substance we all strive for as Hebrews 11 tells us

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
(Heb 11:1)

Hope is made evident through expressions of faith. And just like we can't give someone faith, we can't give them hope. Why is that? Couldn't we just say a lot of optimistic and happy feel-good things that make people feel hopeful? No, because the hope that we are talking about hasn't come from men or any other earthly source

“Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.” (2Th 2:16-17)

We aren't commanded to give men hope. We aren't commanded to give men a semblance of hope. There can be no hope for someone who has not been given that hope by Jesus, and we have no business establishing false hope by preaching some doctrine that claims to give hope to all men.

Pay attention to what Paul tells his friends at Colosse:

“...Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom...”

We warn, we teach. We don't labor to give someone the expectation that they can work their way to heaven, or that they, without any understanding of what they should hope for, or why it is necessary to have the hope, can expect to receive that eternal rest. Those who don't feel a need for that rest have no desire for it.

Which is why we warn. They don't realize they need hope. What need does anyone have of hope, if the expectation they've been given by every false Christian around the globe is that God loves the whole world unconditionally and they're all going to heaven when they die, regardless of their natural depravity or how they've lived their lives? Those people don't think that they **need** any hope! They don't see their own filthy rags! In their estimation, everyone is walking around in brand new Christian Dior duds that sparkle and shine, because God don't make no junk!!!

Only people who understand their filthiness, who know and acknowledge their sinfulness, who mourn for the wretchedness that permeates all mankind, only **they** see their need for and desire to have a hope! Why do they see it? Because God has made them to know that they can never pay the debt His justice requires of them, so they will only have despair if the grace of God doesn't give them hope. They are given sight and hope to be able to deal with what they see.

Yes, an acknowledged and sorrowful sinner must have hope if they are to function in this life. But hope isn't some chocolate syrup we can pour on people's lives to make their misery somehow seem less miserable. Hope isn't a cheese sauce you can use to make even broccoli palatable. Hope is reserved. Hope is a gift of grace from God, not a deliverable, a chotchki you leave the church service with. Hope isn't something you can talk people into. No number of conversations or discussion sessions, no number of treatises or pamphlets handed out will put hope in a person's heart.

Moreover, it is **our hope**. Not 'our' as in the whole round world, the entirety of mankind. But 'our' as in God's people. His elect. His chosen. His remnant. Through grace, hope is provided to those for whom He authored, finished, and delivered their faith. Hope is not a willy-nilly platitude you go around wishing on everyone – some hope for you, and some hope for you, and here, have a little hope, oh, you'd like some to take home to the wife and kids, too? Here, have a little more.

Trying to, or believing you are giving hope to someone is a failed proposition, and I dare say it at least borders on disobedience to this admonition:

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”
(Mat 7:6)

Please understand that I’m not suggesting we don’t preach hope. In fact, I suggest the exact opposite. What I do **not** suggest – without reservation – is that we preach hope for unrepentant sinners and that we preach it at the cost of warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come, as John Baptist did. This is not an either or scenario. Preaching hope and preaching repentance go hand in hand as part of the whole Gospel. Indeed, Paul speaks to preaching it earlier in his epistle to the Colossians:

“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;” (Col 1:23)

This is a very interesting exhortation and of course part of the same context as our ‘definition’ of hope. There are several wonderful pieces to consider:

1. *“If ye continue...”* – the word if indicates something will happen. You see what if you go back to 21 *“...yet now hath he reconciled”*. This demonstrates the need for our persevering in faith unto the end. Without that perseverance, the saints will not realize that for which they hope, having not been fully reconciled to God through the Son.
2. *“...in the faith grounded and settled...”* – here we have that exhortation that is all throughout the Bible – to be anchored, not tossed about as a ship without a rudder, but to be fastened onto the hope and its source through faith.
3. *“...not moved away from the hope of the gospel...”* – latched onto that hope of the gospel, not another hope, not some false hope of salvation by works, not some hope that if we present in some flashy way that markets God to the masses we’ll win souls to Jesus. Do not be, no matter what the world does or says in response to it, do not be moved away from that hope found in the Gospel, which is salvation of the remnant whose names are written in the book of Life.
4. *“...which ye have heard...”* – the reminder that they have heard the words, those specific souls in the church at Colosse, they have explicitly heard them and ought not to depart from them. Regardless of how the waves toss them about, how the world howls, regardless of when loved ones, even those of our own houses, obstinately object to the words we have heard, we do not move from them.
5. *“...preached to every creature...”* – here is support for the idea that it is the responsibility of a church to preach as Paul did – warning and teaching. We preach hope in the same manner we preach repentance and faith. We preach the truth of it. We don’t water it down, make it palatable to the masses, and turn it into a side show or way to make us look good in the world. We certainly don’t use it as a recruiting tool. We preach that it is exclusively reserved.

