

HOPE

-THE CERTAINTY OF FUTURE BLESSING

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TRANSFORMED
WORKING LIFE

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No one can serve two masters

Hope –the certainty of future blessing

Faith or presumption

Hearing God speak

Renewing the mind

Working from rest

Be strong in the battle

Anointing

Fruitfulness

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All quotations are from the New King James bible unless otherwise stated.

INTRODUCTION

‘Without hope in this world’ that statement sounds terrible, and so it is! This is not meant to be the portion of the believer - the scripture declares that it is the unbeliever who is without hope.

‘that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.’ Ephesians 2:12

No Jesus, no hope!

By complete contrast we have our hope as an anchor for the soul.

‘This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,’ Hebrews 6:19

..... do we, or more pertinently, do you? Hope is a subject of immense importance and yet it is hardly ever taught. This booklet seeks to bring understanding of hope - what it is and how we obtain and develop it.

The booklet was written for people at work - the truths it contains apply just as well to all aspects of our daily life whether our endeavours are paid or not.

CHAPTER 1

THE CERTAIN HOPE OF FUTURE BLESSING

There are many scriptures which talk of great blessing ahead for the born again Christian believer. Very often the scripture is referring to our expectation of eternity with Jesus.

When we look around at this world we see problems, disasters, poverty and sickness on every side. We can very easily slip into a line of thinking which says, ‘It will be wonderful when we get to heaven, don’t lift your expectation on earth, just grit your teeth and get through it somehow.’

In this case we have misunderstood the nature of hope.

It is true that eternity with Jesus will be an unimaginably glorious experience. A few scripture references will suffice to illustrate:

(I am using the word ‘eternity’ in an all inclusive way. Whatever you think of the outline of future events, whether you believe in a future millennium or not, eternity in my context means, all the time from Jesus return onwards.)

‘looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ,’
Titus 2:13

*‘Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--
in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.’
1 Corinthians 15:51-53

‘so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,’
1 Corinthians 1:7

'When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.'
Colossians 3:4

From these few verses we can see a time of unparalleled hope ahead if we simply accept that the scripture is true. The references all look forward to the coming of Jesus with great expectation. This is sometimes referred to as 'our great hope.'

Belief in an eternity of unimaginable joy and peace is a fundamental building block - if one does not believe that eternity is like this - then, how will one believe that anything much can be done to bring hope for today? On the other hand, when we see the sheer goodness of God, when we see that He wants to share eternity with us - then we can start to recognise that He can also bless us in this age.

There is a need to start thinking along the lines that God is good, very good, and that He is interested in our well being. Without this type of thinking we will not have hope in this age - because the world cannot bring hope - only Jesus can bring hope.

'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

So you can see from the scripture - it is the Lord's desire that we are filled with hope. That will happen as we are filled, more and more, with the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 2

CAN WE EXPECT BLESSING TODAY

Before we get into this chapter I want to ask a question:

Should our belief, that is our doctrine, be determined by what we experience or by that which we read in the scriptures?

Should we bring belief down to the level of experience or, through seeking God's face for His strategy, should we expect our experience to gradually come more and more up to the level we read in scripture?

Jesus explicitly told the disciples that they would do greater works than He had done.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father”.
John 14:12

There is debate - what does greater works mean? Does it mean greater in ‘importance,’ greater in ‘magnitude,’ or greater in ‘number’ - or perhaps all of these things?

For me, this is a discussion I am happy to allow to pass by. So far, any ‘works’ that I have done, are not threatening to be greater under any of these headings! Probably for most, if not all of us, the same is true. Therefore we will ignore the argument completely and just concentrate on this one factor - can I expect the Lord to bless me now - in this current age, or to use me as a blessing for others? Can I hope to see the powers of the age yet to come? Jesus certainly expressed the expectation that we would do greater works than Him.

Most certainly the answer to this question is yes. If we look in Hebrews 6: 5 we will find a reference to the Hebrew Christians experiencing the ‘powers of the age come.’

