

# No Hope

by R.A. Torrey

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a well-founded expectation for the future, based on the existence of a personal God, and warns against the consequences of having no hope.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 14:1, John 3:36, Romans 8:28, Romans 8:32, Ephesians 2:12, Philippians 4:19, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Titus 1:2, Hebrews 10:26-29, 1 Peter 1:4

**Topics:** "Hope in Christ", "The Consequences of Unbelief"

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## Description

R.A. Torrey emphasizes the dire state of those who are without Christ, focusing on the phrase 'having no hope' from Ephesians 2:12. He illustrates the despair of living without hope through various scenarios, explaining that true hope is rooted in the existence of a loving God, the truth of the Bible, and personal acceptance of Christ as Savior. Torrey warns that those who deny these truths face a bleak future both in this life and the next, while believers in Christ possess a profound hope for both present and eternal life. Ultimately, he challenges the audience to choose between the hopelessness of a life without Christ and the glorious hope found in Him.

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## Transcript

"Ye were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Eph. 2: 12.

THESE words describe the appalling condition of the Ephesians before they were saved, but tonight I wish to impress upon you just three words in this dark picture, "having no hope." There are no words in the language more dreadful than those two words, "no hope." A doctor stands beside a bed upon which lies a man who is very ill. The doctor's finger is upon the sick man's pulse; he is looking intently into the sick man's eyes; he is eagerly watching every movement and the way in which the sick man breathes. The sick man's wife and children are gathered around the bed, looking anxiously first at the husband and father, and then at the doctor. At last the doctor looks up and says, "No hope." A ship has sprung a leak in mid-ocean; the sailors are working with all their might at the pumps; the water from the hold dashes across the deck into the ocean. An officer stands by, now and then dropping a line into the hold measuring the depth of the water, seeking to find if it is falling or increasing. At last he looks up and cries, "It is no use, boys; there is no hope." A man has been making every effort to keep off financial ruin, but at last he is obliged to throw up his hands in despair and cry out, "No hope." A little company of men are defending a citadel against a yelling horde of murderous, bloodthirsty Turks without. Gathered in the citadel are not

only the men who are defending it, but a company of women and children. The men know well that if they surrender it means death to them and worse than death to the women and children, and bravely they fight on to defend the citadel, but now their last round of ammunition is exhausted; there is a crash as the doors give way below, and a cry rings through the citadel, "No hope, no hope!" Ah, those are dark words, but they are even darker yet in import in the connection in which we find them in our text. Better be without anything else than be without hope. We may be in great present distress, but if we have a good and sure hope for the future, it matters little. We may have great present prosperity, but if we have no good hope for the future it is of little worth. I would rather be the poorest man who walks the streets of this city to-night and have a good hope for the future, than to be the richest millionaire and have no hope for the future.

## I. WHO HAVE NO HOPE?

There are three classes who have no hope. But what do we mean by hope? Desire, no matter how strong it may be, is not hope. Mere expectation, no matter how confident it may be, is not hope. We use the word hope in a very careless way in much of our modern speech, but in the Bible the word is used with great care. Hope is a well-founded expectation for the future. Any expectation that has not a sure foundation is not really hope.

1. First of all the man who denies or doubts the existence of a personal God, a wise, mighty, loving ruler of the universe, has no hope. He may cherish fond wishes about the future ; he may even entertain confident expectations about it, but wishes are not hope, and expectations, no matter how confident, are not hope. His expectations are not well founded, and therefore they are not hope. The man who denies or doubts that a wise, mighty and loving Father presides over his destiny and that of others, can have no well founded expectations for the future.

If he has what he calls a hope it is utterly irrational and baseless. If there is not a God who is wise enough to know what is best, and loving enough to desire what is best, and powerful enough to carry out what is best, if there is not such a God as that, there is absolutely no guarantee that at any moment nature may not plunge into chaos and human history into pandemonium, absolutely no guarantee that both nature and man may not be involved any day in a universal sway of pain, destruction and despair; no guarantee that both nature and society may not become hell.

Man's only rational foundation for hope in the future is the existence of an intelligent, beneficent, and omnipotent God ruling nature and the affairs of men. Atheism and agnosticism are unspeakably dark faiths if any man has the courage to think them out to their logical conclusion; most atheists and agnostics dare not do it. But some agnostics and atheists have done it. Listen to the words of two men men who were agnostics and who have thought through their creed of unbelief toward its logical and utterly dark conclusion.

