

Hope

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of nurturing hope, which is the power to look forward and see the goal, and provides practical ways to do so by reading the scriptures, living in harmony with one another, and worshiping God with one voice.

Scripture: Psalm 27:13, Romans 15:4-6, Romans 15:13, 1 Corinthians 13:13, Colossians 1:27, 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Hebrews 6:19, Hebrews 10:23

Topics: "Christian Hope", "Faith Renewal"

Description

Richard E. Bieber emphasizes the importance of nurturing the three gifts God gives believers: faith, love, and hope. He explains that neglecting the gift of hope can lead to a loss of faith and love, urging listeners to seek and hold onto the vision of heaven even in darkness. Using the analogy of Christian in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, he highlights the necessity of finding and maintaining hope to face challenges. Bieber stresses the need to taste glory in the scriptures, through harmony with fellow believers, and in unified praise to renew vision and hope in God.

Transcript

Read: Romans 15:4-6 & 13

Sometimes we come to a place where our zeal for God is gone. Our soul is stagnant. We don't have any more strength to face things.

When we get like this it's not necessarily because we committed some gross secret sin or because we're physically exhausted. Many times this inner flatness of soul comes to us simply because we've neglected one of the basic gifts God gave us when He brought us into His Kingdom.

When God brings a man or woman to His Son and causes them

to be born again of His Spirit, that person immediately is given three gifts -- basic to every other gift talked about in scripture.

First, that person is given faith -- the power to see the unseen and hold on to it. None of us has ever seen Jesus with these eyes of flesh. Yet, there are people in this room who are going to willingly die for His name because they have faith. Of course, to keep this gift you have to do something with it. If you don't exercise faith it gradually fades.

Secondly, God gives to the believer the power to love other people the way God loves.

Love is of God and he who loves is born of God and knows God.

What the believer does with this power to love determines whether he grows up into the likeness of Jesus Christ or whether he degenerates into an empty shell, a fruitless branch that will be thrown into the fire.

But there is a third gift, a very important and often neglected one: the gift of hope.

-- The power to look forward and see the goal.

-- The power to hold that vision of heaven even when we have to walk through absolute darkness.

Like the other two gifts, this gift of hope has to be nurtured, cultivated, exercised.

If you lose your hope, your faith and love will soon go down the drain too.

Many of us have a shaky faith and a dubious love in our hearts because our hope is sick, because we have allowed our vision of the glory that lies ahead to fade.

When Christian, in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, got to the Cross and the burden rolled from his back, he was given a scroll with writing on it which he was to read as he traveled to the Celestial City. This scroll was his hope.

While Christian was climbing up the Hill Difficulty, he stopped at an arbor half-way up and went to sleep and the scroll fell out of his hand. He woke with a start, the day was almost spent and he hurried up the hill. As he got to the top two men came running toward him and warned Christian that there were lions up ahead that would tear him to pieces. It was then that Christian reached into his coat for his scroll and it was gone.

Without that scroll, without this hope Christian knew that he couldn't face the lions. So, he climbed down the hill to the arbor where he had fallen asleep and looked until he found his scroll.

This is exactly what many of us need to do. Somewhere along the road we fell asleep and our hope dropped out of our hands. We need to go back and find it. We won't get anywhere until we do.

Don't underestimate the gift of Hope which God gave you. For it's not hope in some dream that will vanish like vapor, it's hope that is anchored to a glory that will

still be shining when the heavens and the earth have passed away.

Christ in you, the hope of glory.

1. When you have this hope within you, it keeps you from settling down in this world.

You have seen a vision of God's Kingdom that makes you an alien and an exile in this world. Now you see everything in this world as temporary and passing.

-- Your home.

-- Your job.

-- Your family.

-- Your own body.

When friends beckon you to come and settle you just have no heart for it. How can you be content with this vale of shadows when you have seen glory? So you press on.

You're on your way to a better country.

You're seeking a city whose builder and maker is God.

2. When you have this hope within you, it keeps you from getting discouraged.

You can't be discouraged when you see glory up ahead.

People think that they are discouraged by their circumstances. That's not true. They are discouraged by the absence of hope. When we lose our scroll we can be discouraged by a gust of wind.

On the other hand, when we have that scroll, tragedy after tragedy can come crashing against our lives and somehow we keep going.

Many of us have been careless with this gift of hope.

-- We have allowed the vision God gave us
to tarnish.

-- We have taken our heart off the vision
and let our heart wander around down here
in the shadows.

-- We have lost our scroll.

Ah, but how good God is! The minute we start looking,
He helps us to find it. In Bunyan's story, Christian
knew that it was God who helped him find his scroll so
quickly.

And how quickly Jesus restored hope to the despairing
Peter.

Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?....

Feed my sheep.

When Stephen was about to be stoned to death, the Spirit
pulled back the veil and enabled Stephen to see glory.

"Behold I see the heavens opened and the Son
of Man standing at the right hand of God."

And that vision of glory sustained him even as the rage
of an angry mob closed in on him and killed him.

So God sustains our hope by enabling us to taste glory
again and again.

-- It's not a feeling.

-- It's not a matter of sight or touch,

but a beholding with our spirit, in the blazing light of
God's Spirit, the Christ who is the hope of glory and who

is in us.

1. We need to be tasting glory in the scriptures.

"...that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of scriptures we might have hope."

Many believers haven't begun to taste glory in the scriptures. They're missing the most important reason why the scriptures have been preserved to us. The scriptures are the witness of ordinary people like ourselves, weak people, selfish and sinful people, whose lives had never- the-less been visited by God's glory and changed by that glory.

Whether you're reading the testimony of Moses, Isaiah, or the Virgin Mary, or Peter, in every case glory from beyond this world came to them. The glory of the only begotten of the Father somehow broke into their darkness and spoke to them. And when you open this book and read the witness of these people, their word is confirmed.

The same Christ who shone upon them starts shining upon you afresh.

You enter their world and you find yourself looking out across a timeless gulf and beholding the glory of the living God shining down on His Son and blazing out to you and quickening your whole being.

When you go to the scriptures daily --- and I doubt if a person is serious with God who doesn't go to them daily.

Don't be satisfied,

-- until you start tasting glory,
-- until you begin to breathe the atmosphere
of heaven,
as you read the testimony of the prophets and apostles
of the Lord.

2. We need to be tasting glory through harmony with
brothers and sisters around Jesus.

May the God of steadfastness and
encouragement grant you to live in
such harmony with one another in
accord with Christ Jesus.

-- Harmony with brothers and sisters around
Jesus is always a foretaste of glory.

-- Disharmony is always a warning of hell.

How few Christian homes and how few fellowships of be-
lievers live in harmony with one another in accord with
Christ Jesus. An occasional half-hour of harmony sand-
wiched between days and weeks of tension,
resentment,
gossip,
bickering,
grudges,
suspicion.

No wonder we lose our vision!

Do you doubt that God will give us the power to live in
harmony if we make the slightest effort to get off our
high horse and repent of our stubbornness?

Do you doubt that God will help us live together and work together as brothers and sisters under the cross if we are willing to conform our own lives to the mind of Christ?

Either we live in harmony with one another in accord with Christ Jesus or we give up whatever vision of glory we ever had. We lose our hope.

Now if your brother or sister is hard-headed, that's their problem and they will have to do something about it. But your brother's hard-headedness will never destroy your hope. If your hope is being destroyed, it's your hard-headedness, your jarring spirit, your evil attitude.

And, it's not a matter of making pacts with each other, not a matter of endlessly airing our dirty linen in front of each other. It's not a matter of some new technique for probing one another's life.

It's a matter of deciding that whether my brothers are nice to me or not, I'm going to line my heart up with the heart of the Lord and deal with my brothers and sisters according to the mind of Christ.

The minute I do, I begin to taste glory. A stream of glory begins to flow with healing effect through the Body.

3. We need to be tasting glory in unified praise.

....that together you may with one voice glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Of course it's impossible to praise God with one voice when our day-to-day living with each other is marred by discord. But once we're making an effort to live in harmony around the Lord, then we get tremendous help and encouragement by praising God with one voice.

When Peter and John are released from prison in Acts 4 and come back to their friends, we read that the believers "lifted up their voices together to God and said....."

Then follows a beautiful prayer.

Did they pray this prayer in unison?

Did one man pray?

How was it done?

It doesn't matter. The point is that they were together with their hearts and it rose to God from all of them together as if it came from one voice. And as this happened, glory visited them and renewed their hope.

When the eleven disciples sang a hymn with Jesus before going out to Gethesemane, it rose as one voice. They were one in their praises of God around their Lord --- a final touch of heaven to help them as they went into the most terrible night of their lives.

We need to come out of our stiff self-conscious compartments and really worship God together. And, as we do,

-- we taste heaven,

-- our vision is renewed,

-- our hope is restored.

The believers and fellowships that will survive the days

ahead will be those whose faith in Jesus and love for one another are held together by a blazing hope, who have their scroll in their hand and read it as they travel on toward the City of God.

The word of the Spirit to this body is that we need to renew our vision by constantly tasting glory.

-- We need to be tasting glory in the scriptures.

-- We need to be tasting glory through harmony with each other.

-- We need to be tasting glory by worshiping God with one voice.

God will help us find our scroll if we really start looking for it.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/hope/>

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