‘And this we will do if God permits.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.

But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.’

Hebrews 6:3-9

Here, the Hebrews had slipped away from their living faith in the risen Jesus. In fact the book of Hebrews is written to Jewish Christians who were in the process of going back to law.

This quote comes from the introduction to the book of Hebrews in the New King James bible:

‘Many Jewish believers, having stepped out of Judaism into Christianity, want to reverse their course in order to escape persecution by their fellow countrymen. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts them to “go on to perfection”’

The Hebrews had been enlightened, verse 4, and had tasted the heavenly gift (righteousness through faith), and had become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and had tasted the good word (rhema) of God and the powers of the age to come.

Now they were in danger of going back to justification by law - this would be to deny Jesus and the efficacy of His crucifixion and resurrection. This would be a gross sin, which would require repentance. In fact it would be impossible to renew them again to repentance whilst they, as it were, crucified the Son of God again and put Him to open shame.

However, there are two elements of good news for our study:

- 1) They would be restored again, to full faith, and full experience of the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, by repentance.
- 2) They clearly were used to experiencing ‘the powers of the age to come.’ This is a reference to the personal reign of the Messiah, when there would be no death, no sickness and so on.
They were experiencing miracles.

Many other references lead us to the same conclusion - Jesus expects His followers to move in blessing and power. The early disciples moved in blessing and power. Some of us today are experiencing blessing and power, at least to some degree.

The major objective of this booklet is to establish how we get into a position of increased hope. In biblical terms the word 'hope' means 'the certainty of future blessing.' Unfortunately the English language has reduced this word 'hope' down to a gamble, down to a flimsy expectation with little or no substance.

So now we will move on to the practicalities.

CHAPTER 3

THE BASIS OF OUR EXPECTATION - THE WORD

The scripture tells us that it is the inspired word of God :

'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.'

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Some people will be able to accept this at face value - others will say we need some more evidence, because the scripture is talking of itself!

So we face a major question - is the scripture inspired by God or not? Surely, if we can establish that the scripture is obviously inspired by God, then we can accept that it will be good for everything else - especially as we comprehend God's character.

Evidence for the inspiration of scripture:

I have chosen to give a few examples which illustrate that the scripture must be inspired - that is based on the fact that the human author, through whom the scripture was written, could not have known the full truth of his writing. I.e. there had to be a greater inspirer of what is written than the actual channel.

Scientific:

1) The apostle Paul writes to Timothy:

'He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honour and everlasting power. Amen.'

1 Timothy 6:15-16

There is a scientific element to this statement - it says that God dwells in light that is unapproachable.

It is now accepted scientific wisdom that matter cannot be accelerated to the speed of light (186,000 miles per second), because it completely disintegrates before it reaches that speed.

How did Paul know that light was unapproachable - he didn't, but God does, and He inspired Paul to write.

2) Job writes: The earth is suspended on.....

Before we see what the bible says lets look at the writings of religion. The Hindu Vedas says that:

The earth is flat, floating in a saucer of water. The saucer is carried on the back of four very large elephants. The elephants are standing on the back of an immense turtle, which is swimming in a sea.

Job, on the other hand has a different viewpoint:

'He stretches out the north over empty space; he hangs the earth on nothing.'
Job 26:7

How did Job know that the earth is suspended on nothing? He didn't, but God does and He inspired Job to write it down.

Man has, in the latter part of this century, been in space and been able to view the earth from there. There is not a single report of elephants and turtles! Rather, the earth is indeed suspended on nothing.

3) Job again:

'He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness.'
Job 26:10 (See also Isaiah 40:22)

Here we have reference to the circle of the earth - stating that the earth is round. How did Job know that? Man's wisdom, until long after Job, considered the earth to be flat.

4) Pure gold is transparent.

'And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.'
Revelation 21:21

We now know that when gold is refined to its greatest purity it becomes transparent.

Medical science

Paul writes:

'Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.'

Colossians 2:18-19

Here we have it - growth comes from the head.

