

Hope

What We Believe

The Hebrew writer begins the chapter on faith by stating, *"Now faith is the substance of things **hoped for**, the evidence of things not seen"* (Hebrews 11:1). The **"things hoped for"** could be translated as **"things we expect to receive or happen."** Abraham hoped for a son, but the aging bodies of both himself and Sarah were evidence that he could not have a son. There was no expectation that such a thing was possible. However, faith in the promise of God gave him hope that a son would be born to Sarah. Paul refers to Abraham's hope this way, *"Contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations"* (Romans 4:18). There was no hope in the physical evidence, but faith in God's Word provided the proof and expectation that the promised son would be born.

The question for us to consider is, "Does it matter what we hope for?" In modern usage, hope represents a wish for something uncertain. We wish it would rain. We wish for a new job. We wish for a myriad of things with no promise of assurance that we will receive anything. But Biblical hope is based upon evidence and promises. Paul says God is "the God of hope" (Romans 15:13). God is not the subject of our hope but is the reason for it. Hope is a significant part of our salvation (Romans 8:24). Hope makes the waiting for Christ's return bearable (1 Thessalonians 1:3). And, hope is the reason we want to purify ourselves and become pure and holy as He is. (1 John 3:3).

Hope is one of three words essential to a Christian's view of God, Christ, and eternity. They are belief, faith, and hope. There is the belief that God exists and created the heavens and earth. There is the faith that Jesus is God's Son and died for our sins. We understand that past events occurred because of the written evidence provided by the Holy Spirit through men and contained in the Bible. Past events and promises of the future builds hope that our time on this earth is short and an eternity in heaven waits for us, *"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope"* (Romans 15:4). An Old Testament example helps us understand how hope is built up within an individual.

David wrote many of his Psalms based on events in his life. These events caused him to draw the conclusion, **"You are my hope; O Lord GOD, You are my confidence from my youth"** (Psalms 71:4-5). David makes hope equal to confidence. He concluded that he has confidence, or hope, that this will also happen because that happened. Notice what David said to Saul when all Israel cowered before Goliath. *And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."* (1 Samuel 17:37). David had proven his faith in God during his time as a shepherd, watching over and defending his father's sheep. That faith assured him that God would fulfill His promises to Israel. That assurance is like the Hebrew writer penned *"Now **faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen"**"* (Hebrews 11:1).

Peter wrote to remind Christians that evidence built the faith within them, causing us to look forward to what is to come. *"Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls"* (1 Peter 1:8-9). Belief in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus keeps us **"looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"** (Hebrews 12:2).

God made the promise to Abraham, who hoped to receive a son, to start a great nation and inherit a promised land. *"And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise"* (Hebrews 6:13-15). In a similar way, we have received a promise. The risen Christ promised, *"I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also"* (John 14:3). Since our Lord and Christ entered the heaven promised to us, we have confidence, a firm hope, that He will keep His promise to us. *"Therefore we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. **This hope we have as an anchor of the soul**, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"* (Hebrews 6:17-20).

Do you have a constant joy in your heart because of a hope of an eternal home with God? Paul's prayer, by the Holy Spirit for us, is that *"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit"* (Romans 15:13).