

Sunday, April 8, 2012—The Believers Hope

What is Hope?

- I Corinthians 15:12-18—Christianity rises or falls on the resurrection of Christ. Paul in writing to the Corinthians tells them and therefore us that if there is no resurrection of the dead and Christ is not risen:
 - Our faith is vain (14)
 - We are false witnesses of God (15)
 - We are still in our sins (17)
 - Those who have died in Christ are perished (18). The Greek word translated “perished” carries the following meanings, according to *Strong’s Concordance*: 1) to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to ruin, 2) render useless, 3) metaph. to devote or give over to eternal misery in hell, 4) to perish, to be lost, ruined, destroyed. In other words, if there is no resurrection and Christ is still dead all our loved ones that have trusted in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as the only total and complete payment for sin are destroyed.

- I Corinthians 15:19—if the hope of Christ pertains to this life only we truly are of all men most miserable because we have placed our trust and hope in something that is not true.
 - I Corinthians 15:1-4—the gospel that Paul preached and that the Corinthians believed was based upon the fact that Christ rose from the dead.

- The concept of hope encapsulates this truth; **it is for the future, not the present, that man exists**. The Greek word translated hope means the expectation of something future: 1) a well-grounded expectation and a gladly and firmly help prospect of a future good, 2) that expected good, that for which we hope. In I Cor. 15:19, the phrase “we have hope” implies that the Corinthians had been hoping, i.e., the endurance of hope through their lives was found in the resurrection of Christ.

- The English word Hope carries the following meanings according to *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*:
 - A desire of some good, accompanied with at least a slight expectation of obtaining it, or a belief that it is obtainable. Hope differs from wish and desire in this, that it implies some expectation of obtaining the good desired, or the possibility of possessing it. Hope therefore always gives pleasure or joy; whereas wish and desire may produce or be accompanied with pain and anxiety.
 - Confidence in a future event; the highest degree of well founded expectation of good; as a hope founded on God's gracious promises; a scriptural sense.

- The definitions of the Greek and English words prove that hope is what moves human being from the present to the future. It is hope that drives us forward through the peril and uncertainty of the present.
- The present was never designed to satisfy man. That it does not, as matter of fact, is attested by the consciousness of all. Let the character of the present and the extent of the future be what they may, the present fails to satisfy, and it is for the future the heart sighs and yearns. How the child of two or three aspires to the school-boy's lot; the school-boy pants to be a youth, the youth to be a man; and the man, be his circumstances what they may, finds not in those circumstances what satisfies and fills his heart, but reaches after that which the future holds out to view. It is not in man to be satisfied with the present. True, indeed, his aspirings may be limited to the present state of being. But his present portion in this state of existence is not that which contents him: it is the future which he expects to do so, even if it be a future here — a future within the precincts of this narrow world and this short life. *It is for the future, not the present, that man actually lives*; just as we have seen that it is for the future, not the present, man was made.
- Romans 8:24-25—it is with the future that hope has to do. This is true of all hope: it is of the Christian's hope that it is affirmed; but it is true of hope, whatever be its character or its object. At least thus much is true, that what we hope for is that which we possess not at present. And it is thus that hope becomes such a stimulus to exertion, such a solace in affliction, such a light amid surrounding darkness, such a stay when no other stay remains. Extinguish hope, and happiness is gone. Let the faintest glimmering of hope remain, and man's misery is not complete.
- And what more powerful in its influence than hope? It is the hope of harvest that cheers the husbandman in his toil. The exile is sustained in his wanderings by the hope of once more beholding his beloved country. It is in the hope of revisiting his native shores that the mariner ploughs the deep and braves the storm. The merchant is stimulated by the hope of gain — the student by the prospect of success — the warrior by the hope of conquest, and perhaps of spoil. Take away from these the hope of securing the objects they severally pursue, and all motive to exertion or endurance is withdrawn. Rob that mother of the hope of seeing her children happy and esteemed, or at least the hope of their being so, whether she should live to see it or not, and what do you leave to support her amid her daily and nightly anxiety and toll? Ah! it is thus that, even in this world, hope goes beyond the limits of the individual's life, and leads men to live and to act for a future in the well-being of their offspring, when their own career on earth shall have come to a close. And hope, even in respect to things of this life, sweetens the bitterest cup, and sustains under the heaviest load of present calamity and grief.
- But if the present thus invariably fail to satisfy, and if hope, on which the heart lives and feeds, be bounded by the, present state of existence, it follows that, as those things which have been hoped for come to be possessed, they are found to be as unsatisfying as all else; and thus the history of human life is the history of disappointed hopes. Either the object of hope is never attained, or, when attainment has transformed the future, into the present, that which has been bright to hope becomes dull and insipid in possession; and the heart still sighs and longs for something which it

possesses not. It is, of course, of the natural heart we speak thus. The sum of all that it seeks, as well as of all that it possesses, is vanity and vexation of spirit.

