

A Good Hope Through Grace

Occasioned By The Death Of Mr. Edward Ludlow.

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...And good hope through grace.- 2Th 2:16

Three things the apostle does in the context: he describes the happy state and condition of the persons he writes to; he exhorts them to stand fast in the faith, and hold fast the truth; and he prays for them.

First, He describes their happy state, in opposition to the followers of the man of sin, the son of perdition, who were given up to believe a lie, that they might be damned. First, by their character, as Brethren, of Christ, of the apostle, and of one another, in a spiritual relation; and as beloved of the Lord, or of God, as some versions; of God the Father, who had so loved them as to give his Son for them; of the Lord Jesus Christ; who had given himself for them; and of the Lord the Spirit, who had quickened and sanctified, them: and he further describes them by their election of God, for which he thought himself bound to give thanks to God for them; the date of which is, from the beginning, or eternity; the means, sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth; the end, salvation; the evidence, the effectual call of them by the gospel to the enjoyment. of that glory, which Christ is in the possession of, and is preparing for them.

Secondly, He exhorts them to stand fast in the faith of the gospel, and not be moved away from it; seeing they were so much in the favor of God, were chosen, of him, and called by him: and to hold fast the traditions they had been instructed in, both by word of mouth and by letter: not the traditions of the Jewish elders; nor such like unwritten traditions the Papists plead for; but the truths and ordinances of the gospel; so called, because delivered by Christ to his apostles, and by them to the churches, either by speech, or by writing; and, are the evangelical cabala, which ought to be held fast till Christ's second coming:

Thirdly, He prays for them, as being most affectionately concerned for their welfare; and therefore, he follows his exhortations with petitions; well knowing this was the most effectual way to have them succeed. The objects addressed are, our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father; two divine persons in the godhead: and seeing our Lord Jesus Christ is equally prayed unto as God our Father; and the same things are asked of him as of the Father; and the same gifts and blessings of grace are ascribed to the one as to the other; yea, he is mentioned in the address before his Father; we may conclude his perfect equality with him, and so his true and proper deity; or prayer, which is such a considerable branch of worship, would not be made to him, nor would he be placed on an equal foot with his Father, and much less be set before him. The things prayed for are, that these divine persons would comfort their hearts; with fresh discoveries of their love to them; with renewed applications of pardoning grace and mercy; with the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel; by the word and ordinances of it; and by granting them fellowship with Father, Son, and Spirit, in private and in public: and also, that they

would stablish them in every good word and work; in every truth of the gospel, and in the practice of every duty. It is a good thing for a Christian to have his heart established in the doctrines of grace; and it is his honor to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: and though the saints are in a firm and stable state, as being interested in everlasting love, secured in the covenant of grace, and safe in the arms of Christ; yet they have need of establishment in the present truths, that so they may not be carried away with the error of the wicked; and in the exercise of grace, that they may not fall from the steadfastness of their faith; and in the discharge of duty, that they be not drawn off from it. Now there is abundant reason to conclude that these petitions would be heard and, answered,

1. From the characters of the persons addressed, our Lord Jesus Christ himself. he who is our Lord, not by creation only, as he is Lord of all; but by redemption, having bought us with his precious blood, and therefore are not our own, but his; and by virtue of a marriage-relation to us, he having espoused us to himself in righteousness, mercy, and loving-kindness; and therefore, is our Lord, and we should worship him: and moreover he is Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer, who has saved us from our Sins, and from wrath to come, with an everlasting salvation; and is the Christ of God, anointed to be Prophet, Priest, and King, which offices he sustains and executes for us; and therefore may it not reasonably be concluded that whatsoever is asked of him and in his name, will be granted? The other person is God even our Father; not by creation merely, as he is of all men, who are his offspring, and the care of his providence; -but by adoption, through Jesus Christ: he who is Christ's God is our God, and he who is Christ's Father is our Father; which relation is owing to his free favor and love; and if earthly parents are ready and willing to give good gifts to their children to the utmost of their power; will not our heavenly Father give every good and needful thing to his children, so near and dear to him? And which may be further concluded,

