

A Reflection On Hope

In the context of Faith, Hope and Love, most people have a good understanding of the terms Faith and Love, but many miss the point when it comes to the concept of Hope. Hope is usually defined as “a desire to want something to be true” as in, “I hope my kids will do well in school”, or “I hope I win the lottery”. People usually use the word hope to describe a wish, with or without some modicum of expectation. Often, it is used at the beginning of a sentence such as, “Hopefully, (this or that)”.

For we Christians, Hope takes on a whole different meaning. When we say we “Hope in the glory of God”, it is not a *wish* in expectation of fulfillment; it is a *belief* in expectation of fulfillment; and that belief should be absolute. It is through Faith that we have this belief; a Faith given to us through the Love of Jesus Christ. Saint Paul writes, “*Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*” ([Romans 5:5](#))

Saint Paul describes “hope against hope”, when he reminds us how Abraham *believed* what God had told him, “*In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, ‘Thus shall your descendants be.’*” ([Romans 4:18](#)). Abraham hoped against the impossible hope that he would have a son at his old age and would have descendants numerous as the stars. Abraham *believed* in the impossible, and it came to be.

Nowhere is Hope more important to we humans than when dealing with the death of a loved one and ultimately, with our own death. We naturally experience grief when one of our loved ones has ‘fallen asleep’, but sometimes our grief is one without hope, a grief without the absolute belief in the resurrection. It is during these times that we must understand that *Hope is not a wish, but an expectation, an unshakable trust in God.*

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, St. Paul was dealing with this very issue in reassuring his beloved community that those who have fallen asleep in Christ will be taken to the father with Jesus; and that while we grieve, our grief is not like the rest, who have no hope, “*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.* ([1 Thessalonians 4:13-14](#))” Saint Paul also admonishes us, “*If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied* ([1 Corinthians 15:19](#))

Hope is not only important when dealing with the loss of our loved ones, but also with our own mortality. How we believe and hope in the future will determine how we live our lives in the present. It is Paul’s exhortation to all Christians that we live our lives with the *Hope* of Resurrection in Jesus and eternal life with the Father as our central focus and goal; to keep our eyes fixed on that goal. Saint Paul writes to Timothy, “*Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.* ([1 Timothy 6:17](#))

We should be encouraged to realize that the daily obstacles and humiliations of ‘life in the valley’ are only noticeable when we take our eyes off of Jesus; “Obstacles are those things we see when we take our eyes off the goal” (Henry Ford). Just as “the true servant heart is oblivious of its sacrifice”, so should the true believer be oblivious of the obstacles and uncertainties of life in this world. *Hope is not a wish, it is an expectation.*