

Hope's Effects in the Soul

Hebrews

By Pastor George McDearmon

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Hebrews 3:6, 6:18-20; 1 Timothy 1:1
Preached on: Sunday, December 27, 2015

Ballston Lake Baptist Church

1 Edward Street
Ballston Lake, NY 12019

Website: blbc.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/blbcsa

This morning, under the fourth heading, "Why has God done it?" That is, why has he set an oath between himself, the God who promised, and the heirs of the promise? The second of two explanations is found in Hebrews 6:18, "in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us." I direct your attention briefly tonight to what is rendered in verse 18, "laying hold of." It is the idea of energetically seizing upon something and clinging to it. It came to mind what my wife does when we're aboard a plane and hit turbulence and she grabs my arm. Now, that is certainly a futile hope, but the strength and the vigor of that grasping of the arm amidst turbulence comes to my mind with regard to laying hold of the hope set before us; vigorously, strongly grasping and keeping our grip upon the hope set before us.

Now, the objective content of that hope is as a city of refuge was to the fleeing man slayer. Now, concerning this hope, I read from other places in the Hebrew letter wherein we find reference to hope. Going back to chapter 3, at verse 6, "if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end." And earlier in this chapter at verse 11, "we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance," the full actualization, "of hope until the end." Then in chapter 7, at verse 19, "a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." And in chapter 10, at verse 23, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." And in chapter 11, at verse 1, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." And here at the end of chapter 6, and where we are or that upon which we are approaching, verse 19, "This hope," that is the hope we have laid hold of, "we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

In the language of another brethren, we live in a world that is a place of great despair for many. Not a place of hope, but a place of despair. To expand, it seems that especially in our own nation, we live in an age of depression. We live in a medicated society even amidst abounding affluence; a society wherein so many apparently have no solid hope, no lasting hope, they spend their lives seeking hope, seeking stability, but for so many what they seem to come to is despair and discontent and frustration and an unstable bounding

from one thing to the next. Over against that, by the grace of God, this hope that we have laid hold of, this hope we have not of any of our resources, but by the electing grace, the saving grace of God, this hope we have has an anchor of the soul.

Now, tonight you have the outline before you and our concern will be the headings under the preface. Now, I admit tonight that these prefacing headings have been lifted out of an older series wherein a theology of hope in the past has been set forth. Does anyone recognize that tonight? Ladies? It comes out of our last, at least for my watch, our last treatment of biblical womanhood, it goes back to '09. And with regard to a woman before God, what is the summary description of a woman's right relation to God? She hopes in God. And we considered in that series why it is for a woman as a woman hoping in God is so apt and so relevant. Well, that's not going to be repeated but it is from that that these prefacing headings have been lifted.

You see them now and, Lord willing, we will work through them quickly tonight beginning with the New Testament meaning of the word "hope." What does the word mean? Well, in contemporary English, the term "hope" is about the equivalent of the term "wish." "I hope it does not snow on Tuesday." Well, if the forecast is right, that's a forlorn hope. That's a wish. Our brother who commutes down into Albany every day, might say when he leaves his home up on Wilton Road, "I hope the traffic on the North Way will be lighter. I hope my husband comes home in time for dinner. I hope the children will take a long nap." Well, the point is in our contemporary English, often when we use the word "hope," we are speaking of something rather weak, "I'd like to see it happen but I still have my doubts and my reservations."

Well, when we come to the New Testament terminology rendered "hope," the idea is nothing like that. In the New Testament, the word translated "hope," does not indicate a vague or an uncertain or a fearful anticipation or some forlorn desire, but rather signifies a confident, certain expectation of good. You can define the New Testament terminology rendered "hope" in that way: a confident, certain expectation of good. To say it differently, there is in the New Testament terminology of hope, there is strength, there is certainty, there is confidence, and as we'll see in a minute, there is reason to it. There is a rationale from which it arises. Our hope consists of a confident expectation for the fulfillment of all the blessings of salvation. We confidently look for the realization of, the possession of, every goodness, every lovingkindness, every benefit, every grace, secured by the redemptive priestly work of God in Christ, and to use the language of Romans 5:5, hope does not disappoint. But, again, with regard to the meaning of the term, briefly put, it signifies or it means a confident, certain expectation of good.

Now, secondly, the nature of hope. We can say of the nature of hope, in the first place, it is an essential saving grace like faith and love. What would be our text to warrant the statement? 1 Corinthians 13:13, "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." We can further say as to the nature of hope, that faith gives assurance to it. Faith breeds confidence in one's hope. Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for." Faith brings certainty. When I have come to trust Christ, when I have come to abandon myself and to put myself in his wheelbarrow, there is

conviction relative to the spiritual realities upon which my hope is focused. Faith lays hold of what is promised and therefore what is hoped for. Faith is the foundation upon which the structure of hope is raised. The man of faith is assured of the eternal saving realities secured by Christ and upon which his hope is founded.

