

The Purifying Hope

by G. Campbell Morgan

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a purifying hope in Christ, which regulates the attitude of the believer's life and prepares them for the coming of Christ.

Scripture: 1 John 2:28

Topics: "Living in Expectation", "Purifying Hope"

Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes the purifying hope found in the anticipation of Christ's return, urging believers to abide in Him and live righteously in light of this hope. He explains that true hope is not a passive expectation but an active pursuit of holiness, as it shapes our lives and attitudes towards Christ and the world. Morgan warns against the dangers of being unprepared at Christ's coming, highlighting the importance of living in obedience to God's truth. He encourages believers to view their daily lives through the lens of this hope, which should inspire them to serve faithfully and remain ready for the Lord's return. Ultimately, this hope is a source of strength and motivation for a life of purity and purpose.

Transcript

MANY persons will ask, What is the practical value of this teaching? The answer to that question is found in 1 John ii. 28 to iii. 3.

"And now, my little children, abide in Him; that, if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of Him. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is. And every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

I fear that the question to which I have used these verses as a reply too often reveals the fact that the one asking has a wrong conception of the nature and value of truth. It is not a commodity to be stored, but a purifying and sanctifying force, bringing men into harmony with the will of God. The man who seeks mere possession of, apart from obedience to, truth, must fail in his quest. When God reveals Himself to man, obedience prepares for the reception of further and deeper revelations. In this connection we call to mind the declaration of our Lord, "The truth shall make you free" ; and the words of His great intercessory prayer, Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth." It is not a point of indifference as to whether

any given view be correct or not. It is of the utmost importance that we devoutly, humbly, and yet earnestly, search out the will of God in the truth of God. What, then, is the particular value of the study of Bible teaching concerning things to come? John, who had such clear understanding of the affinity between Jesus and the believer, says that the hope of the Church is to be the reason for, and the power of, purity of individual life in its members.

The Greek word translated hope in the passage referred to undoubtedly has the same meaning as the Anglo-Saxon hope. The word is often used in a light way which ignores its true meaning. Hope is a confident anticipation of good things to come, with corresponding effort to reach and attain them. It is not a mere consciousness in the mind, that something of value is to take place in the future. It is the setting of life and purpose toward that which the mind has come to understand and appreciate. The return of our Lord Jesus Christ is uniformly regarded by the apostles as the hope of the Church, though they may treat of it under varied aspects, such as the reward of workers, the destruction of evil, meeting with loved ones gone before, and the inexpressible delight of the Lord's presence. Let us examine a few of such passages:

(i.) Rom. viii. 17-25: "- heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in HOPE that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For by hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

Evidently, in the mind of .the apostle, the completion of redemption-that is, the redemption of the body-is the hope of the Church.

(ii.) Titus ii. 11-13: "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world ; looking for the blessed HOPE and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

In this case the apostle links the Church's hope with the epiphany of the glory.

(iii.) Heb. x. 19-23: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a great Priest over the house of God ; let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water: let us hold fast the confession of our HOPE that it waver not; for He is faithful that promised."

The translation in the Authorized Version, Let us hold fast the profession of our faith," is inexplicable, when the Greek word there used is rendered hope in every other New Testament passage. Faith has been mentioned in verse 22; and, in its fullness, we are to draw near into the holy place. It is the confession of our hope that we are to hold fast; and the nature of that hope is evident from verses 25 and 35-37:

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh."

. . . Cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise. For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry." The coming of the Blessed One is the hope which we are to hold fast, as we come to God in fullness of faith.

(iv.) 1 Peter i. 3, 6: "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, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the Last time."

The hope of the Church is, in this aspect, a salvation to be revealed in all its fullness when Jesus Christ Himself shall come.

(v.) Reverting to the verses with which we started, in the words " He that hath this HOPE," the apostle of love refers to the day when we shall see Christ as He is, and be like Him. It is this hope toward which the Church looks with confidence and takes her way through days of patient waiting.

An alteration, apparently trivial, and yet of vital importance to a right estimate of this hope, is made in 1 John iii. 3. Instead of "this hope in him," as in the Authorized, we have "this hope set on Him," and the pronoun should have a capital letter, for it refers to Jesus Christ as the revelation of the Father. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God" ; and the argument proceeds, from the Father through the Son, to the point of hope's purifying effect.