Medical science has now discovered that the physical growth of the human body is controlled by the pituitary gland in the back of the head. Why did Paul say that growth comes from the head? Because he was inspired by God to make that analogy.

Media

In Revelation 11 it clearly states that the many nations will be able to look upon the dead bodies of the two witnesses in Jerusalem at some future date. The concept would have been unbelievable for John.

However, now we know that events anywhere in the world can be viewed virtually everywhere through television in an instant - just like the recent death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

So here we see that various branches of science are agreeing with the inspired scripture.

Prophetic input.

I deliberately started with the scientific because the area of the prophetic is questioned by some.

But we will look at the person of Jesus for a moment, taken from the viewpoint of some of the scriptures about Him:

'Jesus was born in Bethlehem¹, of a virgin², descended from Abraham³ and David⁴, from the tribe of Judah⁵. He was called out of Egypt⁶ to enter Jerusalem on a colt⁷ and to die as a sacrifice on the cross⁸, without a bone being broken⁹, whilst His captors divide His garments and cast lots for His clothing¹⁰. After three days He is raised from the dead¹¹ and appears to many.'

- 1 Micah 5:2
- 2 Isaiah 7:14
- 3 Genesis 12:3, Acts 3:25
- 4 1 Chronicles 17:12, Isaiah 9:7
- 5 Genesis 49:8-12
- 6 Hosea 11:1
- 7 Zechariah 9:9
- 8 Isaiah 53:10-12
- 9 Psalm 34:20
- 10 Psalm 22:18
- 11 John 2:19

In this short exercise we have, in one short paragraph descriptive of Jesus, listed 11 fulfilled prophecies. Whilst it may be argued that some of these were within Jesus own ability to fulfil, many clearly were not.

Surely, we have established that the scripture is indeed the inspired word of God.

There is another important principle to remember. Hope can be likened to good soil - so that when a word (rhema) comes from God, it drops into good soil. In the gospel of John we find a very clear statement on the importance of believing the scripture:

*“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.
“But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”
John 5:46-7*

If we do not believe the writings (the scripture), then we will not be able to believe a specific (rhema) word from the Lord when it comes.

CHAPTER 4

THE GUARANTEE OF OUR EXPECTATION - GOD'S CHARACTER

Now that we know that the scripture is inspired we need to look at the character of the inspirer of the scripture.

In this chapter we will discover that God is good. In fact, 'God is the answer, not the problem.'

If we think that God is the author of our problems - that He is the one sending problems and sicknesses, then we have no antidote.

The scripture makes a number of statements which demonstrate the very goodness of God. For example:

"If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? "Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Luke 11:11-13

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:11-13

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

"But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep,

sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.

“The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”
 John 10:9-15

When we go through these scriptures, and of course there are many many others, we get some idea of His goodness.

We can get a wrong perspective of God’s character when we consider His judgement.

This is partly because we try to measure His judgements against our own, instead of measuring against perfect justice. Only God Himself knows what is perfect justice. Our human viewpoints can get mixed with sentimentalism and emotions leading us to consider Him to be harsh. This is wrong. The Lord does want any man to perish.

‘The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.’
 2 Peter 3:9

However, man hardens his heart against the Lord, and reaps the result.

In the Old testament we see God’s judgement rise up in various manifestations. However, for the born again believer, all the judgement that should have fallen upon us fell upon Jesus Christ instead.

Now the only judgement that remains for the believer is that of his works.

Another way of seeing the goodness of God is to consider some of His names:

El shaddai Almighty to bless Genesis 17:21, 28:3,43:14

The Lord our:

Yaweh Tsidkeenu .. righteousness Jeremiah 23:6

Yaweh Nissi .. banner Exodus 17:15

Yaweh Jireh .. provider Genesis 22:14

Yaweh Hoseenu .. life maker Psalm 95:6

Yaweh Ropheca .. healer Exodus 15:26

Yaweh Shalom .. peace Judges 6:24

Why not meditate upon these characteristics of God - He is good.

