

# C. D. Cole

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## INTRODUCTION

The Bryan Station Baptist Church of Lexington, Kentucky, has undertaken the task of printing the writings of Dr. C. D. Cole of Mortons Gap, Kentucky. Dr. Cole has a great doctrinal mind and the Lord has blessed him in being able to put this doctrine in writing. His writings have been a blessing and a great help to me as a pastor and I feel sure that anyone who reads the books of C. D. Cole will be strengthened and greatly helped. We are printing these as a part of the missionary work of our church. Concerning other books by C. D. Cole, please see the back page.

Alfred M. Gornley, Pastor The Bryan Station Baptist Church

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## CHAPTER I THE HEAVENLY HOPE

"I live on hope and that I think do all who come into this world." Bridges. It is the writer's observation that of all the doctrine of the Bible, the doctrine of hope has received the least attention from preachers generally and from theologians in particular. In the index of subjects in one of our largest and most popular theologies, the word hope does not appear.

"Knowledge begins with definition," so spoke Demosthenes. And since we wish to impart knowledge, we will begin with the definition of the word hope. In the general sense, hope is the expectation of future good. Hope consists of two things: desire and expectation. It cannot be truly said that a person hopes for something he does not desire; nor can he hope for something he does not expect to receive. To desire something with no expectation of receiving it, is not hope but despair. And to expect something that is not desired is not hope but dread.

Hope may be further defined as a quality in the human soul that anticipates the future with a sense of peace and pleasure; peace and pleasure commensurate with the worth of the object hoped for. Hope is concerned only about the future; we do not hope for what we already see or possess. "For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that (25). What is hoped for must be waited for.

Hope is one of the principal springs of human endeavor. Without hope men would never attempt anything. If hope deferred makes the heart sick, then to be without hope would take the heart out of every undertaking. Without hope of harvest the farmer would not plant and cultivate. Without hope of pay the miner would not hazard his life in the treacherous mine. Without hope of profit the merchant would close shop. Without hope of winning nobody would ever run for office. Without hope of happiness lovers would never march to the marriage altar. In all the wedding cake, hope is the sweetest of the plums.

### IS HOPE AN ASSET OR A LIABILITY?

This may seem a strange question in the light of what we have already written. But the question is not so one-sided as one may at first judge. It is a question whether, on the whole, hope has given more pleasure than pain. Hope, in itself, is a happy quality in the human mind, but it often ends in disappointment. So often we do not get what we hope for; or, if we do get it, it is found to be worth less than we had thought. All of us know that many things we have hoped for in this life have never been realized. Hope often lies to us. It holds out prizes that are never won. It promises pleasures that are never enjoyed. Hope makes us toil and struggle and then fails to pay off. Hope so often turns out to be a false prophet. Parents entertain high hopes for their children only to be disappointed by their sins and failures. Pastors have hoped for faithfulness in church members who have not lived up to their promises. Pastors hope for cooperation from those who never give it. And the hope of a fatherly home has turned out to be a lie with many a husband and wife. Experiencing hopes tell many a tale of sin and shame. And all this has caused one poet to write:

"Hope tells a flattering tale, Delusive, vain, and hollow. Ah! let not hope prevail, Lest disappointment follow."

And Dryden, in a time of dejection, wrote:

"When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat, Yet fooled with hope, men favor the "deceit,"  
But the poet Cowley writes in defense of hope and says: "Hope! of all ills that men endure, The only cheap and universal cure."  
And Shakespeare writes that,  
"The miserable have no other medicine, But only hope."  
Wordsworth expresses his doubt as to the worth of hope in these lines:

"Hopes! what are they? Beads of morning Strung on slender blades of grass; Or a spider's web adorning  
In a strait and treacherous pass."

But Oliver Goldsmith says that,  
"Hope, like a gleaming taper's light,  
Adorns and cheers our way," And so it is debated by the poets whether hope is a blessing or a curse. But the fact is, that all men have hope of some sort in some degree. As Pope puts it:

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast, Man never is, but always to be blest."

Hope is the chief pillar of life. Hope supports the mind under all changes, trials, and difficulties. A man without hope would soon go mad. It is fairly safe to say that every suicide who leaves a note reveals that he has lost all hope for the future.