Then, this hope "maketh not ashamed." There is no uncertainty about it, and it cannot be hindered. That which has become the Church's beacon, casting a ray of glory upon her dark night, is no false light luring to destruction. This hope, being set upon God in His purpose and arrangement, and not upon our individual life, the circumstances of a day, the conditions of a century, or the changing policy of ecclesiasticism, is lifted clear away from the strife of party and from human uncertainty. As sure as God is, the hidden Man Christ Jesus, the King Whom the heavens have received for a season, must come again: and the light and the glory of that promise is the hope of the Church.

If it be indeed true that Jesus is coming; and if, in the wisdom of God, the date of His return has been absolutely hidden from man- how should we live as those to whom God has given that coming as the supreme and only hope of our life? The question answers itself.

This is a purifying hope, because it regulates the attitude of the believer's life toward Christ. Through all the passing years we are to wait for Him, expecting that at any moment, above the din and strife of earth, we may hear His call. There is no other purifying hope. I take it for granted that no true child of God cherishes the sordid ambitions of worldly men, such as the hope of wealth or of fame. Yet our hope may be set upon an opening for ourselves in the mission field or in the service of humanity at home. As long as hope is set upon service, it is not fixed upon Christ, and He should hold full and absolute possession of our hearts. Our lives may be so occupied with things good in themselves, that we do not see the King. In the will of God, however, there is but one attitude for the believer-that of the pilgrim, with loins girt and staff in hand, waiting for the break of day, the coming of the King. Do not misunderstand me. If we are truly waiting for Jesus, we shall not be careless of those for whom He died: and we shall not dare disobey His

word which bids us preach the gospel to every creature. But, as far as individual life is concerned, the coming One should fill the heart's vision through all the days and moments.

How will this affect our behavior? I would suggest questions rather than attempt to answer them; for your own minds and hearts will be busy on this point. How should I transact my business, knowing that even as I make an entry in my ledger I may be interrupted by the call of my Master? How should I take my recreation when, at any moment, He may summon me from it to His own presence? The purifying effect of such considerations are evident. We are to serve our generation, live in our homes, do our business, and take our recreation, in readiness to leave all at any moment. Someone says, " That will make a very strained sort of life." I think not.

Mr. Wesley was once asked by a lady, "Suppose that you knew you were to die at twelve o'clock to-morrow night, how would you spend the intervening time? "HOW, madam?" he replied; why, just as I intend to spend it now. I should preach this night at Gloucester, and again at five to-morrow morning; after that I should ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the societies in the evening. I should then repair to friend Martin's house, who expects to entertain me, converse and pray with the family as usual, retire to my room at ten o'clock, commend myself to my heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in glory."

No man lived a more strong and beautiful life than did John Wesley, and his view of death was that whenever it came he would be found at his duty ; and the transition from that duty to heaven's service would be a natural one. Instead of death, let the Lord be expected; and the true attitude of life will be that of quiet pursuit of duty and constant readiness to greet Him.

But you say to me, "Would you like Jesus to come and find you playing with your children?" Why not? I know of no occupation that I believe would be more pleasing to the heart of my King! It would be a proof of my belief in the blessedness of His reign, when the children are to have a perfect playtime. When Jesus went from earth, the clouds at which His disciples gazed were riven, and an angel appeared, saying:

"Why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven!"

That is, in the clouds, not merely in a spiritual sense. Thus, at the earliest moment in the "little while," the attitude of star-gazing was rebuked; and His disciples were sent to the discharge of duty, to look for Him from the midst of loyal service. Alas I that some who profess to believe in the coming of the Lord, should give up all the things which they were intended to sanctify. We are to be busy about our appointed task; to influence our day and generation as far as in us lies, by a reproduction in the power of the Spirit of the pure character of Jesus Christ; and all the while to have a listening ear for the Master's call, and the longing to welcome Him when He comes.

This hope also lights up circumstances. Are you entrusted by God with the great responsibility of riches? Expecting the Lord's return, you will use that wealth for Him. Are your days filled with stress of poverty and necessity for careful planning in regard to means? In the light of that promise, even poverty is transfigured. I am not now discussing the great questions of poverty and wealth. I regard poverty as a curse! God never meant any one to be poor, in the sense of that pinching, grinding want, which gives a man heart-ache and brain-ache. There is plenty in the world for every man to live in comfort, and all lack is the result of human mismanagement. The light of that coming upon friendship forbids unholy alliances and ennobles sanctified comradeship; and when it falls upon the graves where our sacred dust rests, how beautiful they become!