First of all listen to the words of David Strauss, who began by questioning the miraculous and by trying to reconstruct the life of the Lord Jesus from the Gospel material, eliminating the supernatural and having the character and conduct left, but who wound up in blank agnosticism. He says: "In the enormous machine of the universe, amid the whirl and hiss of its jagged iron wheels, amid the deafening crash of its ponderous stamps and hammers, in the midst of this whole terrific commotion, man finds himself placed with no security, for a moment, that on an imprudent motion a wheel may not seize and rend him, or a hammer crush him to powder."

That is an awful picture, but if there is no personal God, no God wise enough to know what is best, loving enough to desire what is best, and powerful enough to carry out what is best, no such God as the Bible presents, then Strauss's conclusion is inevitable, only he has understated rather than overstated the darkness of the outlook. Now listen to another, Morley: "The millions of hewers of wood and drawers of water, come upon the earth that greets them with no smile, stagger blindly under dull burdens for a season, and are then shoveled silently back under the ground with no outlook and no hope."

Pretty dark is it not, this creed of agnosticism? but if there is no God these statements, terrible as they are, appalling as they are, full of utter despair as they are, are understatement of the hopelessness and blackness of the outlook. One night some years ago the thought came to me, suppose that instead of the God of wisdom and love in whom we believe, there sat upon the throne of this universe a malignant being, a being just the opposite of the God of the Bible, what then? and I began to think it out until my brain almost reeled.

The denier or the doubter of the existence of an omniscient, omnipotent, loving God, has no hope, no rational, well-founded expectation for the future, a very dark hell may be his portion any moment. No wonder the inspired Psalmist calls the one who says in his heart there is no God a fool (Ps. 14:1).

2. The man who denies the truth of the Bible has no hope. It does not necessarily follow because a man denies the truth of the Bible that he does not believe in the existence of God. A man may believe in God, he may be a theist, and yet not believe the Bible. But even though a man is a believer in God, if he rejects the Bible he has no hope, i.e., he has no expectation for the future that has a solid and certain foundation underneath it. The conception that one gets of God from mere philosophy and pure reasoning is altogether too inadequate to form a rational foundation for an intelligent hope. Furthermore, the God of philosophy is necessarily an ever vanishing quantity, for philosophy is always in a flux. Philosophy never reaches conclusions that are final and settled. I once was very fond of the study of philosophy; I waded through the teachings of the great philosophers from the time of Socrates down to the time of the modern German philosophers. It seemed a fascinating study. At times I thought I had reached settled conclusions, but at last I discovered what every other thoughtful student of philosophy discovers sooner or later, that one philosopher comes upon the scene to demolish all who have gone before him, only in turn to have his own conclusions demolished by those who follow him. The only conception of God that gives a man a good basis for expectation for the life that now is, or the life which is to come, is the conception of God found in the Bible. It is true many who reject the Bible borrow their idea of God from the Bible and build up a superstructure of hope upon the conception of God which they have borrowed from the Bible, and then fancy they have reasoned it out, and then they go on to discredit the Bible and throw it away; but by so doing unwittingly they tear out the very foundation of their own faith. If you give up the Bible you most logically give up the contents of the Bible, the teachings of the Bible and if you give up the teachings of the Bible you must give up hope. There is no hope for the man who discards the Bible; that is, no well founded expectation for the future. Discard the Bible, discredit the Bible, and the future is dark and full of possibilities of evil, awful possibilities of evil.

3. The man who believes in the Bible but does not accept and confess the Christ the Bible presents as his own personal Saviour and Master, has no hope. Many a man fancies he has a ground for hope because he is not an infidel or an atheist. Many a man says to me, "Why, I believe the Bible, sir," but that is not the whole question. Have you accepted the Christ of the Bible as your own personal Saviour, and are you confessing Him before the world as your Lord, and are you proving that to be an honest confession by doing as He says? The Bible holds out absolutely no hope to any except those who accept the Saviour

whom it is its main purpose to reveal. In this Bible which you profess to believe we read in John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Again we read in this Bible which you profess to believe, in 2 Thess. 1: 7-9, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of His power in naming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall suffer everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might." And still further we read in this Bible which you profess to believe, "If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God (and that is what you are doing if you have not accepted Him as your Saviour and confessed Him as your Lord), and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, a common thing, and hath insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:26-29). The one who believes the Bible but rejects the Saviour whom the Bible presents, has every vestige of hope swept away by that very book he believes. The man who believes the Bible but rejects the Christ of the Bible has no hope, the future has in it nothing but the appalling blackness of utter despair.