2. From the love each person bore to those for whom the petitions are presented: which hath loved us; which relates both to God our Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, who have both loved us; such who were by nature children of wrath, enemies in their minds by wicked works; and were far from having any true love to God or Christ; so far from it, that they were enmity itself unto them, and yet loved by them. Matchless, unparalleled Grace! The Father loved them, and therefore appointed them not unto the wrath they deserved, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ; loved them, and therefore made a covenant with them in Christ, ordered in all things and sure, full of precious promises and spiritual blessings, suited to their cases and circumstances; loved them, and therefore made them the care and charge of his Son, put them into his hands, and laid up grace and glory for them; loved them, and therefore sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be the Savior and Redeemer of them; loved them, and therefore spared him not, but delivered him up into the hands of justice and death for them; loved them, and therefore begot them again to a lively hope, and quickened them when dead in trespasses and sins; loved them, and therefore justified them, pardoned them, and adopted them into his family, and made them heirs of himself, and joint-heirs with Christ. And our Lord Jesus Christ himself loved them with the same love his Father did, and as early; and therefore in eternity became their surety, and espoused their persons and cause; loved them, and therefore in time assumed

their nature, bore their sorrows, took upon him their sins, and suffered for them; loved them, and therefore gave himself an offering unto God for them; loved them, and therefore shed his precious blood for the remission of their sins, and washed them from them in it; loved them, and therefore is gone to prepare heaven and happiness for them, and will come again and take them to himself, that where he is, they may be also. Now, from persons of so much love, and who have given such strong proofs of it, what may not be expected? And which may be still further concluded,

3. From the gifts of grace, bestowed as the fruits of such love: and hath given us everlasting consolation; God is the God of comfort, and all true comfort springs from him; Christ is the consolation of Israel, and if there is any real, solid comfort, it is in him, and comes by him, through his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; and which is applied by the holy Spirit, through the word and ordinances, which are breasts of consolation; and by the ministers of the gospel, who are Barnabases, sons of comfort; and miserable comforters are all others that attempt to comfort in another way.

And whatever comfort is had in this way, is a pure gift of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ; it is what men are undeserving of, and therefore the least measure of it should not be reckoned small; because those that share it are by nature children of wrath, as others: and though this, as to sensible enjoyment, does not always continue, but is interrupted through the prevalence of corruptions, the violence of Satan's temptations, and through divine desertions; yet the foundation of it is always, and is everlasting, as the everlasting love of God; and therefore the elect are not, and cannot be consumed; the everlasting covenant of grace, which yields the heirs of promise strong consolation; the everlasting righteousness of Christ, by which being justified, they have peace with God; and everlasting salvation by him, and therefore shall be saved from wrath to come; and both Christ and the holy Spirit, the other comforter, always abide, and are the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever: and besides, as the spiritual joy of believers is what no man can take away from them, so it eventually issues in everlasting consolation, without any interruption in the future state; when the redeemed shall be come to Zion, they shall have everlasting joy on their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. The other gift is good hope through grace; and since God and Christ have bestowed such high favors upon the saints, it may be reasonably thought, that they will go on to comfort their hearts, and establish them. And this clause in the text being what our deceased friend pointed at, and laid the emphasis upon, I shall a little more largely insist upon it, and do the following things.

First, I shall give some account of the nature of the grace of hope.

Secondly, Shew the original of it, that it is of God, and a gift of his.

Thirdly, Explain in what sense it is through grace.

Fourthly, Make it appear that such an hope is a good one.

First, I shall give some account of the nature of the grace of hope; and which may be learnt in a good measure from the things with which it is conversant. And,

1st, It is of things unseen. An object seen and enjoyed leaves no room for the exercise of hope about it; wherefore the apostle says, hope that is seen is not hope; {Ro 8:24-25} that is, what is seen and enjoyed is not the object of hope; and hope can be no longer conversant with it, since it is in actual possession; concerning which the same inspired writer in the same place thus strongly reasons; 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. Christ is the object of our hope, and he is unseen by us, with our bodily eyes, is only seen by faith; he is gone to heaven, and is at the Father's right hand, out of our sight; but we hope and believe that he will come again and receive us to himself; and therefore we expect him our Savior from heaven, to raise our bodies, and change them, and make them like his own, and to re-unite them to our souls, and give us perfect happiness with him: the glories of the future state we are hoping for, are unseen realities; what eye has not seen, nor ear heard; eternal things we are looking at by Faith, and which are a support under present afflictions, are invisible; they are within the vail, into which faith enters, and gives a glimpse of; and hope follows, and waits for a clear light and full enjoyment of.