We shall meet in "the morning."

"Some from earth, from glory some:

Severed only till He come."

The bright rays of this truth shine for me upon some of the most perplexing problems of the Book of God and of the times in which we live. In my New Testament I find the freewill of man and the sovereignty of God both distinctly taught. These things were long a source of perplexity to me. The view which I strongly hold, that Christ is coming for His Church, an elect company out of the multitude of the saved, has solved for me a most difficult problem. I believe that Divine election has reference to membership in the Church of the Firstborn, not to personal salvation; and I believe, therefore, that there will be great multitudes saved by the finished work of Christ who are not members of that sacred body.

Christ's coming throws light upon other problems in the Book, in current theological thought, and in present-day life. How can we find comfort in missionary enterprise unless we believe in Christ's coming and the more blessed dispensation which lies beyond? Let the societies add to their statistics the facts that within a year the heathen have multiplied in a ratio far exceeding the number of converts made; and that the proportion of Christians to the mass of mankind is smaller to-day than it was fifty years ago. Where is your comfort, in view of these facts? Along such a vista of missionary work God appears as being beaten out of His own world! We believe that the King is doing work preparatory to His coming. He is gathering out His Church, and in a thousand ways making straight His paths by the proclamation of the Gospel in all lands, so that when the ancient people of God shall become His messengers to all peoples they will find a readiness to receive the message as the result. In this view we have hope for the nations of the earth and for the ages which lie ahead.

The light of this truth falls also upon the chaos and unrest of our age—arming of nations, mutual distrust, "wars, and rumors of wars." Man is failing in governmental power; and the hope of the world is that Jesus will come to rule within the lines of His own royal policy. Once take firm hold of this great truth of the coming of the King, and it affords a bright outlook along every avenue of life and brings gladness to the weary heart.

Our responsibility is marked in the passage to which I have more than once referred:

1 John ii. 28: "And now, my little children, abide in Him; that, if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

The if casts no doubt upon His appearing, but is indicative of a coming at any time. An alternative possibility is here suggested as to the attitude of Christians at that coming. They may "have boldness" or "be ashamed."

With regard to the first: the word "boldness (in place of confidence, A.V.), by no means conveys the whole force of the original. The idea is that we may have the freedom of speech which comes of the perfect familiarity of friendship. We all know how the diffidence and awkwardness which come of the sense of being out of place, paralyze speech. This, I imagine, would be the position of most of us if granted a personal interview with Queen Victoria. Not only should we be at a loss in regard to deportment, but we should wonder what to say, and be anxious as to whether we had said it aright or not. May God help us so to abide in Christ that when He comes we may not feel the awkwardness which arises from the constraint

of being strangers to Him, but that we may be able to say-This is our Master, we have known him by faith and now we see Him. We have poured in to His listening ear the tale of our sorrows in the day of mystery and darkness, and now we may talk with Him face to face (see Isa. xxv. 9).

Mark the other possibility, ". . . and not be ashamed from Him at His coming" (the preposition is apo, away from). The picture is that of persons so conscious of unreadiness that they dare not face Him. The root meaning of the word ashamed is disgraced, so that it is allowable to read, and not be disgraced from Him at His coming." This is not addressed to the outside world, but to the believer in Christ, In that verse there is a very clear division which, to my mind, answers the question whether believers may not pass through the great tribulation. Some will be ready to enjoy freedom of access to Christ and familiarity with Him; but the "little children" of God who have been living only in the elements of the world will be disgraced at His appearing.

What are we to do, as Christian men and women, in the light of these two possibilities? I give two passages from the Epistle, as my closing words: "My little children, abide in Him" ; "Every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself." Those who are abiding in Christ here on earth, who purify themselves as He is pure, separated once cut clean adrift from the ungodliness of the age, loyal of heart to the King in the days of waiting for Him these are the men and women who will have boldness in the day of His coming. Who shall draw the line? I do not. It is for each of us to make application of this truth in solitude.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/g-campbell-morgan/the-purifying-hope/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net