## II. IN WHAT SENSE HAVE THESE THREE CLASSES NO HOPE?

We see, then, that the atheist and the agnostic have no hope, that the infidel and sceptic have no hope, that the orthodox believer in the Bible who rejects Christ as a personal Saviour and Lord has no hope. In what sense have they no hope?

1. They have no hope for the life that now is, no well-founded and sure expectation of blessedness for the life that now is.

(1) In the first place, they have no guarantee of continued prosperity. They may be very prosperous to-day, they may have perfect health, a comfortable income, hosts of friends, every earthly thing that heart would desire, but unless they are right with God, unless they have accepted His Son Jesus Christ and therefore have a right to claim the promises of the Bible as their own, there is absolutely no guarantee that these things which they now possess will continue to be theirs twenty-four hours. A thousand things may occur to change it all. Upheavals of nature may come, such as laid San Francisco in ruins a few years ago, wrecking the fortunes of thousands and bringing bereavement to many homes; social upheavals may come, political catastrophes may come, war may come; indeed the black portent of war over hangs every people on earth to-day. This country by its recent election may have expressed its unwillingness to go to war, but that will not necessarily keep us out of war. What may other countries plan regarding us? Innumerable other diverse occurrences may come. A thoughtful man can conceive of many things that might occur that would sweep away in a few minutes the vast fortunes of even a Rockefeller or a Morgan.

Indeed, I am strongly inclined to believe that it is almost certain that all these fortunes will be swept away in the next ten or twenty years as an outside limit, either by great social and political revolutions, or by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) In the next place they have no guarantee of continued capacity to enjoy prosperity, even if it continues. A man's prosperity may continue and he lose all capacity to enjoy it. When I lived in Chicago, one of its wealthiest men had been for several years in a madhouse. His business continued to prosper, prosper enormously, but what good did that fact do him? He had no capacity to enjoy what he possessed. No man

out of Christ has any guarantee of continued capacity to enjoy the things of the life that now is. He may have the money to spread his table with all the delicacies that a gourmand might desire, but if he has dyspepsia what good will it do him? No, the man out of Christ has no hope, no well-founded expectation, for the life that now is.

(3) Furthermore, the man out of Christ has no guarantee of continued life. There is never but a step between any man and death. Every step that each one of us takes each day is but a march toward the grave. Every step we take is along the edge of the grave, and any moment the edge may crumble away and we fall into the grave. It takes but one little snip of the shears of fate to sever the cord of life. Of course if a man is a true Christian this fact has no terrors for him ; for what men call death is simply departing to be with Christ, "which is very far better." No man out of Christ has a good hope for the next ten minutes. Let us go back some years and go to New York City. We stand in the doorway of the library of the richest American of his day. His property inventories at one hundred and ninety-six millions of dollars. He is in close conversation with a business friend; they are discussing how to make that one hundred and ninety-six millions a little more. Ah, you say, as you look on that multimillionaire, he has bright hopes for many years to come. You are absolutely mistaken; no hope, absolutely no hope, for ten minutes; even as you look at him he pitches forward from the chair to the floor, and when Mr. Garrett picks William H. Vanderbilt from the floor he is a corpse. How much is he worth now? The next day one man asked another on change in New York, how much did William H. Vanderbilt leave? The other man replied, He left it all. Yes, he left it all. Men out of Christ have "no hope" for the life that now is.

2. But infinitely worse than this is the fact that they have no hope for the life that is to come. This earthly life is but a brief span at the very longest. Earthly life when I was a boy appeared very long to me, but the other day I was reading some words that I wrote about twenty years ago. I said, Life used to appear long when I was a boy, but now that I have just passed the fortieth milestone and feel confident my race is more than half run, it seems very short, very short. But now that twenty years more have passed, it seems shorter still. It seems shorter every year. I never knew time to fly as it has the past month. We are hurrying on toward the grave and eternity faster than the automobiles yesterday whirled around the course in the Vanderbilt Cup Race. Do you realize, men and women, that in thirty years you will be in heaven or in hell? Yes, some of you in twenty years, some of you in five years? Do you realize that some of you who are here to-night will be in heaven or hell within a year? But ETERNITY is LONG ; how it stretches out. Let us stand now and look out down through the stretches of eternity, look yonder, a thousand years have passed, are we any nearer the end of eternity? No. A million years have passed and still it stretches on before us; a billion, a trillion, a quadrillion, a vingintillion, are we any nearer the end? Ah, no! On and on and on! The arther we look ahead the longer it stretches out. It is an awful thing to have no hope for eternity.

