

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

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The Anchor of the Faithful Christian's Soul

Hebrews 6:18-19: *that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil;*

In the midst of trying and uncertain times, people often look for **hope** of something better in the future. For faithful Christians, hope is a central part of life at *all* times, serving as the anchor of the soul.

When hope for the faithful Christian is spoken about in Scripture, its object is *heaven* (cf. **1 Pet. 1:3-4**).

Hope involves fervently *desiring* heaven. We should *look forward to and earnestly desire the coming of the Day of Judgment*, when the righteous of all ages will be gathered together in heaven.

After assuring that the Day of Judgment *will* come (**2 Pet. 3:10**), the Holy Spirit through Peter goes on to say, "*Therefore since all these things will be destroyed like this, what kind of people ought you to be in holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the day of God, which will cause the burning heavens to be dissolved, and the elements will melt*

with fervent heat?" (**verses 11-12**).

Notice the exhortation to be *prepared* for that Day, and how those who *are* prepared should *view* that Day. The only reason to tremble at the thought of judgment is if one is not prepared. Faithful Christians ought to *look forward* to it. The opportunity to be in God's direct presence for eternity in a place free from sin far outweighs anything the world can offer. Looking forward to the Day of Judgment, on which day the righteous' hope will become reality, is a key element of hope.

The hymn "On Jordan's Stormy Banks" expresses this sentiment well. Just as the physical nation of Israel looked with eager expectation toward their promised land, we who are part of "*the Israel of God*" (**Gal. 6:16**) (all faithful Christians) should look forward to the point at which the righteous will be gathered together in *our* promised land.

The biblical concept of hope goes further than an eager desire, though. It also includes a *confident expectation* that such hope will be *realized*. This is seen in part of the definition of faith given in **Hebrews 11:1**: *Now faith is assurance of things hoped for...*

When there is a 50% chance of rain and a person says "I hope it doesn't rain today," he or she has a desire, but cannot have a confident expectation. On the other hand, there is a *100%* guarantee

that the righteous will spend eternity with God in heaven. One who is a faithful part of the body of Christ can have a confident expectation that *if* he or she *remains* that way, heaven will one day be a reality.

The assurance one has of things hoped for is a part of *faith*. Faith is built by receiving the Word of God with “*an honest and good heart*” (Luke 8:15; cf. Rom. 10:17). The truth God gives us thus forms the basis for our hope. We know the righteous *really* will spend eternity in heaven because of God’s Word, which persuades us of His faithfulness and the resurrection of His Son.

1 Peter 1:3 says, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*”

Jesus’ resurrection is connected to the hope of *our* resurrection. Notice 1 Corinthians 15:20: *But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep.*

Jesus was not the first to be raised from the dead (Matt. 9:18-25; John 11:43-44; etc), but He *was* the first to be raised from the dead *never to die again*. The crux of 1 Corinthians 15 is that Christ’s resurrection guarantees a “general resurrection.” This truth should make the *unrighteous tremble* (and come to God on *His* terms), but this truth provides *comfort* to the *righteous* (cf. John 5:28-29).

The assurance of the resurrection provides a sure and steadfast anchor for the faithful. The grand conclusion to the “chapter of the resurrection” is “*Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord*” (1 Cor. 15:58). Because Jesus was raised, we know that laboring in His vineyard is not in vain, and we have great motivation to be steadfast in the truth.

This takes us back to Hebrews 6:18-19. Hope anchors the faithful Christian’s soul. The righteous’ faithfulness to God is not contingent on temporal circumstances. Life on earth will never be a “utopia,” but life on earth can be lived with hope of eternal comfort in God’s direct presence.

Such hope is *not* for those who are not God’s faithful servants though. Any “hope” of heaven for the unrighteous is a *false* hope. The eternal abode of the unrighteous is a place “*where their worm doesn’t die, and the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:48). Hell is a place of *never-ending* torment.

This doesn’t have to be the destination of anyone reading this though. May those who’ve not “*put on Christ*” in the way the New Testament instructs (Gal. 3:27; cf. Acts 2:38) do so, and may we each abide in His teaching every day, being anchored by the hope of eternal life offered us by Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.

- Michael Hickox