2dly, It is of things future, things to come: present things are not the object of hope; for what are present with us, we no more hope about; we and hope ceases, which was exercised concerning them when at a distance: nor have them, are the things of this present life the only objects of hope; for if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. {1Co 15:19}

Our hope indeed has to do with future things in the present life; we hope for more communion with God and Christ in ordinances, and therefore wait patiently in them; we hope for further supplies of grace out of the fullness that is in Christ, and therefore wait upon him and for him; we gird up the loins of our minds, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Christ: our hope reaches beyond the grave, to a future state in another world; to the resurrection of our bodies; to our standing at the right hand of Christ; to our being justified before men and angels; to our receiving the crown of life and glory; to our admission into the everlasting kingdom; and to our being with Christ for evermore, and being **like him, and seeing him as he is**. The things we are hoping for are laid up for us to be enjoyed hereafter; we have here some pledges and foretastes now, but the main is yet to come; and therefore we keep looking for it: faith only gives those things we are hoping for a kind of subsistence, and realizes them to us; and therefore it is said to be the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. {Heb 11:1}

3dly, It is of things difficult to be obtained, as future salvation is; for though the righteous are certainly spared, yet **scarcely** {1Pe 4:18} that is, with difficulty; by reason of the many corruptions, temptations, and snares in the way; and particularly by reason of afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions for Christ's sake: they come to the enjoyment of it through a strait gate and a narrow way, through many tribulations and sorrows; and there try and exercise hope. And yet,

4thly, It is of things possible; or otherwise there would be no room, nor reason for hope; nothing but black despair would ensue, and a resolution to lay aside all thoughts about our happiness in another world, and to take the swing in carnal lusts and pleasures; saying, there is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. {Jer 18:12} But eternal glory and happiness being what God has prepared and promised, what is to be had through Christ, and that by sinners, even the chief of them, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing; {Ezr 10:2} and the least encouragement given to a sensible sinner, hope lays hold upon; and it improves every hint and circumstance to its own advantage; such a soul putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope; {La 3:29} and as the possibility and probability of happiness appear to him, so in proportion his hope rises.

5thly, It is of things certain, which have a real being, and which are solid and substantial; and which not only faith is the substance of, but they are really laid up in heaven, are in the hands of Christ, and shall certainly be enjoyed; and of which the hoping Christian has no reason to doubt: and there is not only a certainty in the object of hope, but there is such a firmness and stability in the grace itself, that the soul in the lively exercise of it rejoices in hope of the glory of God; and which is so sure unto him, that he is even said to be **already saved by hope**. {Ro 8:24}

6thly, True hope is always attended with **faith**: these two graces go together; where the one is the other is; they are wrought by the same hand, and at the same time, in regeneration; and are more or less exercised together; though the one may be at some times more visible in its exercise than the other; and there may be hope when faith is scarcely discernible; yet faith is at the bottom, and is the **substance of things hoped for**; and without which there would be no hope; and some of the acts of these graces are so similar, so much like to one another, that they are scarcely to be discerned and distinguished from each other; and therefore are put for one another: So what is called trusting in Christ, **Eph 1:12** is in the Greek text **hoping in Christ**; and these two are joined together in **Jer 17:7**. I proceed,

Secondly, To shew the original of this grace, that it is of God, and a gift of his; for this clause, and good hope through grace, is in connection with the words preceding, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which -hath given both everlasting comfort and good hope. As faith, so hope, is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; and what is said of the one is true of the other, that all men have it not. {Eph 2:8; 2Th 3:2} Hope is not to be found naturally in men; nor is it in any natural man, in a man that is in a state of unregeneracy; such may express it, but not experience it; it is too commonly and too profanely said, "As I hope to be saved;" when such who use the phrase know not what a good hope through grace is; it is the character of God's own people before conversion, that they are without hope, as well as without God and Christ in the world: {Eph 2:12} This is a grace which is wrought in the soul in regeneration by the Spirit of God, and is one of his fruits; it is implanted by him, and grows up under his influence; it is through him believers wait for the hope of righteousness by faith; and it is through his power they abound in the exercise of it: No man has it till he is born again; for he is, of abounding grace, begotten to it: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his

abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; {1Pe 1:3} by which it appears, as well as from our text, that God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ have a concern in the production of a good and lively hope; that it is owing to the abundant mercy of the one, and the resurrection of the other, who was raised and glorified that our faith and hope might be in God {1Pe 1:20} and that it is not until a man is regenerated; whatever hope he has before, is not a lively one, and so not a good one: The gospel is the ordinary means by which it is ingenerated, and therefore may be called the **hope of the gospel**; {Col 1:23} and certain it is, that the gospel being good news, and glad tidings of good things, of peace, pardon, righteousness, and salvation by Christ, tends greatly to encourage and promote hope; its doctrines being doctrines of grace, and its promises being free, absolute, and unconditional, are calculated for this purport, and greatly serve it; from there the heirs of promise have strong consolation, who flee to Christ and **lay hold on the hope set before them**; the promises they are heirs of, and which yield them comfort, encourage their hope in Christ, who is set before them, in the gospel, as the object of it; and, generally speaking, it is a word of promise which the holy Spirit brings home and applies to the Soul, which is the ground and foundation of its hope: Hence says David, Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou **hast caused me to hope**. {Ps 119:49} Indeed whatsoever is written in the scriptures is written for our use, profit, and learning, that we through comfort of them **might have hope**; {Ro 15:4} and there are many things which, under a divine blessing, serve to cultivate and increase this grace; as the consideration of the power and faithfulness of God in his promises; the free grace and mercy of God displayed in salvation by Christ; the sufferings, death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ; and present experiences and a recollection of past ones; for **experience worketh hope**: {Ro 5:4} But then the cause, means, motives and encouragements of it, all shew it to be of the grace of God, and a gift of his. And which may further appear, by,

Thirdly, Explaining in what sense it is **through grace**. Grace is the spring and source of it; it comes to us from and through the grace of God; it is a part of that grace, which the God of all grace is the donor of; it is a part of the fullness of grace which is in Christ the Mediator, and is had of him; it is a part of that grace which the spirit of grace operates, and is the author of in conversion. Grace also is the object of it. The words may be literally rendered from the original text, and **good hope**, en caipp, "in grace," and so the phrase is the same with **hoping in the mercy of God**: {Ps 147:11} the mercy of God in Christ is the ground and foundation of hope; and is not only the motive and encouragement to it, let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy; {Ps 130:7} but is the thing itself, which hope is conversant with: the sensible sinner, or hoping Christian, hopes in the pardoning, justifying, and adopting grace of God, through Christ; he hopes that the good work of grace is begun in him; and he hopes and believes it will be **performed until the day of Christ**; he hopes for larger measures of grace from Christ, to enable him to do his will and work, to oppose his own corruptions, to withstand Satan's temptations, and to discharge his duty to God and man; he hopes the grace of Christ will be sufficient for him, or that a sufficient supply of it will be given him, to carry him through all the trials and difficulties of life; he hopes that his covenant-God and Father will supply all his need out of his riches in glory by Christ, and that God will give him persevering grace to hold on and out unto the end; he hopes for grace to be brought to him at the appearance of Christ; and

he hopes for glory, which is the perfection of grace. Moreover, a good hope through grace is an hope that is exercised through the grace of God; that is to say, that a man hopes for such and such things, and that he shall have them; not through any merits of his own, or through works of righteousness done by him, but through the grace and mercy of God. Thus for instance,

1st, Let the thing hoped for be salvation, as David says, **Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation:** {Ps 119:166} this the sensible soul knows is not by works, but by grace; and therefore he hopes for it, not through the one, but through the other: he is well assured that God saves and calls men, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace; that it is **not by works of righteousness they have done they are saved, but according to the mercy of God through the blood of Christ,** and washing of regeneration; and that they are saved by grace, and not merit, to prevent boasting in the creature; and therefore he hopes for it in this way, and in this only: and it is its being by grace which encourages him to hope for it; for were it by works, he should for ever despair of obtaining it. He observes, that it is freely wrought out by Christ, who came into the world having salvation, and is become the author of it; that it is already done, Christ on the cross said, it is **finished,** {Joh 19:38} and now he is on the throne, he says, it is done, {Re 21:6} and so completely done, that nothing is wanting in it, nor can any thing be added to it; and therefore the man that is acquainted with all this, hopes for it through the grace of Christ, that has wrought it, without any works of his: he further observes, that Christ came to seek, and to save lost sinners; yea, that it is a truth to be depended on, and is worthy of his acceptance and the acceptance of others, that Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners; and that the worst and vilest have been washed, cleansed, sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God; and therefore he hopes for salvation through the same grace and favor that has been shown to them, though he has been as bad as they, and may think himself worse; he takes notice that Christ is lifted up in the ministry of the word, as the brazen serpent was lifted up on the pole, that whoever, looks to him and believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life; he is encouraged by the gospel-declaration that whoever believes in him shall be saved; {Mr 16:16} and by the gospel instruction given to a sensible sinner in his case, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved; {Ac 16:31} which he considers as wonderful displays of the grace of God in Christ through which he is enabled to hope in him.

