

OUR BLESSED HOPE

Titus 2:13 says that “*we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*” and in this article I would like to talk about our hope.

Hope is not something we can hold in our hand but something we hold in our heart. Our hope is that one day we will leave this sinful world behind and live forever in the presence of God. We will no longer have our sinful body of flesh which is weak and fading away but we will have an immortal body like Jesus (Phil. 3:21). It’s impossible to understand what it will be like but the Bible says that it *will* happen and, when it does, we probably won't understand how we could ever have been so sinful. Our future is sinless perfection in a world of eternal love and that is a wonderful hope to hold on to.

Hope and faith are united and it is because of our faith that we have hope. In Heb 11:1 we are told that “*faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see*”. We can’t see faith but it is through our faith that we have the hope of being with Jesus one day.

Examples of faith and hope

The Bible gives us many examples of people with great faith and hope and Job was one of them. Job lived hundreds of years before Jesus and was tested severely by the devil but he kept the faith. He was very wealthy and had seven sons and three daughters but he lost everything when God allowed the devil to attack him. He also suffered with painful sores and was deeply offended by his friends yet he kept his hope in God. In the middle of all his pain he said “*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth*” (Job 19:25). Even though he suffered terribly, he did not allow his earthly suffering to destroy his heavenly hope.

Paul was another person with great faith and hope even though he suffered many times while spreading the gospel. He was in prison often, flogged with a whip five times, beaten with rods three times, stoned once, deserted by all and suffered through many other trials. But, rather than destroy his faith and hope, these trials strengthened him and he said “*in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds*” (2 Cor. 7:4). Paul is a great example of someone who suffered enormously for Jesus without losing hope. In Romans 12:12 he tells you and I to be “*joyful in hope*”.

What about our hope?

What can you and I do to have such a strong faith and hope? When we look at two men of great faith, Noah and Abraham, we see that they not only believed but they also obeyed. Noah was a righteous man and he obeyed God by building the Ark and, because he believed and obeyed, he was saved from the flood. Abraham also believed and obeyed God and was so near to God that God called him His friend. If we want God to call us His friend then -

1) We must obey the His commands. Jesus said, *“You are my friends if you do what I command”* (John 15:14).

2) We must talk to God in prayer and listen to Him through the Word because we can't be friends with someone we don't commune with.

There is a wonderful promise in James 4:8 which says, *“Come near to God and he will come near to you”*. As we seek to come near to God, through obedience, prayer and reading His Word, He blesses us with a greater awareness of His peaceful presence. Isa. 26:3 confirms this where it says, *“You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you”*. So, if we want to increase our faith and hope then we must *“come near to God”*.

Carefully read the following verses and note how God is urging us to draw near to Him in faith, to hold on to the promised hope, to practice love and to keep meeting together as a church. Heb. 10:22-25 say, *“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching”*.

How strong is your hope?

Now I would like to ask you, “Do you have a strong faith and a sure hope or do circumstances and people easily upset your faith?” If your faith and hope are weak then you need to apply yourself and draw near to God through meeting with other Christians, prayer, Bible study and obedience to His commands. As already shown, it is God's promise that if you make the effort to get closer to Him, He will come closer to you and this will most certainly increase your faith and hope. Finding time for prayer and Bible study can be

hard but if you make the effort and ask God to help you to find the time, as well as to give you understanding as you read, then you can be sure that your prayer will be answered.

There is a free book on the Internet called The Calvary Road. It dramatically changed my life as I learnt how to hear and follow the Lord's voice. At first, I didn't like some of the things the Lord was telling me about myself and I tried to ignore Him but He got through to me eventually and has made some serious changes in my life ... and is still making changes. Today, I know the Lord's voice well and have a certain hope of being with Him one day soon. Just Google "free book the calvary road" and you will find it.

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