To be without hope is a sad expression in anybody's language. It is a sad thing to hear in the sick room when the doctor looks grave and indicates there is no hope for the patient. It is a sad expression in the business office when the manager wrinkles his brow and says there is no hope of profit. It is a sad word on the high seas when the captain of the sinking ship says there is no hope of saving the ship, and calls all passengers to put on the life belts and make their way to the life boat. It is sad for the politician when the returns show he has no hope of being elected to the office for which he campaigned.

### HEAVENLY HOPES ARE DYING HOPES

To hope only in this life is tragic. To hope only for things this side of the grave and eternity is most pathetic. And yet this describes the hope of the masses. A young man was being interviewed by an old preacher. He was asked what his plans and hopes were after he had finished high school. He replied that he would go on to college, work hard and graduate with honors.

"What then?" queried the minister. The young man said he would take postgraduate work in his chosen field, in the hope of being one of the best capable and successful. "What then?" continued the old preacher. The young man revealed his plans to marry, settle down in some good town, work at his profession, make a lot of money, and move in the best society. "What then?" persisted the old man. By this time the young man was not so glib, but he went on to say that he would finally become old, and have to retire, but that he hoped to have a competence for his old age. "What then?" continued the older man. The young man dropped his head and said, that of course, he would have to die. "What then?" the old man continued. And to this he had no answer, for he had his plans and hopes were this side of the grave and Eternity.

There are triple doors to the Cathedral of Milan, and over each door is an inscription. Over one is carved a beautiful wreath of roses and underneath is the legend: "All that which pleases is but for a moment." Over another is a sculptured cross and underneath are these words: "All that which troubles is but for a moment." And over the great central door are the words: "That only is important which is eternal." What a solemn reminder! "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked shall perish" (*Pro 10:28*).

### ETERNITY WITHOUT HOPE

Hell is a hopeless place, the place of eternal despair. To enter eternity without hope in Christ is to remain forever hopeless. The hope of the rich man was soon dispelled as Abraham told him of that impassable gulf between him and the blessings of God. The rich man did not ask for much, but he did not get even the little water for his burning tongue.

When Napoleon was being crowned emperor of the French in 1804, there was one person in the huge throng who was neither overawed nor overjoyed by all the pomp and splendor of the occasion. And that person was his old Corsican mother. During the ceremonies she had to say over and over again, "So long as it lasts." She knew that the glory that was her son's for the moment would end in despair. She realized that the crown being placed on his head was only a fading chaplet. She had no hope that his popularity would last, and we know from history that it did not last.

The saddest thing about Napoleon was not his defeat at Waterloo by the Duke of Wellington. It was not his exile and loneliness on St. Helena. The saddest thing in the history of Napoleon was that day in May, 1821, when he died and his soul entered that place of which Dante wrote: "All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

The hope of the writer is to challenge the reader to examine his hope in the light of eternity; or, as Peter puts it, give a reason for the hope that is in you. If your hope is built on anything other than Christ and Him crucified, such a hope will fail you in the day of judgment.

If some lost person, in the providence of God, shall take time to read these lines, let me warn him of the Christless grave and the fearful hell that awaits him.

My sinner friend, me thinks I hear the breaking of the waves on the shore of eternity. You must go down into these waves sooner or later, and it may be doing you no good. What if it should prove to be a sea of fire to you forever? What if every billow in that sea of flame should break over you? What if you must be drifting forever across that fiery sea, with words of Divine wrath driving you on, never to find a haven? Dear friend, stop trifling with eternal matters. Put an end to your careless career! Take the place of a sinner and trust the One mighty to save, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lost friend, there may yet be hope. This is not the day of despair, for we are still living in the day of salvation. Not yet has the great key grated in the lock to shut you forever in the dungeon. It is said of Christ, "He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (*Rev 3:7*). He can open Heaven to you. He is the one and only Saviour. Trust Him with your whole heart. Rest in His blood, for nothing else can cleanse you from your sins. Find shelter, through childlike trust, beneath His cross, where the lightning bolts of Divine wrath cannot strike. Look up to Him; yea, come to Him, for he has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (*Joh 6:37*). Trust Him now, for there is heaven in delay.

"This heavenly hope is all serene, But earthy hope now bright so'er, Still fluctuates over this changing scene, As false and fleeting as its fair."

-Reginald Heber

## CHAPTER II FAITH - HOPE - CHARITY

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three" (*1Co 13:13*).