Finally, in this chapter, let us consider this wonderful verse:

'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.'
James 1:17

What does this verse tell us about the Lord;

- 1) He is the author of every good and perfect gift
- 2) He does send these gifts down from above.
- 3) He does not vary.
- 4) There is not even a shadow, let alone the substance, of any turning away from the position of being the source of every good and perfect gift.

At a practical level we can use this verse to help us discern what is from the Lord and what is not. For example, if one was to fall sick - that is clearly not a good and perfect gift, therefore it is not from the Lord.

The Lord uses even our bad experiences to help to bring us to blessing and to maturity. So even when we do fall sick, somehow, the Lord is able to bring good out of that situation. That does not mean the Lord sent the sickness in the first place - that would contradict James 1 :17.

'And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.'
Romans 8:28

Now we have established:
The scripture is inspired by God.
God is good, very good.

Now we can see that our hope, that is our expectation of experiencing the goodness of God, is based on sound foundations.

CHAPTER 5

RELATIONSHIP IS THE KEY TO HOPE

Even in our thinking in this world we know that there are different levels of relationship. Some are brought into very close relationship - usually just a very few. Others come into friendship relationship. Whilst many are acquaintances and many more are either, totally unknown, or we meet just once or twice in the course of life.

Very close relationships require much more time and a very positive attitude to flourish. When we think of those around us we know that some are far more reliable than others. We know that we can trust some to do what they promise and to be there in time of need - equally we know that not everyone is reliable.

We have seen from the last chapter that God's character is very positive towards us - so any problem with relationship is going to come from our end.

Developing the relationship with the Lord**1) *Our attitude.***

Do I want a close relationship with the Lord? - or do I prefer to keep Him at arm's length. This is a very real question. It is easy to give a 'religious' answer. 'Yes, of course I want a close relationship' - that answer can come so quickly from our lips and yet be words only with no reality.

When there is reality in our desire for a close relationship it means submitting our will to His. It means that we do not do the things we want to do - rather we pray and seek His will and are prepared to sacrifice our desires when they do not agree with His.

On the positive side, once we recognise that He has good plans for us, far better plans than we could envisage - then it should be easy and logical to submit our wills to His will.

'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.' Jeremiah 29:11

2) *Communication*

One of the keys to a good relationship is communication.

We get so very busy that it is very easy to have no or little contact with the Lord on a day to day basis. Actually it is easy to keep in close contact with the Lord.

Smith Wigglesworth is quoted as saying, 'Rarely do I pray for 20 minutes at one time, but never do 20 minutes pass without a prayer.'

We should seek to avoid a religious attitude. We can pray in almost every situation - pray with our minds. We can express love to the Lord in virtually every situation - loving Him from our mind - even in difficult moments.

I would highly recommend frequent contact - even if it is only for a minute or two at a time.

3) *Sharing*

Closeness is developed by sharing. We are invited by scripture to cast all our anxieties on Him for He cares for us. Why not take this literally. Sometimes we think, 'this is too small a matter to bother the Lord.' Then there is no sharing, there is no opportunity for God to intervene in the situation and demonstrate His love.

I believe that we should increasingly communicate our position to the Lord, rather like discussing things with a very close friend. Indeed, in my own experience, when I talk to the Lord like this, then I find that He fills my mind with His reply.

4) *Adoration*

God is so very good. It is right and proper for us to absolutely adore Him. You will know you have a close relationship with Him when you adore Him. When He has become everything to you - then you are close. It is at this point that hope is unquenchable. You know Him, you know the truth about Him, you know that He will bring good out of every situation.

CHAPTER 6

THE EXISTENCE OF TRUST

Now that we have established that the scripture is inspired and that the character of God towards His children is good, we should be able to trust, both Him and the statements of scripture.

In order to apply some of this, it is helpful to see that there is a purpose in God for His church. We find the part of the purpose of the church mentioned in Ephesians 3.

