

The Hope Laid Up in Heaven

(Col. 1:5)

By Randy Wages

1/11/09

Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. Introduction:

- A. Title ó taken from Col. 1:5, where Paul refers to “...*the hope which is laid up for you in heaven...*”
- B. Could that same statement be accurately directed toward you? Do you have this hope Paul is speaking of? Is it laid up for you? Well, to whom is Paul speaking? Look with me in verses 1-5 (Read).
1. Well, there in vs. 2 we see that Paul is speaking to the õfaithful brethrenö and õsaints.ö What is a õsaintö? Does this describe one who never sins? Not according to God’s word which without any ambiguity states that “...*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23) & that “...*there is none righteous, no not one.*” (Rom. 3:10). No, a saint is a sinner saved by the grace of God, (only peace by grace ó unmerited favor not conditioned on the sinner himself). A saint is one to whom God does not impute (or charge) with his sin, who has been sanctified (set apart) and accounted to be holy based upon the impeccable perfection of their Substitute, the very righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, being laid to their account.
 2. Now if you’re among those for whom the Lord Jesus Christ lived and died as a Substitute, then you’re a saint. But how do you know if you’re one for whom Christ lived and died. Well, in verse 5, we see a distinguishing characteristic of these saints ó specifically, that they have a hope laid up for them in heaven.
 3. So today, we will consider just what is meant by this phrase and may each of us ask ourselves, is the õhopeö referred to here, my hope ó this hope that is laid up in heaven for all of God’s saints. For if so, then you can assuredly count yourselves among the saints spoken of here.

- C. To examine this further, let's first consider the meaning of these words. What is meant by a hope that is laid up for the saints of God?
1. hope = The word hope is used 3 times in the 1st chapter of Colossians and we will look at each of these today to help us understand the specific hope Paul is speaking of. But to begin with, the word hope itself simply means an expectation or confidence, not the hope so of today's common usage. Hope is then something experienced in the sinner's heart and mind that gives rise to his or her expectations. So then any who believe they are bound for heaven's glory are professing to have a hope so to speak i.e. they expect to be saved from their sins & eternal misery and possess a confidence that they will be blessed throughout eternity in heaven's glory. Now the scripture is replete with examples of many, who had a hope of sorts, but whose hope will sadly be exposed to have been a false hope or a misplaced hope, being based upon a false ground or premise. So to have a hope for heaven, as multitudes do, does not necessarily mean that such confidence is warranted. Ultimately, as I hope to show you today, the validity of one's hope depends (1) upon whom and (2) on what basis their hope is derived.
 2. The phrase "laid up" simply means "reserved." So even through the immediate context of the phrase in verse 5, "**... the hope which is laid up <or reserved> for you in heaven,**" we gain some insight into one of the distinguishing characteristics of a well-founded hope or expectation. It is one laid up in heaven.

D. Reporter Questions: In English composition classes, you may have been taught how to write reports by posing all the questions that reporters pursue to insure that they get the full story or questions like, Who, What, When, Why, Where, & How. Likewise today, we will ask a few of these which apply to our subject as we examine this hope as it is set forth here in Col. 1. Specifically, we'll consider:

1. Where this hope is?
2. In Whom this hope is placed?
3. How this hope becomes an individual sinner's hope or his expectation or confidence?
4. What this hope is based upon?

II. Where is this hope?

- A. Well verse 5 makes it clear, this hope is one that is laid up in heaven, not on earth.
- B. Turn to Matt 6. Christ is speaking here in the Sermon on the Mount as He directs our attention to consider what we treasure or value in our own minds and heartsó and I believe this should direct us to consider where my and your hope or confidence lies.
1. (Read Mt. 6:19-21)
 2. Traditionally, we often consider this passage to be contrasting our interests in the things of this world (such as material things or physical well-being) versus spiritual things, and that lesson is certainly appropriate; however, I find it noteworthy that Christ speaks here about ölaying upö treasures ó that is reserving (or laying up) those things we value (treasures) in hopes of securing our future. Now for eternal security, we need that which is incorruptible, everlasting & not subject to change. So, we see that if our hope is based upon anything done by us (mutable, fallible, sinners) in this life on earth (i.e. ó If salvation is conditioned on the sinner in any way or to any degree), then our hope is not based upon something already finished, accomplished (ölaid upö), reserved for us in heaven as a done deal that is incorruptible, everlasting, and sure and certain.
 3. So if your hope, like mine in years past, is based upon your act of faith, etc., then the treasure youöve laid up, your security, your hope is not sure and certain ó not one that is incorruptible, laid up for you in heaven. Your hope would be based upon works (i.e. ó something done by, in or through you the sinner here on earth, not grace) ó not conditioned on Christ alone who even now, sits at the right hand of the Father, ever making intercession for us.
 4. Dare we approach the throne of Godø judgment pleading our very best, when Christ (in this same Sermon on the Mount) said that “...*except your righteousness* (that which you can produce by your best efforts) *exceed that...*” of the best of the best (the scribes and Pharisees) ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of God. How perfect must we be? (Quote Matt. 5:48 & Acts 17:31).