Hope is one of the three cardinal Christian graces. The hope of the Christian differs radically and in many respects from any and every hope the man of the world may have. In defining the word hope we have said that the expectation of future good. But the Christian hope is more than mere expectation, it is the well-founded expectation of future, even eternal good. What hope the Christ rejector may have of eternal good is ill founded, and is sure to end in disappointment. Moreover, the hope of the unbeliever is at the best vague and uncertain. But the hope of the Christian is both sure and steadfast, and it goes with him all the way to glory. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (*Heb 6:19*).

There are three chief things which the Lord Jesus Christ is said to be unto believers: (1) He is our life. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (*Col 3:4*); (2) He is our peace. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (*Eph 2:14*); (3) He is our hope. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope" (*Tit 1:1*).

We trust the Lord Jesus for life and the life we have in Him is everlasting life. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (*Joh 3:36*). We look to Him for our peace with God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Rom 5:1*). And this peace was made by the blood of His cross. "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself" (*Col 1:20*). And our hope for heaven with all its glories is based upon our faith in Him. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (*Heb 11:1*).

In this chapter we shall deal with three things:

(1) The author of our hope, or who produces it; (2) The object of our hope, or what we hope for; (3) The ground or foundation of our hope.

### The Author

1. The author of our hope is God. Hope is a Christian grace produced in us by the Spirit of God. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" (*2Th 2:16*). The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, so that our hope maketh not ashamed. "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (*Rom 5:5*). Furthermore, in *Rom 15:13* we read, "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 Ghost." God is here called the God of hope because He is the Author of our hope. And Peter assures us that we have been begotten again unto a living hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (*1Pe 1:3*). Hope like all the other Christian graces, is born of God and not of the flesh, nor of the will of man. And the faithful God, who causes us to hope in His son, will not disappoint that hope.

### The Object

2. The object of our hope is heaven with all its blessings. The things the Christian hopes for are all the heavenly blessings promised in Christ Jesus. This is a good place to be reminded that the word hope is used in a twofold way in the New Testament. The word is used both subjectively as an inner grace in the soul, and it is also used objectively in the sense of what is hoped for. "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (*Col 1:25*). We are told about the hope laid up for us in heaven, which has reference to the glories of heaven; and all the things that will make heaven such a grand place. It is also a good time to be told that we cannot have heaven until we get to heaven. The blessed things we hope for are in heaven. Our heavenly inheritance is now a matter of hope. And in the other world we will possess this inheritance. "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (*1Pe 1:4*). There is nothing in the nature of this inheritance that will be subject to corruption; it cannot be defiled by anything from the outside; and its joy will be everlasting. Heaven will be a disappointment to the child of God. As to its beauty, it is represented by the most precious things of earth, the most precious things the human mind can conceive of: gold, pearls and precious stones. Heaven will be a place of freedom; freedom from so many things which have cursed the inhabitants of earth.

There will be freedom from bodily pain. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any pain: for the former things have passed away" (*Rev 21:4*). These freedom things are the very things with which we are all most familiar. Everybody knows the language of tears. We are all familiar with pain and disease and death. But all these enemies of human life will be forever outlawed from the heavenly precincts.

There will be freedom from poverty. Heaven will be a place of plenty. We cannot but think of the large areas of earth where poverty is indescribable. And even in this land of plenty, the poor can be found in large numbers. But there will be no meat and bread problem in the Father's house; no housing problem in the new earth; no tumble down shacks over there; no health problem, where there is no more pain.

There will be freedom from fear. This world is a place of fear and more fear. As I write men's hearts are failing them for fear of the things coming on the earth. There is much here to make afraid. Wars and rumors of wars shall continue unabated to the very end. Diplomatic discussions in the interest of peace are warring words which make for deeper hatred and greater fear among the nations. The red horse of war, the black horse of famine, and the pale horse of death still ride furiously.

But in heaven there will be none to make afraid. The very word fear will be blotted forever from our hearts. The fearful words of earth will have no place in the dictionary of heaven.

There will be freedom from sin. Here is the word that pinpoints all that makes for pain, and poverty, and fear. Heaven will be a holy place filled with holy people.

### The Ground

3. The ground of our hope is Christ in His mediatorial work. We delight and sing: "On Christ the solid rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand."

Without Christ every man is hopeless. Hope not founded upon Christ and Him crucified is only an idle dream. He who pleads anything before God except the Lord Jesus Christ will find no acceptance with Him. The only voice to which the God of justice will listen is the voice of the blood of Christ, that blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.