‘To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.’
Ephesians 3:8-12

Here, the purpose is, that the church should demonstrate the manifold wisdom of God to principalities and powers. This is a purpose of power. We know from Ephesians 6 that principalities and powers are the enemies of the church.

‘Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.’

Ephesians 6:10-12

We know from Luke 10:19 that we have been given authority over the works of satan.

'Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.'
Luke 10:19

The church is expected to exercise that authority, to demonstrate to satan, that he is not the ruler of this world.

Another part of the purpose of the church is to be the bride of Jesus Christ. This is an amazing expectation which will be fully realised in the future.

Another part of the purpose of the church is to demonstrate the power and goodness of God to the unbelieving world. Some will believe as a result and some will not. However, no one will be without excuse. Jesus said, *'Greater works than these shall you do.'*
John 14:12

Every aspect of the purpose of the church is good. Therefore every member of the church should be able to see, understand and say, 'God is for me and not against me.' Trust should arise.

We could say that hope will have become full when it has become trust.

How do we receive hope.

I believe the answer to this question is that hope grows and grows. Hope grows with our understanding. However we can do something to actively contribute to this process.

Meditation

Joshua was told to meditate 'day and night' upon the words of the law so that he would make his way successful and prosperous.

'This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.'
Joshua 1:8

Here is a principle. If we meditate upon something it will become a part of us. That is to say - the result of Joshua meditating upon the law, would be his obedience to that law, it would become part of him.

Put that into a New testament context. If we meditate upon the truths and promises of scripture, they will grow within us and become part of us.

I meditate like this:

First, get very comfortable, lying on my bed.
Then, speak out loud an appropriate scripture.
Then, keep on doing that 20 or 30 or more times.

This process is repeated day after day - I will remain on one scripture for a number of days or weeks. What happens is that the truth of the particular scripture grows and grows within me.

At first it is very difficult to meditate in this way. That can be because the mind can be over active. This process will slow it down. Objectors say, 'You are brain washing yourself.' Actually I agree ... I am washing my mind with the water of the word. My mind needs that because operating in the world it picks up all sorts of negative and unhelpful input.

Is there any scriptural basis for this type of meditation?

Psalm 4:4

'Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still.'

To make best use of meditation select scriptures which speak into areas of weakness in hope or trust. I started with Romans 8:28.

'And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.'

Romans 8:28

That is a wonderful scripture for establishing hope within. Do you tend towards anxiety? Then choose something like this:

'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'

John 14:27

If there is any area of your Christian faith which you know to be on the weak side - then choose appropriate scriptures and meditate upon those.

Biblical meditation will bring you strong hope and put your Christian life onto a sound footing.

'This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,'

Hebrews 6:19

CHAPTER 7

THE WONDER OF GRACE

Grace means unmerited favour. We are the recipients of God's unmerited favour because He has chosen us to bear fruit.

'You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.' John 15:16

It is His Purpose for His goodness to be shown on the earth - because His goodness leads us to repentance.

'Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?' Romans 2:4

Just look at the example of Peter:

When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.

So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them.

And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; Luke 5:4-9

On seeing a practical demonstration of the goodness of Jesus, Peter falls down - seeing his own need of a redeemer.

Even when Peter makes a mistake, Jesus is there to provide, not judgement, but a practical solution: Here Peter has wrongly stated that Jesus would pay the Temple tax - Jesus provides the solution:

“Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.”

Matthew 17:27

Why not read the account of the restoration of Peter in John 21. Here again Jesus is speaking to Peter through his work. Peter was a fisherman - Jesus speaks to him through his fishing. This should raise our expectation. We could start to expect that Jesus will speak to us through our daily lives and through our work.

Scripture carries wonderful promises of the grace of God:

Although we have already seen this scripture a couple of times in this booklet, it is worth repeating again:

‘And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.’

Romans 8:28

Here the promise is quite amazing - good out of every situation!

All we have to do is have the confidence to approach the throne of grace: Scripture tells us that there is an abundance of grace to help in time of need.

‘Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.’