Hope, faith and patience are all closely and inextricably intertwined together, and are frequently discussed in conjunction with one another. That must inform our thinking about hope and our preaching of all these important doctrines.

Consider this passage in Paul's epistle to the Romans:

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom 5:1-5)

This is another passage that could reasonably have weeks spent on it to dissect it all, but it drives home that these crucial elements of our election and inclusion in the body of Christ are all intertwined. You cannot with honesty dispense any of them to people, nor can you dispense of them in your ministry, but they must be dealt with according to Scripture, not men's ideas.

God's people are not ashamed of the hope that we have. Even if the rest of the world doesn't get it. Our hope drives us to deliver an unvarnished truth to the mass of humanity amongst whom we walk. Why does it cause us to do that? Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts! How could it not cause us to put all on the line and make these truths known?

I want you to consider this example of how to preach both the exposure of sin and the hope of Christ:

*"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, **ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain**: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on*

*his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, **whom ye have crucified**, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Act 2:22-38)*

I'm not going to dissect this sermon of Peter's today, but I do refer and recommend you to the whole of Acts 2 for the rest of it. Notice how he twice points out to the Jews gathered around that they killed Christ, bringing to their attention their sins. Why does he do that? Because by the providence and will of God, it generates the necessary effect, i.e., “...when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart...” which in turn drove them to the necessary question “...what shall we do?”

Without the necessary question being asked of the hearer, there is no application of hope to be made; put another way, a message of hope will fall on deaf, stopped up ears if they are not moved to receive the words. Peter lays out clearly that the hope of resurrection lies in Christ, but doesn't ask them if they want to have some of that hope. He doesn't tell them they should let the Lord into their hearts today. He reminds them, in no uncertain terms, that they killed the Savior David spoke of and was promised to Abraham. He lays out in detail the grave sins they have committed. Peter executes what I think is one of the best examples of this directive from Paul:

“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:” (2Co 3:12)

We can, and must, speak with a great plainness of speech because we have this sure hope founded in the confidence of our God wrapped up in our hearts, driving us to operate in faith.

Hope belongs to each of God's people, and it is a precious thing that we should treasure. Hope is a fundamental part of the grace God shows His people to help them navigate their pilgrimage and to do so with a rejoicing spirit.

This hope is something that must occupy our thoughts when we meditate upon God's word so that we can

“...sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” (1Pe 3:15)

We have an obligation to answer this fundamental question of “why?” I believe you all know I don’t mean we are obligated to provide an answer to every smarmy mocker and scoffer who wants to get into some forensic disputation with us about the existence of God. Those disputations are not necessary. It is, however, needful for us to be able to fundamentally answer what reason we have for hope when nothing going on around us suggests any reason for it. Especially now, and as the days of woe come more rapidly upon these people. Why is that? Paul gives us an answer:

“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” (Rom 8:24-25)

We don’t see the mansions prepared for us. We don’t see our names written in the book, but we have this hope in us through God’s grace that gives us confidence in our Lord, and for any sheep out there that is despairing, that is seeing themselves for what they are as a depraved son or daughter of Adam, others who can answer that question are vital to their peace. To make full assurance of our ministry and provide a full testimony, we must understand and be able to articulate individually the reason for our hope. Without hope none of us will be able to run this race with a shred of patience.

That answer isn’t going to be the same for everyone. I don’t want to hear about people promoting some laminated card with a mantra on it about “Christ crucified, buried, risen the third day, ascended into heaven, blah blah blah”. This isn’t about canned answers and scripted dialogs. This should not be trivialized in such a manner.

Each of us has an obligation, through a diligent and careful parsing and discerning of the scripture to work at understanding our reason for this hope, and being able to articulate it. I don’t mean being able to orate or expostulate on every element of the Gospel. This isn’t blindly reciting lots of scripture. Just memorizing and reciting verses isn’t articulating **your** reason for the hope that is in you when asked. It doesn’t require having the same level of understanding as another person, the same approach to explaining it or anything except being based on the same foundation. It just requires you to be able to do it.

I encourage all of you today to carefully consider this question and work to frame up an answer in your own minds so that you are ready if asked.