2dly, Let it be the pardon of sin he is hoping for: As sin is the first thing the Spirit of God convinces a man of, it is the pardon of it that he in the first place seeks after; and when he understands the right way in which it is to be had, he hopes for it; not through his tears, humiliations, and repentance, but through the grace of God streaming in the blood of Jesus: He finds that God only can forgive sin, against whom it is committed; that this is his sole prerogative, which he exercises, in a free and sovereign manner; that he has promised, in covenant to his people, that he will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will he remember, no more; {Heb 8:12} that he has proclaimed his name in his gospel, a God pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin; {Ex 34:6-7} and that there is none like him on that account; and therefore he is greatly encouraged to turn to the Lord, who will abundantly pardon, and to hope in his mercy: He understands by the sacred writings, that God set forth his Son to be the propitiation for sin; and that he sent him

forth, in the fullness of time to shed his blood for the remission of it, there being no remission without shedding of blood; and that he has **exalted him at his right hand**, to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins; and therefore he hopes for it through him, seeing with him there is mercy and plenteous redemption: And though he observes that forgiveness of sin is through the blood of Christ, yet according to the riches of divine grace, and comes through the tender mercy of our God; and therefore he hopes for it, not according to his own merit, but according to the multitude of God's tender mercies. The gospel declaration, that whosoever believes in Christ, **shall receive remission of sins** {Ac 10:43} and the many instances of pardoning grace and mercy, even such that have been great sinners, and whole sins were attended with aggravated circumstances; as David, who was guilty of murder and adultery; Manasseh, of most abominable crimes; Peter, of denying his Lord and Master; Saul, the persecutor, the blasphemer, and the injurious person, and the notorious sinner spoken of, who loved much because much was forgiven her; all these engage to the exercise of hope for pardon, through the free grace and mercy of God.

3dly, Let it be eternal life which is the thing hoped for, as that is; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began, says the apostle; {Tit 1:2} hence, eternal glory and happiness being the object of hope, is called the blessed hope, and the hope which is laid up in heaven. {Tit 2:13; Col 1:5} Now, eternal life is the gift of God, **through Jesus Christ our Lord**; it is that kingdom which it is our heavenly Father's good pleasure to give unto his children; it is what he of his rich grace, has prepared for them, and promised to them, calls them unto, makes them meet for, and bestows upon them: Not only the promise of eternal life, but that itself is put into Christ's hands for them; and he has power to give it to as many as the Father has given him; and to them he does give it, and they shall never perish: And since it is a gift of pure free grace, therefore do sensible sinners, seeking for glory, immortality, and eternal life, hope for it; which they could never expect upon any other foot: And they are the rather encouraged to hope for it, since God has declared it to be his will, that whoever sees the Son, and believes on him, shall have it; and because they find the holy Spirit of God is at work upon their hearts, has begun the good work, which he will finish, and is working them up for that self-same thing, eternal life and happiness; wherefore they reason as Manoah's wife did, that "if the Lord were pleased to destroy them, he would never have shewed them and told them such things as he has done, or wrought such things in them;" and hence for grace and through grace they hope for glory; **seeing to whom God gives grace, he gives glory**; these are inseparably connected together; **whom he calls and justifies, them he also glorifies**, And, Fourthly, Such an hope is a good one, There is a bad hope and there is a good one. There is the hope of the worldly man, who makes gold his hope, and says to the fine gold, thou art my confidence; {Ro 15:13} he puts his trust in it; and not only places his dependence on it for present and future good in this life, but hopes for eternal life upon the account of it; imagining there is none the King of kings will delight to honor in the world as himself, who enjoys so large a portion of this; this is a bad hope. There is the hope of the man that is only upon principles in which he has been brought up; who hopes upon the faith of others, his natural descent, or being born of such and such parents, and his religious education; this is a bad hope. There is the hope of the moralist and legalist; who hopes he shall inherit eternal life because of the good things he has done; because of his moral life and actions, and his works

of righteousness in obedience to the law; whereas by these no man can be justified, and so not saved, or ever enter into the kingdom of heaven; this is a bad hope. There is the hope of the hypocrite, who hopes for heaven because of his profession of religion and subjection to ordinances, and going through a round of duties in a formal manner, and with a mere outward show; this is a bad hope; it is like the spider's web, and will be as the giving up of the Ghost, and be of no avail; even though such may have gained a name among men to be holy and good, when God takes away their souls. And there is the hope of the profane sinner, for such have their hope; and they hope for salvation through the absolute mercy of God; they fancy if they have but time to say at last, "Lord have mercy on us," all will be well; this is a bad hope; for there is no mercy for sinners, but through the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ. But the hope we have been treating of is a good one, and may be so called,