Hebrews 4:16

So often we struggle in our own strength, or we even blame the Lord, instead of coming to the throne of grace and asking Him - ‘Lord what is your strategy for my situation?’ Then move in faith by hearing the Lord’s specific reply.

Indeed, according to Romans 5:17 it is the Lord’s intention that we should reign in life through grace.

‘For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.’

If we will take these scriptures seriously and at face value - then we would see that the Lord’s desire for us is that we will always be able to rise above our circumstances.

He will never allow the testing brought about by living in this world to become more than we can bear without His grace providing a way of escape.

'No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.'
1 Corinthians 10:13

Grace and truth working together - the 'golden oil anointing'

In Zechariah 4 we find the account of a vision given to the prophet.

These were the circumstances:

Some of the Jews had returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. They had started rebuilding the temple - but the work had faltered.

Zerrubabel was the governor of Judah and Joshua the High priest.

The word of the Lord comes through Zechariah:

Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps.

"Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left."

So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, "What are these, my lord?"

Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord."

So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts.

'Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it."

Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands shall also finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.

For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth."

Then I answered and said to him, "What are these two olive trees-- at the right of the lampstand and at its left?"

And I further answered and said to him, "What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?"

Then he answered me and said, "Do you not know what these are?" And I

said, "No, my lord."

So he said, "These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth."
Zechariah 4:1-14

Here we see that the work will not be completed by might or power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord. Shouts of 'grace to it' are the order of the day. The hands of Zerrubabel are definitely needed and in his hands is a plumb line. The plumb line represents building straight and true.

Then Zechariah sees a vision of two olive trees feeding golden oil into a receptacle from which the oil is continually fed through pipes to keep the seven lights burning.

The lights are representing the presence and the glory of God. In the tabernacle and in the temple the same lamp needed the ministry of the priests to keep them alight. Now, in this vision, the lamp burns continually by itself.

So here we have a picture - two olive trees feeding the same receptacle.

Later, in Revelation, two olive trees are described as the two witnesses; here I believe they represent the truth and the Spirit, or, if you prefer, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In either case it shows us the need to have this golden oil of truth and grace flowing in our lives - then the light will burn continually.

We should aim to have 100% truth and 100% grace functioning in our lives - then we will be blessed in deed.

Finally, in this chapter, just a reminder - the lesser is blessed by the greater.

'Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.'

Hebrews 7:7

This reminder is to try to keep us from religious thinking. We cannot bless God. He is the sovereign Lord of the universe. He has all power. You cannot give Him anything He does not already own. He can, and does, and wants to, bless us. We please Him by loving Him.

The Lord God wishes to see us reigning in life through the abundance of His grace.

CHAPTER 8

BRINGING OUR HOPE INTO OUR EXPERIENCE TODAY

In Hebrews 11:1 the scripture tells us that, faith is the foundation of the things we hope for, and, the evidence of what we do not see. This scripture is telling us - there is method by which the things you hope for can materialise now.

The catalyst is faith. Once you have faith, it will become the foundation upon which your hope can become manifest as a reality. A foundation is an unseen thing - but it is necessary for the 'building to stand.' Faith comes first, and then the hope materialises. Hence it is very important to have hope. If you hope for nothing or if you consider that God is not good and not full of goodness towards you - then there is 'nothing hoped for.' In these circumstances you expect nothing to materialise.

There is not enough room in this booklet to give a full discussion of faith - please see 'Faith or presumption' in this series.

We must however state this:

'Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.' Romans 10:17

'Word' in this quotation is the small phrase or saying from God and not the whole of scripture. This then means - we have the ability to hear what God is speaking to us now.

Do you find it difficult to hear the voice of God? - then read, 'Hearing God speak' in this series.

Good soil

Here we are saying that 'hope' or the 'expectation of certain future blessing,' could be likened to good soil. When the 'seed' of a rhema word from God drops into the good soil of hope, then it is able to take root and grow.

Sometimes the Lord will work with the instant miracle, but more frequently He provides His answer in such a way that we need to develop patience. This is part of the normal Christian life and is discussed in chapter 10.