- I Corinthians 1:19—if we cannot even satisfy ourselves it is vain to suppose that we can satisfy God. This is why Paul says that if our hope in Christ does not extend beyond the borders of this life we are of all men most miserable. From where does the Atheist draw his hope?

The Believers Hope

- I Corinthians 15:20-23—those who have placed faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are not perished or miserable because Christ has risen from the dead. Just as sin came into the world by one man so also came the resurrection of the dead. The believers hope is not extinguished upon death it waits for resurrection.
- I Thessalonians 1:10—the hope and future longing of our souls is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hope his inseparably tied to the one who rose again from the dead.
- I Timothy 1:1—Christ is the believers hope not only in this life but also for the life to come.
- *Heaven*—should the question be put to almost any Christian — What is it that is the object of your individual hope? the answer, in most cases, would be — Heaven. And this, surely, is according to the word of God.
 - Colossians 1:5—THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH IS A HEAVENLY, NOT AN EARTHLY HOPE. Heaven, not earth, is our future dwelling-place. Whatever links of connection there may be in that day between heaven and earth — whatever benign influences the Church may be employed of God to exert on the earth and its inhabitants — heaven, not earth, is our distinctive place and portion.
 - Ephesians 1:3
 - Philippians 3:20
- How does one get from here to heaven? There are but two options: 1) death, 2) the return of the Lord to catch away the saints. Both of which are associated with the hope of the believer.
- *Resurrection*—there is another point on which the faith and hopes of Christians generally are undoubtedly according to God's word. I mean the expectation of being happy with Christ in heaven after death, in case that event should occur.
 - Philippians 1:21, 23—Paul's desire was to be with Christ
 - II Corinthians 5:8—and while it is most true, and, in its place, most important, that departed saints are happy with Christ in heaven, it is not this disembodied state, this state

of happy, departed souls, which is set before us in Scripture as our hope. This disembodied state is not the full and final object of the believers hope.

- II Corinthians 5:1-3--what is this house which is "from heaven?" Surely it cannot be our disembodied state while in heaven awaiting the resurrection of the body! No, it is the resurrection-body itself which the apostle says we earnestly desire: "if so be," he proceeds, "that being clothed we shall not be found naked."
- II Corinthians 5:4—it is not death, and a state of happiness between death and the resurrection, for which the apostle waits, and longs, and groans. It is the resurrection-state, the being clothed upon with the house which is from heaven, the swallowing up of mortality in life. Afterwards he does intimate, that even to be disembodied is better than to be in these mortal tabernacles.
- Such was the state of the apostle's mind on this important subject. While in this body, or tabernacle, he could not but groan. Why so? Because, while at home in the body, he was absent from the Lord. On this account he was willing, and in Philippians he says he had a desire, to be "absent from the body, and present with the Lord." But though preferring the disembodied state to the present one, it was not for the disembodied state that he groaned and waited, as the definite, final object of his hopes. "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon." It was for the resurrection-body, the resurrection-state, the resurrection-glory, that he longed. And *resurrection, not death, is the believer's hope.*
- *The Coming of Christ*—heaven is our hope; and, that if the Lord should tarry, and we should fall asleep ere He return, we shall be happy with Him in heaven until the resurrection. But it is not this state of separate spirits which is placed before us in Scripture as our hope, but *the return of Jesus*, to raise the sleeping saints, and to change those who are alive and remain, that both being caught up to meet Him in the air, we may thus, in bodies like to His glorious body, be "forever with the Lord." This is the hope set before us as individual believers.
 - I Thessalonians 4:13-17—what was to assuage the sorrow of the Thessalonians? Was it that Christ had come and fulfilled his word? No, it was the return of Jesus, accompanied by the departed saints.
 - I Corinthians 15:51-52
 - Philippians 3:20-21
 - I Thessalonians 1:10—in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the coming of Christ is mentioned in every chapter.
 - I Thessalonians 2:19-20—it was at the coming of Christ Paul expected to have the full joy of the success of his labors among the Thessalonians.