Consider the state of the fallen angels and we see what our condition would be without the redemptive death of Christ. The angels had nobody to stand between them and the God of justice and so are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the day of judgment. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto the judgment" (*2Pe 2:4*).

By way of warning, we shall now point out some of the shifting sands upon which many are building their house of hope.

Many hope in the mere mercy of God apart from the mediation of Christ. This was the best hope of the writer before his conversion. He reasoned that, while he was a sinner, God was merciful, and that a merciful God would not punish him in hell. He failed to consider that God is just as well as merciful, and that God might give him justice instead of mercy. He failed to see what he now sees with sunlight clearness, that Christ is the one and only channel of mercy. Christ is the only mercycast to which the sinner may come and find mercy with God. God out of Christ is not merciful, but is a consuming fire. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (*Rom 3:25*). The word translated propitiation in *Rom 3:25* is the same word which is translated mercycast in *Heb 9:5*. "And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercycast; and which we cannot now speak particularly." Let the sinner try ever so hard and live ever so good, he will not find mercy with God unless he trusts God's Son.

Some hope for heaven in their common honesty and civility between man and man. They base their hope on their good citizenship. They pay their debts and try to be good neighbors, and vainly hope they will come out all right in the end. These things are good in their place, but no good for salvation and a hope for heaven.

Others hope in their descent from pious and godly parents. They forget that salvation is an individual blessing and does not run in the veins. They do not seem to realize that the family circle can be broken in eternity.

And still others hope in the externals of religion. Their hope is in the church and its ordinances. It is surprising the number of people who have no other hope than that they are members of a church and have subjected themselves to the ordinances of religion. Now, the ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper, are precious and should never be neglected. But they are not precious as the ground of hope. They are blessed symbols of the gospel of Christ, who is our hope. They are preaching ordinances. They proclaim the death and burial and resurrection of Christ, "Who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification" (*Rom 4:25*).

We cannot but believe that those who find Christ precious as Saviour will find delight in observing the ordinances of His church. But the ordinances must not be allowed to take the place of Christ in salvation.

## CHAPTER III HOPE THROUGH GRACE

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God ... hath given us good hope through grace" (*2Th 2:16*).

The good hope through grace. The word rendered good, according to the scholars, means unfeigned, bright, genuine, and beneficial. The good hope will not be disappointed; its benefits will be forthcoming in due time. There is no good hope through human merit. All men are sinners and cannot merit anything good from God.

In this chapter we want to consider some of the leading characteristics of the Christian hope.

1. It is the hope of the gospel. "But let us not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (*Col 1:23*). The gospel, in the power of the Spirit, not only begets faith and love; it also arouses hope. The gospel not only points back to the cross to what Christ did there, it also points to His coming again and to what He will do for us then. On the cross our Saviour bore the guilt of our sins and took them away from us, and He is coming again to take away the shame of sin and restore us to the image of God. With the guilt removed we are now justified; when the shame is removed we shall be glorified. "Beloved, now are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see Him as he is" (*1Jn 3:2*). "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (*Col 3:4*). The believer looks back to the cross as the ground of hope and forward to the fruition of hope.

2. It is the hope of Salvation. "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (*1Th 5:8*). Here salvation is put in the future. There is a very real sense in which we are not yet saved; we only hope to be saved. Hope implies there is an aspect of salvation we do not yet have. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (*Rom 13:11*). Faith brings deliverance from guilt of sin which is justification. Hope is concerned about the deliverance from the shame and annoyance of sin. Our salvation is in three tenses: past, present, and future. The believer has been saved from the guilt and penalty of sin, anathema maranatha so that he is no longer condemned, but justified from all things. "And by him all that believe are justified from all things" (*Act 13:39*). He is being saved from the damning power of sin because he is no longer under law but under grace. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (*Rom 6:14*). And the believer is yet to be delivered from the very presence of sin, because Christ is coming to make him like Himself. "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (*Php 3:20-21*).

3. It is the hope of righteousness. "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (*Gal 5:5*). While the believer has the righteousness of Christ imputed to him by faith, he still hungers and thirsts after personal righteousness. And this aspect of righteousness is only a matter of hope. The righteousness we now have by faith has a hope attached to it: the hope that we shall be personally righteous, the hope of being perfectly whole.

