

Living with Hope”

Hebrews 6:9-20

Hope enables us to live life boldly in spite of the presence of difficult circumstances. It focuses on what's coming in the future rather than on what's here now. It has the power to lift us to a higher perspective until we view what's happening as part of a much bigger picture. In this way, living with hope is like watching an action film the second time. When enemies and dangers arise, you don't respond with the same alarm you did the first time you saw it because now you know how everything turns out in the end. Sitting next to someone who is wild-eyed and gripping the armrest, you're able to smugly say, "Don't worry, it will be alright!" Unfortunately, hope isn't something that is static, meaning once you have it it's always there to the same degree. It tends to wax and wane based not on how tough the circumstances are but on how close we are to God and how much we believe His promises. Faith and hope go hand in hand, but they aren't the same thing. Faith is believing God will do what He says, but hope is the change in attitude that comes over us when we expect good things are coming. When hope declines, we become discouraged, tired, bitter, sorry for ourselves, and withdrawn from others. When hope grows, we find new courage, energy, thankfulness, self-discipline, love for others and joy. All hope, of course, is based on who God is and what He's promised, but you and I still have a part to play. Hope doesn't just happen; we must choose to be hopeful. We must learn to hold on to our hope (Heb 10:23) and that's the lesson the author of Hebrews teaches us today: how to hang on to the hope God has given us in Jesus Christ for the rest of our lives.

The Question

If you could have one wish granted, what would it be? The answer you give will reveal the hope that's in your heart.

- One of the tragedies of life is that the things we hope for are far too small.
- The hope that the author of Hebrews is talking about is the hope of eternal fellowship with God.
- (v 19, 20): that we too will enter "within the veil".
- Heb 9:1-5: face to face with Him forever
- Rev 21:1-4; 22:3-5

Review: Heb 6:9-20

v 9,10 Though the author warns his readers of the severe danger they face, he does not believe they have gone too far. Some measure of faith must still linger in their heart. For one thing, their Christian life started out so well he is confident God will extend to them extra grace. In their early days as new believers, they bravely endured much persecution.

- Heb: 10:32, 33
- Public trials, mocked and shamed for their faith.
- None actually martyred (Heb 12:4)
- Some imprisoned and many had their homes and property plundered in mob riots or confiscated by government authorities.
- Yet they joyfully endured and diligently cared for those who were impoverished or imprisoned.
- Their initial commitment to Christ was not to be questioned, yet somehow as the years passed, their resolve had eroded and was being replaced with bitterness and unbelief.

(v 11) He yearns for each one of them to show again the eagerness and zeal they had as young believers (Rev 2:4) He wants their hearts to be full of hope for the rest of their lives.

(v 12) Having faith is one thing, but having patience is another. To obtain the good things God promises we must have the kind of patience Abraham had. How long did he have to wait for Isaac? (Ge 12:14; 21:5)

(v 13, 14) Not only did God give Abraham a promise, but He also guaranteed that promise with a solemn covenant ceremony (Ge 15:9-11, 17). In swearing such an oath, He vowed to curse Himself if He broke His promise.

(v 15) In the ancient world, covenant oaths were the highest form of promise because the person making the oath invoked upon himself or herself a curse asking God or the gods to watch and punish them if they broke their word.

Since God never lies, He did not need to make an oath to ensure that He would do what He promised, but He did so in order to communicate in human terms how seriously He meant what He said.

(v 17, 18) God has made just as solemn a promise to those who believe in Jesus. He promised that Jesus would be a priest who will make it possible for us to be with God, face to face forever. (Ps 110:4; Heb 5:5-6; 7:17, 21)

(v 18) We who are sinners and know we should be punished are able to flee to Jesus and find refuge from God's judgment. He is our hope for the future.

(v 19) Knowing that Jesus offered His blood for our sins on the Mercy Seat of Heaven gives us hope that we can be with God forever. It's like an anchor that keeps us from drifting.

(v 20) His resurrection and ascension are proof that He is God's High Priest and that we will someday follow Him into that Holy Place in Heaven.



LIFE LESSONS

WITH DR. STEVE SCHELL

Teaching the Bible
practically & understandably
and seeing lives changed by
the truth of the Gospel

The Lesson: How to keep hope alive

1. (v 11) Don't lose your "first love" (Rev 2:4)
Invest in the disciplines needed to refresh your faith.
2. (v 12) Study the lives of great men and women of faith and imitate them (Heb 11).
3. (v 15) Maintain the proper perspective. Remember that patient waiting is not a sign of failure, but a mark of all real men & women of faith.
4. (v 17) Recognize how rock solid the promises are that God has made concerning Christ. They are guaranteed with an oath.
5. (v 20) Focus on Jesus. He's proof that what we hope for will be realized. He has already been resurrected and is in heaven with God.
 - In Him we see many of the things God has planned for us
 - It's already fact

Facets of Hope

Like a beautiful gem our hope has many brilliant facets:

1. Resurrection
 - Our bodies and creation itself will be freed from bondage to decay
 - Ac 2:26; 23:6; 24:15; 26:6-7
2. New heaven and earth
 - A place in which righteousness dwells: no more sin, sorrow, sickness, or death
3. We shall be like Him (1Jn 3:2)
 - Not only in external bodies, but also in holiness (Fruit of the Spirit, Ga 5:22, 23)
4. We will be reunited with believers who've died.
 - We don't grieve like those who have no hope (1Thess 4:13)
5. We will have unbroken fellowship with God (Ps 73)
 - This above all is the hope that keeps us from drifting from Christ
 - Those who love God and long to be with Him will never forsake Christ. For He alone has the power to make us stand in the presence of God's glory blameless with great joy (Jd 1:24)

The Power of Hope

Hope:

1. Gives us patience (Heb 6:19)
2. Purifies us (1Jn 3:3)
 - John says the hope that we will someday be just like Jesus causes us to purify our lives
3. Produces faith and love (Col 1:4, 5)
4. Brings a deep sense of joy (Rom 12:12)
 - We can maintain an optimistic outlook even when things go wrong
 - "Rejoicing in hope"

Conclusion

Tom Wright, Hebrews for Everyone, Westminster, John Knox Press, 2004, pp.67-68).

Questions

1. Have you been to a funeral or memorial service lately? How did your "hope in Christ" change how you felt in that service? How does it change your view of your own death?
2. Describe a time when you felt very close to God. Tell us how this moment or season changed you.