(1) The man out of Christ has no hope of blessedness after death. No, there is no light in the grave for the Christless man. Let us stand and look into the Christless man's grave right now. What do you see? Oh, it is dark and cold. Black, black, black, eternal blackness, eternal despair.

(2) There is no hope of glad reunion with friends who have gone or who may go. The believer loses his friends, but he does not sorrow as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13), he knows that the time is fast hurrying on when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God ; and when the bodies of his loved ones who have gone before shall be raised, and when he "shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air," and so shall they ever be with the Lord and with one another (1 Thess. 4:14-16). Ah, Christless man, you will never

meet that sainted mother again. What a noble woman she was, what a dark hour it was when she left you to depart and be with Christ. How you have longed for a reunion with that woman who, as you thought, was the noblest woman that ever lived on earth. But you will never meet again. Ah, Christless woman, you will never meet again that sweet and innocent babe who has departed to be with Christ. When God put that babe in your arms how you hugged it to your breast; how as the days went by you looked down into those eyes so full of mystery and meaning ; but the day came when God in His infinite wisdom took that child from this world, and now it is safe in the arms of Jesus, but you are out of Christ and you will never depart to be with Christ. You will never meet that sweet babe again. Oh, Christless husband, how dear and noble was that woman who for some years walked by your side, and then she was called away and now she is with Christ in the glory, but you will never meet her again. No, there is no hope for the man out of Christ of happy reunions in that world where there is no sorrow, no pain, no sickness, no death, no separation.

3. For the man out of Christ there is not hope of pardon in the eternal world. Pardon is freely offered here to any one who will accept Christ, but there is no pardon beyond the grave. Our Lord Himself has told us that those who die in their sins, whither He goes they cannot come (John 8: 21). There is no hope of escaping from the wrath of God against the sin of unbelief. "The wages of sin is death. The gift of God is eternal life," but that life is "in Jesus Christ our Lord," and if you reject Him and die without Him there is no hope. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him." No, there is no hope of escaping the wrath of God against sin and unbelief, if one goes out of this world without Christ.

No hope, "no hope," no hope, for the man out of Christ, no hope for the life that now is, no hope for the life to come, no hope for time, no hope for eternity. There is nothing ahead but the blackness of darkness. The joys of the present may last a few days, but even that is not certain, but it is certain that they cannot last long, and then nothing left but separation from God with all its consequent misery and degradation for all eternity.

### III. THE BELIEVER IN CHRIST HAS HOPE.

Before we close let it be said that the believer in Christ has hope.

1. He has hope for the life that now is. It is true that he does not know what the future may bring, but he has the sure Word of God for it that it will bring nothing but good, he knows that all things work together for good for those that love God (Rom. 8:28). He knows that he needs to be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make his requests known unto God, and that the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep his mind and heart in Christ Jesus. He knows that God will supply his every need according to His riches in glory, in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6, 7, 19). He knows that "God spared not His only begotten Son but freely gave Him for" him, and by that guarantee he knows that He will withhold no good thing from him, that with Him He will freely give him all things (Rom. 8:32).

2. The Christian has hope for the life to come; he has "hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie hath promised" (Tit. 1:2). How certain that hope, resting upon the Word of God who cannot lie; how magnificent that hope, eternal life. He has in the world to come "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for" him (1 Pet. 1:4). He has the assurance of the Word of God and the indwelling Spirit of God that he is a child of God, and if a child, then an heir, an heir of God and a joint

heir with Jesus Christ, and that any "sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in" Him (Rom. 8:16). Wonderful hope, immeasurable hope, glorious hope of the Christian, but the man out of Christ has "no hope."

Friends, which do you prefer to-night, the no hope of a man out of Christ, or the glorious hope of the one who has received Christ as his Saviour, surrendered to Him as his Lord and Master, and confessed Him as such before the world? You have your choice. Everyone here has his choice. Which will you take? All of us here to-night are like men standing on the seashore and looking out over the boundless ocean of eternity. Toward some of us, toward every one of us here to night who is a true Christian, there come gallant vessels loaded with gold and silver and precious stones, with every sail set, wafted swiftly toward us by the breezes of God's favour. But toward those of us who have rejected Him or neglected Him, those of us who have never publicly confessed Him before the world, there come no vessels, but dismantled wrecks, with no cargoes but the livid corpses of lost opportunities, over which hover the vultures of eternal despair, driven on toward us with mad velocity before the fast rising tempest of the wrath and indignation of an all holy and almighty God. Glorious hope, and no hope, which will you take?

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