We can say further about its nature, it is a gift of God. It is not something we muster up. 2 Thessalonians 2:16, "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace." Hope is the gift of God. The world gives despair. The world gives bitterness. The world gives cynicism. The world gives depression. The world gives hopelessness. It promises much. It delivers little. It raises false hopes. It leaves the deceived heartsick and cynical. God alone is the author of what Paul writes here, good hope, for God is the author of that sure salvation to which our hope looks.

Then, fourthly, regarding its nature: it's reasonable. Now, that can be borne out by what we read in 1 Peter 3:15, "to make a defense, to give an account of the hope that is within you," that is, to give a rational, verbal explanation for the hope which one possesses, which influences, in Peter's case, his readers, amidst their suffering. The point is bound up in defense and account, that there is evidence which supports the hope. There is a rationality which supports it which can be explained. Our hope, like our faith, is well-founded upon truth and reality. And what are two of the unchangeable realities? Hebrews 6, upon which this hope is based: God's promise and God's oath. Our hope is not speculative. Our hope is not mindless. It's not blind. It's not unreasonable. It is not dreamy and imaginary and abstract, not rooted in some trance like mental exercise. No, it is supported by fact, by the historical person and work of Jesus Christ. It is supported by the Scriptures. It is supported by God's promise and God's oath. It is supported by what we have seen happen in the lives of others by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

Now we come further to the basis of this hope. The basis of hope simply put, is God. In the Old Testament, God the Father is identified as the hope of his people, the basis of their hope. As representative of such a statement, I read Psalm 39:7, "And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in Thee." And in Psalm 42:5, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence." In Psalm 131:3, "O Israel, hope in the LORD From this time forth and forever." Jeremiah said in Lamentations 3:24, "'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I have hope in Him.'" Consistently through the Old Testament, Jehovah, the covenant making God in whom was redemption, provision, protection and every lovingkindness, was the basis of his people's hope.

When we come to the New Testament, the basis of one's hope is God in Christ, and thus we read from a text quoted earlier today in 1 Timothy 1:1, "Christ Jesus, who is our hope." Colossians 1:27, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Ephesians 1:12, "We who were the first to hope in Christ." God in the person of his Son, God who has accomplished eternal redemption by means of his appointed great high priest, he is viewed as the basis of our hope.

And now its content. The hope described in the New Testament in terms of content is oriented to the various blessings bound up in salvation. As to its content in the broadest sense, 1 Thessalonians 5:8, "it is the hope of salvation." A hope which confidently anticipates the possession and realization of all the goodnesses, all of the gifts, all of the Gospel benefits and blessings inherent in the salvation accomplished by Christ. But more specifically, Galatians 5:5, "For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness." Now, perhaps in Galatians 5:5, that could be interpreted in more than one way, certainly in the Galatian letter it would be understood regarding the justifying righteousness of Christ imputed to his people whereby they stand justified, and perhaps the declaration of that at the final judgment. In Galatians 5, perhaps further, the hope of righteousness signifies that righteousness which is the goal of sanctification, perfect holiness, conformity to Christ, which will be the Christian's at glorification. Whatever the case, it is the hope of righteousness.

In 1 John 3:2-3, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, if He should appear, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." What is the specific hope there? It is the hope of being like him; the hope of being Christ like; the hope of final, perfected, completed holiness. Then in Titus 1:2, we read of, "the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago." And in Titus 2:13, "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Jesus, the hope of the second coming. That's all to say the content of biblical hope has reference to the various Gospel benefits that had been procured by Christ.

Now we come to the matter which is really our primary concern tonight: the effects of hope. I formerly headed this "The Moral Fruits of Hope." I think it could be better headed as I thought about it, "The Dispositional Effects of Hope"; the effects of hope in the soul, in the heart. The Scriptures reveal that hope fixed upon the living God who has drawn near in the Son, the hope which confidently anticipates the full scope and realization of the blessings of that salvation accomplished by Christ and applied by his Spirit, that hope of which God is the gracious author, a reasonable hope which stands assured and nerved and strengthened by faith, that hope is productive of certain dispositional effects. In other words, hope leaves its mark upon our lives just as conversely hopelessness. That is evident even in ordinary human experience, even in the realm of lesser temporal hopes. It is evident when a person has hope: marital hope with regard to a husband or a wife; family hope with regard to children; hope with regard to vigorous health; hope with regard to a forward moving career. It is evident when a person has hope, and it is evident when a person is hopeless. Attitudes, words and conduct are drastically influenced by either the presence or the absence of hope. Determination, perseverance, confidence, are among the results of hope. Depression, passivity, and foolish behavior are some of the results of hopelessness.