1st, Because it is laid upon a good foundation; not upon the absolute mercy of God; not upon the merit of the creature; not upon any outward acts of righteousness; not upon civility, morality, or an external profession of religion; all which are sandy foundations to build an hope of eternal happiness upon; but upon the person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ; upon the person of Christ, who is God over all blessed for ever, and is able to save to the uttermost, who is **the hope of Israel, the Savior thereof** in time of trouble, and **Christ our hope**, and **in us the hope of glory**; upon his blood, which cleanses from all sin, and was shed for the remission of it; upon his righteousness, which justifies from all sin, and gives a right and title to eternal life; and upon his sacrifice, by which sin is finished and made an end of, and reconciliation is made for it.

2dly, Because not only the author of it is good, who from it is called **the God of hope**, {Ro 15:13} but because the objects of it are good things; it is of good things to come, and the best things are referred till last; now the saints have their evil things, their sorrows and afflictions, but hereafter they shall have their good things. Christ is come an high priest of good things to come unto his people; and these good things are laid up for them, and shall be enjoyed by them; and hope is waiting for them: And the hoping Christian knows them to be good by the foretastes and pledges he has had of them; such as a sight of God in Christ; communion with Father, Son, and Spirit; fellowship with angels and glorified saints; perfect knowledge, holiness, and pleasure. 3dly, Because it is in its nature and effects good: It is called a **lively hope**, or a **living one**; {1Pe 1:3} because it has not only for its subject a living man in a spiritual sense; and for its foundation, not dead works, but a living Christ; and for its object, eternal life; but because it is of a quickening, exhilarating, and cheering nature; and because it is attended with living works of righteousness; for as faith without works is dead, so is hope likewise; and because it always continues, and is sometimes in lively exercise, when other graces are not so lively: It is also said to be of a purifying nature; every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure; {1Jo 3:3} and which it no other ways does than as it deals with the pure and spotless righteousness of Christ, and with his precious blood, which purges the conscience from dead works.

4thly, Because of its great usefulness: It is that to the soul an anchor is to a ship when becalmed, or in danger through rocks and shoals; it preserves and keeps it steady; and is

therefore said to be as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. {Heb 6:19} And it serves the same use and purpose as an helmet does to the head; and therefore the hope of salvation is said to be for an helmet; {1Th 5:8} this grace preserves the head and heart of a Christian from bad principles in perilous times; for he can give into none that strike at the foundation of his hope; it is an erector of his head, and keeps it above water in times of trouble, inward and outward; and it covers his head in the day of battle, between him and his spiritual enemies; this he will never give up, This grace is of singular use under afflictive dispensations, of providence; the believer-rejoices, in hope of the glory of God, even in tribulations; 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, {Ro 5:2-5} And it is of eminent service in the hour of death; for when **the wicked is driven away in his wickedness**, like a beast to hell, the righteous hath hope in his death; {Pr 14:32} of tiring again at the last day, and in the mean while of being in the arms of Jesus, and of being happy with him; and therefore can look upon death and eternity with pleasure. Yea, this grace is of so much importance and usefulness, that even salvation is ascribed unto it, **we are saved by hope**; {Ro 8:24} not by it, as the efficient cause of salvation, for there is no other author or efficient cause of salvation but Christ; but by it as a means of coming to, and enjoying the salvation Christ has wrought out: As we are saved by Grace through faith, in like manner we are saved through hope; being begotten unto it, we are kept through it, till we receive the end of it, the salvation of our souls; wherefore upon the whole, it must be good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. {La 3:26}

There is a sort of people risen up among us of late, who sneer at this phrase, **a good hope through grace**, not considering that it is a scriptural one; and represent such who have attained to nothing higher, as in the lower form and class of Christians, if they deserve that name; and suggest, that persons may have this and everlastingly perish: but let us not regard what these flighty people say; let us attend to what the scriptures say, to what our text says concerning it; which speaks of it as of God, as a gift of his; ascribes it to his grace, represents it as a fruit of the love of God and Christ; joins it with everlasting consolation; and mentions it as a blessing of grace, which the apostles themselves, whom God had set in the first place in the church, in the highest office in it, were possessed of, and were thankful for: Let us attend to what a solid saint on a dying bed says of a good hope through grace; what his sentiments, his notions of it are; and such an one, I mean a solid saint, was our deceased friend, whose death is the occasion of this discourse; as must be allowed by all that knew him, who are capable of judging of a spiritual man.

