

Hold Fast to Hope

by Brent Barnett

The sermon emphasizes the importance of placing hope in God and not in the world, and encourages believers to stand firm in the only true hope of Christ and our inheritance in Him.

Scripture: Proverbs 11:7, John 13:34, Romans 8:24, 1 Corinthians 13:13, 1 Corinthians 15:54, Hebrews 10:23, 1 Peter 1:13, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Eternal Hope", "Christian Faith"

Description

Brent Barnett delves into the significance of hope in the Christian faith, emphasizing its importance alongside faith and love. He highlights how placing hope in worldly desires leads to emptiness and eternal loss, contrasting it with the enduring hope found in Christ and His promises. Barnett warns against misplacing hope in temporary gifts or relationships, stressing the need to fix our hope completely on the grace brought by Jesus Christ's revelation. The sermon underscores that true Christianity is anchored in a hope for eternal life with Christ, guiding believers to focus on their heavenly inheritance and live with a confidence that draws others to inquire about their unwavering hope.

Transcript

1 Corinthians 13:13 says, "But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love." We understand that faith is essential to life in Christ, being the grounds for salvation and the means to be able to accomplish anything truly spiritually meaningful in Christ. We know that love is important to Christianity, given that it is the mark of true disciples of Christ (John 13:34-35). But hope? What makes hope so great that it is listed as part of these three enduring qualities?

An interesting thing happens to those who set their hope entirely on the things of this world. They hold on to them so tightly, which makes sense, given that sin is enslaving. Thus, any who refuse to hope in Christ and His promises and who choose rather to hope for the selfish pleasures of this life don't want to hear about Christ and salvation. They don't want to give up the source of their "hope," which is their sin. They need their sin to keep having something to live for. Proverbs 11:7 says, "When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish, and the hope of strong men perishes." In other words, those who set their hope upon the things of this world will lose all hope when eternity comes. Their earthly "victories" of achieving selfish hope after vain expectation will be swallowed up in death and eternity in hell. The righteous, on the other hand, have hope that will endure, for to them, death is swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:54).

Yet sometimes Christians, too, get caught up with placing their hope in sources other than God. The most common mistake is probably hoping in the gracious gifts of God more than God Himself. Some become enslaved to chasing ministry success or the chance to do something great for God. There is nothing wrong with these things in and of themselves as long as God remains our hope above all. Sometimes Christians get so attached to their mate, and understandably so, such that when their mate passes away to be with the Lord, they virtually stop living and lose their hope. It is absolutely important that, though God gives us gracious gifts in this life, we never put our hope in the gifts at the expense of failing to put our hope in the Giver. In fact, 1 Peter 1:13 says, "Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Peter reminds believers everywhere, particularly those who are in distress, to hope fully, totally, and entirely upon Christ and the fulfillment of His promised salvation to us. Even the best gifts that God can give us will not satisfy us like Christ can. Even the most intimate relationship on earth, marriage, is not as pure and wonderful as our relationship with Christ. Nothing we can gain, earn, or accomplish on this earth is to be compared with the riches that are in Christ. We do ourselves a great disservice when we begin placing our hope and our confidence in sources outside of God Himself and His promise to us of eternity with Him.

Hope is an essential foundation of Christianity, along with faith and love. Central to true Christianity is a hope in what is not yet seen (Romans 8:24), namely eternal life with Christ, and a refusal to put our hope in anything that the world says will bring us life. Because of his hope in the eternal, the Christian is focused on trying to maximize not his stay on earth but his future inheritance in heaven. How he lives on earth is dictated by a heavenly hope and confidence. This hope and focus on the life to come should be so evident to others that they ask him about the hope that he has (1 Peter 3:15). No one would marvel at a person who hopes for the next sitcom, paycheck, or promotion. What sets Christians apart is their preoccupation with, focus upon, and hope in heaven.

Our hope is not a passing hope, but it is certain. Hebrews 10:23 says, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." When we came to Christ we confessed our sins, our need for forgiveness, and the fact that Christ is indeed our Savior and Lord. Intricately connected to our confession of faith is a confession of hope. Salvation implies a concern for Christ and for the life to come. Thus, hope in our redemption and life in Christ is very much connected to saving faith and Christian love. Our focus and hope is not upon ourselves or this world but upon Christ and the life to come. This enduring hope to which we must hold fast is a defining mark of the believer. We have great hope because we know that God will keep His promise to us of eternal life.

In a world full of hopelessness and misled hopefulness, may we as believers stand firm in the only true hope of Christ and our inheritance in Him to such an extent that the world must inquire about the Source of our hope.

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