What are the effects in the soul of our Gospel hope? Well, I begin under that final prefacing heading, "The Effects of Hope," with this one, number 1: joy. Romans 5:2, "we exult," that's a word for, we might call, rejoicing in the extreme, rejoicing in the extreme,

"we exult in hope of the glory of God." Briefly put, hope breeds gladness and rejoicing in that the multiple blessings of God are certainties. As many as may be the promises of God in him in Christ, they are yes and because of that certainty, one exalts in hope. The Christian's confident expectancy shall not fail. He can go through this life encountering its afflictions, encountering failures, broken promises from men, shattered dreams, failed aspirations, difficulties and adversities of all kinds, and yet be joyful because he exults in the hope of the glory of God, the manifestation of the glory of God which will accompany final redemption. One can rejoice in the Lord always, or as Paul writes it in Romans 12:12, rejoicing in hope. I guess we could put it simply this way: where there is hope, there is a happy person. Where there is hopelessness, there is a sad and despairing person. One of the dispositional fruits or effects of a solid hope is joy. We exult in the hope of the glory of God.

Secondly, is the matter of confidence. Confidence, and what I mean by confidence, that quality, that state of feeling sure, feeling certain. The opposite of doubt. The opposite of wavering. The opposite of fearfulness and anxiety. Confidence containing the elements of firm trust, strong assurance, and an optimistic view of the future. Confidence is a firmness of mind, an assurance of soul, in view of the stability, the capacity, the veracity, the power, the character, the faithfulness of another who is Christ Jesus. He has resources and abilities upon which I can rely without doubt.

Now, in Hebrews 3:6, confidence is related to our hope. Setting forth the preeminence of Christ versus Moses, we read, "but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end." There is a confidence, a sense of certainty, of strong assurance, a positive view of one's future, of the ultimate outcome of life's trials, difficulties and challenges, which is of our hope, that is, it belongs to our hope. It is caused by our hope. One's certain expectations of good, one's sure anticipation of the full possession of all saving blessing procured by Christ, gives me now in this world a confidence, a confidence which we are to hold fast to, resolutely, firmly, hold onto.

Joy, confidence, and now, thirdly, among the dispositional effects of hope: comfort, consolation. What I mean by comfort is support. Amidst times of sorrow and pain: help, encouragement that gives a sense of relief and a restoration of good cheer. Comfort is often referred to as that which is administered by God to his people. Psalm 23:4, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me." We heard this quoted this morning in the first hour. "Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." In Isaiah 51:3, "Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion." In 2 Corinthians 1:3, "the Father of all mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." Our comfort is abundant through Christ.

Well, what about the connection with hope? Hope and comfort? You might turn in your Bibles briefly to 1 Thessalonians 4 as an example of how hope breeds comfort. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep," that is, those who have died prior to the second coming of the Lord,

"that," a statement of purpose, "you may not grieve," it's the language of emotional distress, "that you may not grieve," distressed over loss, sorrow, sadness, "that you may not grieve as do the rest who have no hope." Now, in this case, no hope of salvation, no anticipation of its blessings, no confidence invested in the coming of Christ, and this is then explained in detail through verse 17, the substance of this hope. Verse 18, "Therefore," in view of the hope we do have, the hope of Christ's return, the hope of the resurrection of the dead, the hope of always being with the Lord, in view of this hope, what are we to do? "Comfort one another." To call to one side, in this case, in order to console by reminding them of hope.

Now, you cannot do that with one who has died outside of Christ, there is no hope, but how different is it for the one who has died in Christ, and we are thus to comfort one another with these words, these words which express in the context, or define our hope in its connection with the coming again of Christ. These words define our hope and comfort is to be found in them. We are not to grieve as the unconverted who are without hope, or in the language of Ephesians 2, "having no hope and without God in the world." Rather, our grieving is mitigated, our grieving is relieved, by the comfort found in our hope.