- I Thessalonians 3:13
- I Thessalonians 5:23
- Titus 2:11-13—the blessed hope of the church is the glorious appearing of our great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.
- Titus 3:7—the hope of eternal life extends only to those who have been justified. Only those who have trusted the shed blood of Jesus Christ as the only payment for their sin and Christ's resurrection from the dead share in this hope.
- Heaven, then, I repeat it, my brethren, is the place where we hope eternally to dwell; but it is heaven, as we shall be introduced to it along with all saints, departed or alive, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is Christ Himself, as about to return and receive us to Himself, who is thus our hope. We look back believingly to the cross of Christ, and have perfect peace; we look forward to the coming of Christ, as our hope. And this hope, as it is presented to us in Scripture, is of universal influence on the spirit, and character, and conduct of the saint. There is scarcely a single christian grace, scarcely a single fruit of the Spirit, with which it is not expressly connected. There is not a form of christian devotedness with which it is not associated.

Conclusion

- I Corinthians 15:19—because we have by faith been identified with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection we are not of all men most miserable. Our hope in Christ does not expire when our life here on earth is over we have a blessed hope that is tied to the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ.
- Earthly hope is such that we cannot even make ourselves happy why then do people insist that they can make God happy with them. And as to how God's favour is to be secured, you understand fully, that it is not by your repentance or reformation, your obedience or devotion, your fastings or prayers or tears — "not by works of righteousness which you have done," or hope to do — much less by any priestly influence, that your fellow-sinners can use on your behalf. No, you read your title to forgiveness and acceptance, in the glorious person, the perfect obedience, the atoning blood, of God's holy Lamb. The assurance of God's infinite satisfaction with Him, and with all who believe in Him, you see in God raising Him from the dead, and placing Him at His own right hand in heaven. . . You have found the true, the everlasting good. The light of God's countenance — acceptance in Jesus — peace through His blood — a conscience purged from sin — the privilege to enter boldly into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; these, with the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the, Holy Ghost, so that you joy in God Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ — are blessings of such a character, that your heart is effectually weaned from the ten thousand objects on which it once was wasted; and you can understand the Saviour's words to the poor Samaritan woman, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but

the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The secret of happiness — true, satisfying, unfailing enjoyment — has been disclosed to you.

- It is true that you have tasted of real happiness, of eternal life, in the knowledge of the Father, and of Jesus whom He has sent. But this is not to say that you have the full, perfect, unhindered enjoyment of this happiness, this life. This is still before you as the object of your hope. "Then the Christian is not satisfied, any more than others?" It may seem so to the worldling; and it is quite true that in one sense the Christian is not satisfied; but it is in a widely different sense from that in which the worldling is not, and for widely different reasons. The worldling is not satisfied because he knows nothing, is possessed of nothing, which — can either now, or at any time, satisfy him. The Christian knows One who can, and is possessed of One who can satisfy him. He knows Christ — he possesses Christ — he enjoys Christ. Christ is his life — Christ is his peace — Christ is his joy — Christ is his portion; but, as yet, he has never seen Christ. It is by faith he knows, by faith he possesses, by faith he enjoys Him; but the more he knows and enjoys Him thus, the more he longs to behold Him. . . believing in Christ, whom we have not seen, we love Him; we rejoice in Him with unspeakable joy; we receive the salvation of our souls But to see Christ — to have the salvation which He wrought out on the cross applied to our bodies as well as to our souls — to have it perfected in our experience even as it respects our souls — to have it consummated thus in all who are fellow-partakers with us of Christ — to be with Him, and with them, in our Father's house — to behold His glory which the Father has given Him — to appear with Him in glory when He appears — to reign with Him over a ransomed and redeemed and happy creation — to fulfil our part in the universal harmony of all in heaven, and all in earth, when all shall bow the knee to Jesus, when every tongue shall own Him Lord, and all voices shall join to celebrate His praise; this, and far more than this — far more than heart can conceive or tongue explain, is what we wait for; and, above all, we wait for Him whose return shall introduce us to all this perfect blessedness — we "wait for God's Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." HE IS OUR HOPE. We know Him now by faith as our Saviour, our Lord, our life, our peace, our joy, our all.