At my first visit to him after he had took to his bed, upon inquiring into the spiritual estate and frame of his soul, he told me, he had a good hope through grace; and added, if I may but go out of the world with a good hope through grace, it will be more to me than all the exaltations and joys some persons speak of; that is enough, I am content, or words to this purpose; and subjoined, that if any thing should be said of him after his decease, meaning in this public way, he desired it might be from this passage of scripture, we have been considering. It pleased God to favor him with a religious education, to bless him with an early conversion, and to cast him betimes under a gospel ministry; by which means his judgment was formed, fixed, and established in gospel principles, in the doctrines of grace,

of which he had a clear discerning: And as he had a retentive memory, he treasured up in it the quintessence and flower of gospel discourses, and the pithy sayings and sententious expressions he had heard or read in them; which, together with that large stock and fund of gracious experience of the love of God to his own soul, abundantly furnished him with rich materials for spiritual discourse; and which made his conversation very pleasant, profitable, and instructive; he being able to speak of divine things in very apt words, with great freedom, propriety, and pertinence. The frame of his soul was generally spiritual and heavenly, and so habituated he was to spiritual things, and so much given to the contemplation of them, and meditation upon them, that in the midst of worldly business, and even upon the Exchange, when he met with a proper person, would at once enter into a Christian conversation about such things, which lay warm upon his heart, he had been lately hearing or meditating upon; which shows the bias and bent of his mind. And as he was indulged with a large measure of grace, so he had great afflictions to try and exercise that grace; which afflictions he bore with uncommon patience seldom making mention of them, especially in a way of complaint; and never murmuring at the dispensations of God; but taking all kindly at his hand, as coming from a loving Father, and designed and overruled for his spiritual good, profit, and advantage. He was remarkable for his humility, he was clothed with it, that ornament **of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price**. His outward conversation in the world was exemplary, and as became the gospel of Christ, and was ornamental to it. He was many years a worshipper with us in this assembly; but became a member of this church but of late: We promised ourselves a great deal of usefulness from him in our church-state; but God has took him away, and he is joined to better company, and is employed in higher service: he was very comfortable in his soul, throughout his last illness; his faith was kept steady, ever looking to Jesus, in whom he knew all his salvation lay. He has left to you, his dear children, a shining example both in civil and religious life; may you tread in his steps; let it be your great concern to know your father's God, to worship, fear, and follow him; so he who has been his God, will shew himself to be yours, and be your God and guide even unto death. May we all learn something from this providence, and from this discourse, occasioned by it; and it becomes us,

1. To inquire whether, we have any hope of good things to come, and what that hope is; whether it be a good one or a bad one. If it is founded on any thing short of Christ, it is a bad one; if it is upon the Creature and creature, and it will be of no avail; if it is through works, and not through grace, we hope for heaven and happiness, it will prove a vain hope: But if it is founded upon what Christ is unto us; what he has done for us; and what he is in us; it is a good one, and will answer some good purposes in life and death: And then if we are satisfied we have such an hope, it becomes us,

2. To bless God for it; since he is the donor and author of it. It is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God; and we should ascribe it not to nature, nor to the reasonings of our minds, the power and freedom of our wills but to the grace of God: We might have been left to black despair, and to sink into hell under the weight of guilt; there might have been nothing but a fearful looking for of wrath and fiery indignation, which our sins deserved; but God has dealt graciously with us, he has given us **a good hope through grace**, Wherefore it becomes us,

3. To continue in the use of this grace; to pray for the holy Spirit of God to cause us to abound in it; and to enable us to hold fast the rejoicing of it firm unto the end; to gird up the loins of our minds, and hope for future grace and eternal glory; and to go on hoping, believing, loving, until hope is exchanged for fruition, faith for vision, and love is in its highest exercise.