

What is hope?

By

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In daily life, “hope” is something positive but also something uncertain. If we hope for something, we are not sure whether it will happen. However, the Bible teaches us that there is a source of hope that is absolutely certain and trustworthy: God’s character and promises.

What are you hoping for?

Most people are longing for a comfortable and carefree life. They hope that they’ll enjoy good health, become rich and influential and find a good job, to name just a few examples. A hopeful attitude can help to maintain a positive outlook on life, even when daily reality is sometimes tough. But in all these cases, people can’t be sure that they will receive what they are longing for. Their optimistic state of mind may be disappointed. Moreover, the things they are hoping for, are only temporary. They last till death at best and can disappear quickly. People fall ill, stock markets crash and hurricanes or earthquakes destroy carefully maintained homes. And even if

everything goes well, “when the wicked dies, his hope will perish” (Proverbs 11:7). If our hopes are focused alone on earthly things, we are acting foolishly.

Our hope in Christ

The Bible does not speak of hope as an uncertain expectation for the future, but as a solid foundation under the life of every believer. Paul writes about this in 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.” Paul is not speaking about humanity in general, but about people who have yielded to the lordship of “our Lord Jesus Christ” and are resting in the love and care of “our Father”. Real hope is only found in Him. This is confirmed by the apostle Peter: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

The Bible mentions hope together with faith and love (see 1 Corinthians 13:13). Faith convicts us of things we cannot (yet) see, but were promised by the God who loves us. Faith makes us trust God's Word about the past, the present and the future. Faith is what makes real the things we hope for.

A great reward that will surely come

This relationship between faith and hope also makes clear what believers are hoping for, namely the good things God has promised us for the future. And that is a lot. It includes spiritual blessings during our earthly life, but also eternal life in the Lord's presence on a new earth where sin, suffering and death will be no more. These things can't be seen yet, but through faith we can nevertheless be sure that our hopes will come true.

In Ephesians 1:16-19 and Ephesians 2:4-7 we read of the surpassing riches of God's grace that He will display to us in the age to come. As Christians, in this life we may struggle with the forces of Satan and the sin that continues to reside in our hearts. But not only is our

reward great; the surety of that reward could not be any more certain. Numbers 23:19 reads: “God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind.” Anything the Lord has spoken, will come to fruition.

The example of Abraham

Hope in God is not a vague expectation or uncertain searching. It is a solid trust in God and His Word. To know what this means, you can learn from Abraham. He had received a promise from God that he and his wife Sarah would have a child and that a great nation would come forth of this child. But the years went by without anything happening. The Bible says about Abraham: “He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised” (Romans 4:19-21). He hoped

in God and not in his own human capabilities. God fulfilled this promise gloriously. When Abraham was 100 years old, his son Isaac was born. Out of this child a great nation and, ultimately, the Lord Jesus Christ was born. Through Him, our Savior, we can also have confidence and trust in God.

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