There is still another aspect of this hope of righteousness: the hope of a righteous society. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (*2Pe 3:13*). This earth is filled with unrighteousness, "for the whole world lieth in wickedness" (*1Jn 5:19*). There is unrighteousness in every realm of human activity. There is diplomatic unrighteousness at conference tables where international treaties are treated as scraps of paper. There is political unrighteousness when vital issues are subordinated to party interests. There is industrial unrighteousness, both on the part of labor and management, in which the poor are ground down and robbed of the fruits of their labor. There is social unrighteousness in which a man's bank account, rather than his character, is made the standard of measurement. There is ecclesiastical unrighteousness when a man's personality, rather than the truth he lives and preaches is made the controlling factor. There is governmental unrighteousness when, for the sake of taxes, men are licensed to sell alcohol as a beverage and thus do untold harm to millions. Or when the law dwinks at gambling in the parlor while the gamblers in the alley feel its iron hand. But a better day is coming, for "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (*Jer 23:5-6*).

It is the hope of His calling. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (*Eph 1:18*). "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (*Eph 4:4*). Here is a twofold hope. God's hope and our hope. When God called us with the call of salvation, He had a definite purpose to glorify us and fit us for His holy presence, and since this was to be in the future it is referred to as the hope of His calling. And since the glory to which He called us is future in our realization and enjoyment, it is the hope of our calling.

Our calling, like our salvation, may be viewed from three angles. As to the past "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (*1Pe 2:9*). Concerning the present. "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (*1Th 4:7*). "But as he which hath called us is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (*1Pe 1:15*). "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (*2Ti 1:9*). These verses emphasize our personal obligation to holy living. And as to the future we are told "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (*1Th 2:12*).

So the hope of His calling is His expectation of finding in us the glory to which He called us. And the hope of OUR calling is our enjoyment of the glory to which he called us. One of these days all of His people shall hear Him say, "Come ye enjoy the glory I meant for you when I called you."

5. It is the hope of glory. "Christ in you the hope of glory" (*Col 1:27*). "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (*Rom 5:2*). J.B. Phillips renders it: "Here we take our stand, in happy certainty of the glorious things He has for us in the future." The man of the world may have more for the present, but the Christian is the only person with a future. The Christian is happy in his hope of being conformed to the image of Christ.

The hope of the atheist is that when he dies he will be like the horse or cow in death and be done for. The best hope of some is that when they die they will go to a place called purgatory and after so much prayers and payments and suffering, finally reach heaven. But there is little or no glory to such hopes as these. The glorious hope is that when we are absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord.

6. It is a living hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (*1Pe 1:3*). Ours is a living hope in a dying world. It is no poor, pale ghost brightening and then fading; fainting and then reviving and then fainting again.

The poor worldling has his hopes, but they are dying hopes. The hope of the false professor is a mere illusion. A false hope may give as much pleasure as the true hope while it lives, but all false hopes will die in disappointment. A man puts his hope of heaven in his own character, or good works, or church membership, and is as happy as the man who has no hope except in Christ who put away sin and is justified of himself. But the time will come when the hope of one will come to an end and the hope of the other will be realized in heaven. Every sinner needs to place his hope in someone who will not disappoint him. And such an one is Jesus Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (*Act 4:12*).

7. It is the blessed hope. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (*Tit 2:13*). The blessed hope is the hope of Christ's return. With His return all the things for which the believer longs and prays and struggles will be realized in happy enjoyment.

In all earthly hopes there is an element of unrest and uncertainty. He who hopes to become rich cannot be certain that his hope will be realized. He who hopes for continued good health cannot be certain that he will not soon be smitten with some fatal malady.

## CHAPTER IV HOPE WITH A FUTURE

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (*1Co 15:19*).

It is a lesson hard to learn that the material and physical blessings of this life are not part of our salvation. These blessings, involving wealth and health, come to men indiscriminately; to the lost and saved alike. They come in the general providence of God. "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (*Mat 5:45*). Jesus Christ did not die to save us from the temporary effects of sin, but only from its eternal consequences. He did not die to keep us from being poor in the material things of earth. He did not die to guarantee us good health. Physical healing is no more in the atonement than is economic security. The writer believes in an atonement that actually atones, and if physical healing is in the atonement, the believers would never so much as have a headache. Bodily redemption is indeed in the atonement, but for the redemption of the body we must await our Lord's return. Believers may pray for health and for material blessings; not on the ground of the death of Christ, but according to the sovereign pleasure of God. John says that if we ask anything according to His will He will hear us. Paul felt that he had a very poor salvation if he got all of this in life, which ended by his head being chopped off by a Roman soldier. The martyrs had a sorry salvation if their hope ended with this present life. And we ourselves, who have suffered little for the sake of Christ, have a short and sorry salvation if it is limited to this present life. Our Father's plan is for us to bear the cross here and wear the crown yonder. If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him.

