

Indeed the unbeliever faces an eternity without hope (Prov. 11:7). The world has no hope because it has no solution to the problem of death.

In contrast, *hope*, in the Bible, includes two main ideas: (1) **certainty** and (2) **eager anticipation**. Consider someone who makes plans to go on vacation. He makes reservations at a resort, buys airline tickets, and lines up a car rental. Now, for the next several months, he eagerly anticipates his vacation, maybe even counting down the weeks or days as the time draws near. Perhaps he finds himself day-dreaming about golfing or fishing or relaxing with his family. There is no sense of uncertainty in his thoughts (he has made the reservations), only anticipation. This is the concept of hope in the Bible, only the object of our hope is not a vacation, but eternal life.

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE?

*Jesus lives, and so shall I.
Death, thy sting is gone forever!
He who deigned for me to die,
Lives, the bands of death to sever.
He shall raise me from the dust:
Jesus is my Hope and Trust.*

These words, which compose the first stanza of a hymn written by Christian Gellert (1715-1769), summarize beautifully the hope of the Christian. Our hope in Christ consists in certain, perfect, and eternal deliverance from sin and death through faith in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. In short, our hope is the resurrection. Let us consider more closely the nature of this hope.

Our Hope Is in Christ

As Christians, our hope is in a Person - not just any person, but the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the God-ordained Mediator between God and sinners (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 5:1-5). Jesus Christ is the Son of God (God, very God, the second Person of the Trinity from all eternity) and the Son of Man (man, very man, born into the world). He was sent by the Father to redeem sinners from sin, death, and God's wrath (Gal. 4:4-6). He accomplished this redemption by giving His life on the Cross as a Substitute. We deserved death, but He died in our place. Three days later He rose from the dead, proving that the work was accomplished. When we repent of our sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we are reconciled to God and have peace with Him (Rom. 5:1). Now our future resurrection is certain. This is our Hope (1 Cor. 15:17-20).

Our Hope Is in Heaven

When we are born again, our hope is transferred from earth to heaven. Our false delusions centered on this fading life are exchanged for a certain expectation regarding eternity in heaven.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has **begotten us again unto a living hope** by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, **reserved in heaven** for you . . .*
(1 Peter 1:3-4)

From the moment of our new birth we are longing for heaven because that is where our treasure is (Matt. 6:21). As we grow in

Christ and in the knowledge of His Word, the things of this world become increasingly dim in our thoughts and desires. We realize more and more that we are only sojourners here, for this is not our home. Trials and difficulties often remind us of this truth and serve to increase our hope in heaven (Rom. 5:3-5).

Our Hope Is in Christ's Return

Since our hope will be fulfilled when Christ returns for us (Titus 2:13; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; Jn. 14:1-3), the Christian eagerly anticipates the Second Coming of Christ. The Greek word (*απεκδεχομαι*) used in the New Testament to describe the believer's attitude towards Christ's return means *to await or expect eagerly* (1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28). As a bride eagerly longs for her wedding day, so the Christian longs for the day that Christ will appear in glory. This will be the day that we enter into our inheritance, will be freed from the very presence of sin, and will obtain salvation in all its fullness (Rom. 8:18,23; 1 Thess. 5:9; 1 Jn. 3:1-2).

Our Hope Is Certain

It is very important to note that our hope is certain. It is not probable, nor is it in doubt, nor is it subject to revisions or recensions or rescissions. This hope is certain because it is founded on God's promises recorded in Scripture. God's Word is perfect, faithful, unchanging, and infallible because God is perfect, faithful, unchanging, and infallible.

. . . In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began
(Titus 1:2).

Our Hope Enables Us to Endure

Because our hope is in eternal things, not in earthly things, and because our hope is certain, not merely wishful thinking, we are able to endure, with true peace and reverent joy, the trials and tribulations associated with living in this fallen, sin-cursed world (Rom. 8:25; 1 Pet. 1:6-7). Yes, we are able, by God's grace, to face even death with confidence because our confidence is in Christ!

*Jesus lives and death is now,
But my entrance into glory.
Courage, then, my soul, for thou
Hast a crown of life before thee;
Thou shalt find thy hopes were just;
Jesus is the Christian's Trust.*

(last stanza of the hymn by C. Gellert)

For this reason, John Calvin wrote:

But this we may positively state that nobody has made any progress in the school of Christ, unless he cheerfully looks forward towards the day of his death, and towards the day of the final resurrection.

Christ has told us that in this life we may expect sorrow, rejection, ridicule, persecution, and trouble. So let us not be discouraged when these things come upon us, but let us take courage, let us put on the hope of salvation.

These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

HOW DO WE PUT ON HOPE?

As Christians, we have already put on hope. We were saved in hope (Rom. 8:24). But the difficulties, disappointments, and struggles of life can cause this hope to grow dim. On the other hand, the joys, pleasures and successes of life can choke out this hope so that our affections are transferred to earthly things. Both of these cases can be spiritually fatal (Matt. 13:22), which is why we must, as it were, continually put on the helmet of the hope of salvation. But how do we put on this hope?

The Holy Spirit Fills Us with Hope

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13).

The Holy Spirit produces hope in us as we yield to Him and are led by Him.

Believing God's Word Fills Us with Hope

The Holy Spirit fills us with hope as we set our minds on the Word of God. As our thoughts, will, and affections are daily, filled with and governed by God's truth, our joy is placed in eternal things. So that day by day our hope ever increases, acting as an anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:19), keeping us steadfast through the storms of life, and as a helmet, protecting us from the wiles of the devil, who is the enemy of our souls.

*My hope is in the Lord, Who gave himself for me
And paid the price of all my sin at Calvary.
For me He died, For me He lives,
And everlasting life and light He freely gives.*

HOPE

By Dean Good

But let us . . . be sober, putting on . . . for a helmet, the hope of salvation – 1 Thess. 5:8

Hope for the Christian, is what a helmet is for a soldier. A helmet is designed to protect the most vital part of the human body (the head) during combat. A soldier can survive a blow to the shoulder, or the arm, or the leg, but a blow to the head is usually fatal. The Christian's hope is vital to his survival in the midst of life's battle. The apostle Paul here instructs us to **put on** this hope, so it is important for us to know what it is and how we put it on.

WHAT IS HOPE?

The world does not have hope. Any man who does not have Christ does not have hope (Eph. 2:12). The world has a substitute which it calls *hope*. This false hope is a kind of positive thinking, a working up to the idea that in the end everything will work out. It is expressed in what Annie sings in the Broadway play of the same name:

*The sun will come out, tomorrow,
Bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow
there'll be sun . . .*

This kind of hope is a delusion and of no value because it is an assertion based on nothing. The only certainty here is in the mind of the individual. The truth is that for the one who is not forgiven in Christ things are not going to get better, but much worse.