II. *Where is this Hope (Con't.)*

5. No, this hope that Paul speaks of is in One who resides in heaven, who has sat down, finished all that is necessary some 2000 years ago at the cross of Calvary. Consider these verses:

- a. Look over with me at Col. 3. (Read Col. 3:1-4)
- b. Consider Heb. 1:3 where speaking of Christ, it reads, ***“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;*** Here, we get the proper sense that this hope is in part said to be *ō*laid up *ö* because it *ø*s a finished work *ó* He sat down, rested, satisfied with the accomplished, finished work of purging the sins of His people at the cross. It *ø*s laid up *ó* a victory already won!

III. **In Whom is this hope is placed?**

A. Well, as you can see, these questions such as *ō*where *ö* and *ō*in whom *ö* and *ō*based upon what *ö* really cannot be separated. You cannot separate the Person in whom we *ø*re to trust from what He accomplished for those whom trust in Him. And as these verses have shown, this hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ, based upon His finished work *ó* Christ, who now resides at the right hand of the Father in heaven in whom the saints of God trust.

1. Let *ø*s look at back now again at Col. 1 where this *ō*hope *ö* is mentioned again toward the end of the chapter in verses 25-27. (Read vss. 25-27)
2. Some, as you know, translate verse 27 so as to suggest to their listeners that their real hope is actually one that is laid up here on earth, literally in you as they read vs. 27 with an inflection of speech that would direct your hope to ***“...Christ, in you, the hope of glory.”*** First you can see how misleading that is if your Bible has the same reference note as mine showing that the word *ō*in *ö* there is actually better translated *ō*among *ö* you.

III. In Whom is this Hope Placed? (con't.)

3. Secondly, if we consider the context of the entire chapter and even the immediate context of verses 26 & 27, we see how Paul continues to speak of how this mystery of the Gospel that had been hidden from the Gentiles, now had been revealed *ōinō* or among *ōyou,ō* the Gentile believers *ó* Christ, the hope of glory.
- B. Look with me now at vss. 21-23 (Read). Here we see that the one in whom we *œ* to place our trust must be the One who reconciled us (the prince of peace) and He did so for all those who continue in the faith and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel. He doesn't reconcile us based upon our continuance in the faith, but rather this passage is teaching us that if He keeps us, if our hope is this hope of which Paul speaks, the one laid up in glory, and it is in Him alone, then we are among those who were reconciled by His blood.
- C. So is your hope placed in Christ and what He accomplished in the body of his flesh though death? Do you imagine you need to *≠*make your peace with God *ø* or did Christ make peace through His blood? You see, the one sure hope is one which is incorruptible, which finds us presented before the Father as holy, unblameable, and unprovable in His sight. Is your faith so perfect that you would dare plead it (or anything else you presume to be meritorious as it pertains to that which you, a sinner, might produce) presuming that thereby you could stand before a holy God with the perfection that Christ alone could and did produce in His life and death on the cross?
- D. Do you truly consider Christ alone to be your Savior? Is He the one in which all of your hope, your confidence and expectation of salvation lies? Well, if you imagine that He did no more for those who perish than He did for those He saves, then your hope isn't in Him and Him alone. Whatever makes the difference *ó* there *ø* where your hope is. And if it isn't exclusively a hope in Christ and His finished work, then it *ø* not this *ō*hope laid up in heaven *ō* (for that speaks of a finished work whereby God is completely satisfied).

III. In Whom is this Hope Placed? (con't.)

E. (Read vs. 12-14): It is in Christ (vs. 14) that we have redemption (we've been bought ó an infinitely valuable price has been paid).