Paul is arguing the necessity of the resurrection to justify our salvation. If there is no resurrection, those fallen asleep in Christ are perished. Christ's resurrection was necessary in order to save us, and our own resurrection is essential to our salvation.

One of the chief errors of God's people is that they are not willing to wait for their inheritance; not willing to wait for the hope laid up for us in heaven. We put too much emphasis on physical and material things here and now. Esau could not wait for his birthright; he despised it because it was something future, and bartered it for a mess of pottage. He satisfied his stomach at the expense of his soul. He traded his glorious inheritance for a temporary snack.

### CHRISTIAN BIRTHRIGHT

To be content does not mean that the believer should do nothing to improve his lot on earth. This would preclude any effort of any sort for any purpose. This would paralyze all industry. But when the Christian has regulated his life by the word of God, in any or every business undertaking, he should be content with the results and not murmur or complain. Paul said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (*Php 4:11*). It is something he had to learn, and it is a natural virtue. "Let your conversation be without covetousness and be content with such things as ye have. For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (*Heb 13:5*). "And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content" (*1Th 6:8*).

### CHRISTIAN JOY

The believer is to be happy in this life, but this happiness is not based upon physical and material blessings. Here is one reason why the saints are not happier: they are trying to find happiness in the things of earth - in the things that would make the world happy - in such things as wealth and health and worldly amenities. But Christian joy is a fruit of the Spirit and is based upon spiritual and eternal blessings.

The believer is to rejoice in the Lord. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe" (*Php 3:1*). He is to be happy that he has Christ. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (*1Co 1:30*). But none of these is material or physical. They are spiritual and far more valuable than anything material or physical. In one of the Chapman-Alexander meetings, a poor paralytic was waddled down the aisle and placed in front of the platform. The song leader looked down at him and asked for his favorite number. As quick as a flash, the helpless man replied, "Count Your Blessings"

The believer is to "rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (*Luk 10:20*). To have our name in the Lamb's book of life is so much better than to have it make the headlines or appear in the social column or Who's Who's.

We are to rejoice in hope. To rejoice in hope is not to rejoice in the possession of something, but in anticipation of something good. "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation" (*Rom 12:12*). If we will rejoice in hope of future good in heaven, we will be patient in times of trouble and adversity. We are to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. In our present conflict with sin we can be happy that the warfare will soon be over and we will reflect the glory of God in our very person.

We are to rejoice in tribulation and persecution, not because they are good in themselves. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (*2Co 4:17*). "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (*Mat 5:12*).

A mother and little daughter stood near the tracks watching the train go by. "That train goes so fast," said the child. "Yes, that is the Lightning Express," replied the mother. "Does that train go to heaven, too?" inquired the child. Life is much like the Lightning Express. Is the train of your life on the way to heaven and eternal glory?

### NOT A BED OF ROSES

The Christian life here on earth is not an easy life. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. As a general rule the Lord's people do not have the carefree and easy life men of the world enjoy. The Lord's people have conscious obligations that do not bother the world. Men of the world are free and easy - they have no church to support with its constant calls for money and time. They do not have to be pestered with a pastor who wants them to honor God with their lives and with the firstfruits of their increase. The Christian life is no bed of roses.

The lost man does not have to endure chastening from a heavenly Father. He knows nothing of the discipline that is necessary to a heavenly character. Every Christian ought to thank God for being more concerned about his character than his comfort. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous" (*Heb 12:11*).

The prosperity of the wicked puzzled David, and was about to make a skeptic of him, but when he went to God's house and learned about their latter end, he understood. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end" (*Psa 73:16-17*).

### PAUL'S EXPERIENCE

Paul was not only speaking of the saints in general, but of himself in particular, when he said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (*1Co 15:19*). These words are far more significant in the light of his experiences than ours. What did Paul get in this life? For his heavenly Father he got a thorn in the flesh, and other disciplinary experiences, to keep him humble. From the churches he