CHAPTER 9

THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING GOD'S STRATEGY

When we seek God's strategy in a given situation it means we are recognising that God is God, and that we are His.

Hope tells us that God is for us and not against us. It tells us that He is able to meet our need - as stated in the scripture:

'Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.'
1 Peter 5:6-7

'Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'

Hebrews 4:16

'Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,'

Ephesians 3:20

The Lord is more ready, willing and able, than we are ready to humble ourselves and ask Him in the way He wants to be asked - that is as 'The Sovereign Lord.'

If we will recognise Jesus as a role model, then we will learn a very important lesson. Jesus did what He saw and heard His Father doing.

Consider the healing of the blind men:

There are five such miracles with four different strategies - Jesus received a strategy from His Father. Why should we think that we don't need a specific strategy? God is God, and He knows how to best meet our needs. He also wants us to have that essential ingredient, 'Faith.' Faith comes by hearing that 'little phrase or saying' that is coming from the mouth of God now.

Every army has a strategy - and a communications system. It is only when the communications system breaks down that people have to take their own initiative. The Lord's communication system never fails - only sometimes we don't listen - so His instructions are either not received or not even sought.

If we want to experience the power of God's eternal army working on our behalf - then we are going to need to seek Him for His strategy.

CHAPTER 10

ALLOWING PATIENCE TO HAVE ITS PERFECT WORK

Finally, we have to recognise that scripture declares, we will inherit the promises of God through faith and patience. This patience may be necessary as we wait for the Lord to answer our request with His strategy. Or, it might be necessary to exercise patience after God has spoken and before His word comes into effect.

In either case the scripture tells us that patience has a perfect work to do within us.

'But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.'

James 1:4

'For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.'

Hebrews 10:36

This is where our hope - that certainty of future blessing needs to stand firm whilst we wait - either for the Lord to speak or for the manifestation of the answer.

God is very good, and, He has an agenda which is greater than ours. Part of His plan is that we are perfected as a bride for His Son. Patience has a role to play in the process of making us perfect.

Undoubtedly we would prefer instant and simple solutions every time. The Lord knows better how to perfect His children - be prepared to let patience do its work within you.

It is said of the Old Testament saints, that they died without receiving what they hoped for - how much better to die in glorious expectation, than to die

without hope.

For most certainly, when we die, we will receive the eternal Kingdom.

Our great and glorious hope - that of meeting with Jesus, will only be inherited at our death - unless Jesus returns beforehand.

Hope is the anchor for our souls. We should be the best 'anchored' people in the world because of our certainty of future blessing in Jesus.

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,'

1 Peter 1:3-4

We have been brought into a living hope. I hope that your hope will increase and increase and increase.

CHAPTER 11

APPLYING IT TO WORK AND DAILY LIFE

We have established that we can and should have hope in this life.

Most Christians are called to ‘secular work. In 1 Corinthians 7 we find the exhortation to stay in the same calling as when we were saved.

It should be obvious, therefore, that the Lord wants us to be full of hope in the work environment. It is here – at work – that we have the opportunity to be salt and light. The Lord will be with us in the marketplace.

Let us, therefore, lift our expectation of His presence with us at work. If we will allow the recognition and knowledge of the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, even at work, that will open the door to increased witness and power.

Over the years the church has allowed a line of thinking to develop – that line of thinking tends to dismiss ordinary work as second rate. Now is the time to recognise work as a wonderful opportunity to be salt and light witnesses among unbelievers – some will be saved, some will be healed – God will receive the glory.

The outcome of our righteousness at work – refusing to be drawn into the unrighteous behaviour of the world – will itself be a testimony and a statement to principalities and powers.

Let us go to work full of hope – the God of all glory dwells within us through the Holy Spirit. Hope is the certainty of future blessing – yes, in the work realm as well.

We are, of course, including all aspects of our daily round in the term work - whether it be leisure paid work or unpaid work – or even just a time of rest.

‘Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.’

Hebrews 10:35