F. Now look at vs. 20 (Read): It's in Him that we have deliverance. It's in Him we are reconciled so that peace is made by the blood of the cross between a holy God and every sinner for whom He lived and died.

IV. Let's consider How ó How does this hope become a sinner's hope?

A. Read vs. 5 & 6 again: This hope is revealed by the Gospel that comes your way. How blessed we are in this place. Has this become your gospel? Do you know the grace of God in truth ó the gospel which sets forth how all of a sinner's hope is to be in Christ, based upon what He alone accomplished for God's saints?

B. As we just saw in verse 23, this hope is called "the hope of the gospel." It refers to the very Gospel they heard preached by Paul who says he is a minister of that gospel.

C. And as we saw in vs. 26-27, it is referred to as the mystery which now is made manifest to his saints, to whom God makes known the riches of the glory in this revelation of Christ, the hope of glory.

D. So how does it become the sinner's? God's word tells us in 1 Cor. 1:21 that God is pleased to reveal Himself by the preaching of this Gospel ó this Gospel that sets forth our deliverance by the blood of Christ as we just read of back in verses 14 & 22.

V. What? What is this hope then based upon?

A. Well, it must be that which is revealed by the truth of the Gospel. Rom. 1:16-17 tells us that it is the power of God ó for therein is the righteousness of God revealed. This righteousness is none other than the perfect satisfaction before God's justice made by Christ in His perfect obedience unto death. It is the merit of this very righteousness that must be made the sinner's by God's free imputation if He is to present us as holy, unproveable, and unblameable in God's sight (as we read to be true of the saints of God in verse 22).

VI. What is this hope based upon? (con't.)

- B. Now, who all will look to this righteousness being made theirs (imputed to them) as the sole basis upon which they might stand with a good hope, confident with a warrant to expect with certain assurance the riches of His kingdom? It will be all those for whom Christ was charged with the demerit of all their sins so as to pay their debt to justice in full, redeeming them fully by His shed blood, purchasing for them the very spiritual life and faith that will cause them to look not to their faith, but to Him, based upon His finished work of righteousness alone, whereby He is exalted and sits at the right hand of the Father.
- C. You see, apart from His righteousness imputed, we have no sure and certain basis to expect a holy God to save any sinner? Apart from that, we can only delude ourselves into a false sense of security which shall not stand before a just and holy God.
- D. In II Tim. 4:8, Paul describes what is *ō*laid up *ō* for him in terms of the substance of what this same hope laid up in heaven is based upon. There he says, “...*there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness...*”, as the context reveals is true for all of the saints of God. So we see clearly that this hope that is laid up is based upon Christ \u00f6 s righteousness and by the imputation of the merit of it alone, God justifies His sheep. (Quote Rom. 5:21 *ō* how grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord).
- E. You see, for our hope to be like that of the saints to whom Paul is writing in Colosse, (in other words if it is indeed a *ō*good \u00f6 hope that shall not prove disappointing), then it must be a hope, an expectation or confidence, that has a sure and certain foundation *ō* not an *ō*I hope *so* \u00f6 . The confidence must be in Christ alone, based solely upon His finished work of righteousness being graciously imputed, for this is how our holy God justly reconciles otherwise ungodly sinners to Himself.

VI. Closing

- A. In closing, turn to I Peter 1. Here Peter is addressing the saints of God and here he sums up this same good hope that is laid up (or reserved). (Read I Peter 1:3-5.)
- B. Well, this describes the hope that is laid up for me in heaven. How about you?
1. Where is your hope ó Is it laid up in heaven?
 2. In Whom is your hope placed ó Is it in Jesus Christ and Him alone?
 3. How did this hope become your hope ó Was it through God's Gospel wherein His righteousness is revealed?
 4. And what is your hope based upon ó Is it based upon that very righteousness and that alone ó Christ's perfect satisfaction to God's law & justice in His obedience unto death? Or as Paul described in II Timothy, is your crown a crown of perfect righteousness that is laid up for you?
- C. My prayer is that all who hear this message may likewise discover by God's grace, (through belief of this very Gospel message of grace), that they too have a sure and certain hope ó a hope laid up for them in heaven ó Christ, the hope of glory!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself ó the Bible.