Now, fourthly, regarding the dispositional effects of hope is: patience; the grace of waiting on God and the hope of his deliverance. Bearing trial, bearing provocation, bearing affliction calmly without resentment, without complaint; a quiet endurance of difficulty until such a time as God shall be pleased to lift the burden. In Psalm 62:5, "My soul, wait in silence for God only." Why? "For my hope is in Him." Wait in silence, without agitation and upheaval and bitterness. Wait in silence for my hope is in him. Psalm 130:5, "I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, And in His word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord More than the watchmen for the morning; Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD there is lovingkindness, And with Him is abundant redemption. And He will redeem Israel From all his iniquities." Again, Jeremiah in Lamentations 3, and you remember the mourning and the grief of the prophet. "This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never fail, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Thy faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I have hope in Him.' The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him. It is good that he waits silently For the salvation of the LORD." We could turn to Romans 8:23-25. The truth is, hope which views the blessings of salvation to be realized fully in the future, gives one the capacity to patiently wait while that one passes through trial, disappointment and loss.

Now, fifthly, there is the dispositional effect of perseverance; the grace of not simply waiting but of carrying on in the faithful performance of duty, despite obstacles, adversity and pressure; the grace of continuing on in the faithful discharge of God-given responsibilities come what may. 1 Thessalonians 1:3 is our text. Paul writes of, "your steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." Steadfastness, descriptive of one who is unswerved from his purpose, unswerved from his loyalty, unswerved from the pursuit of holiness and duty by pressure and trial and suffering. Steadfastness as it is rendered here, rendered "endurance" in the Hebrew letter, often I speak of it as perseverance, however

you render it, remaining under the load. Yes, it comprehends patience but there is another sense: it's pressing onward under that load patiently borne. Steadfastness of hope, a steadfastness belonging to hope, a steadfastness caused by hope.

Finally, brethren, this evening, the sixth dispositional effect and this brings us back to where we begin, God willing, next Lord's day morning: stability. It seems an uncommon thing today to find people who are simply stable. Stability, one who is firmly planted; maintains their equilibrium; one who is settled; one who is predictable; one who is faithful; one who does not live all worked up, again, bounding from one episode to the next. Stable. Hebrews 6:18, "in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold," seizing upon, clinging to, "the hope set before us." Verse 19, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us."

Now, it's pretty plain even on the surface of the language, the imagery here is nautical. The imagery behind the language has to do with ships, an anchor, an anchorage, and the depiction is life in this world is like unto a ship at sea. I heard a little bit of what it's like, I haven't really been at sea. Life in this world is like a ship at sea: winds, waves, batter the ship, toss it to and fro, can potentially send it far off course, can potentially sink it. The ship needs to find safe harbor where it can anchor. We're like a ship. We need to find a safe anchorage where we can lower our anchor to the end that amidst the storms of life, we might be fixed and settled and stable. F. F. Bruce writes, "We are refugees from the sinking ship of this present world order so soon to disappear. Our hope is fixed in the eternal order, that is, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us. It's fixed in the eternal order where the promises of God are made good to his people in perpetuity."

This hope is like unto an anchor. Again, the figure of an anchor conveying the idea of being firmly established, not easily moved by winds and tides. Our hope is an anchor of the soul with the promises, the oath-bound promises of God before us, with the confident expectation of realizing every Gospel benefit of salvation procured by Christ. The point is here, as God willing we'll come to: we are effectively anchored, we are firmly established in our purpose, in our conviction, in priorities of life, in our resolution, because our anchorage has been cast. You don't normally cast an anchor upward, but the imagery here it is into heaven where our forerunner, the lead ship in the nautical imagery, has gone and found a certain anchorage.

Stability and, again, brethren, as we launch the boats of our lives upon the waters of 2016, not knowing what our lives will be like in that year, not even knowing what they'll be like the next day, tomorrow, may our hope not be in the shallow waters of this world and its pleasures and its vanities, may our hope be where our forerunner has entered for us, where he has gone to prepare a place for us, something of a parallel expression to what we have here, and there secured our hope of eternal life. May that provide the stability and the confidence to live distinctively for Christ in the new year, whatever winds, whatever storms, however the tides run. Hope, Christ Jesus who is our hope, and thus we be a people of stability, firmly planted and established, persevering onward. God

helping us if he preserves us, we will take up in our exposition of verses 19 and 20 next week.

Let us pray.

Father, thank you that you have given us good hope and, Father, may that sure and steadfast hope be nurtured and cultivated as we seek more and more communion with you in the year ahead. Father, may we go forth humbly, knowing our limitations and our ignorance but, may we go forth joyfully, confidently; may we go forth with a hope wrought stability because of our certainty that our forerunner has gone on ahead and has secured for us by union with him, our presence before you. We pray now for your blessing upon the week ahead and, Father, may we be good representatives of the Lord Jesus in our various spheres of activity and life. I pray in his name. Amen.