

Core Seminars: JS
Capitol Hill Baptist Church
Teacher Notes

Jump Start
Lesson 7
Living in Hope

Opening Prayer

Introductions of Class Members

I. Introduction

Today is our last class in the Jump Start core seminar. So far we've covered six basic themes of the Christian life that have encompassed everything from understanding the nature of our salvation, how we are enabled to live a Godly life, how to pray, why we should commit to other believers, and why we should share the Gospel with others.

Today our theme is: "Living in Hope." If you've been a Christian for any length of time, perhaps you've been asked why you live the way you do. Perhaps your co-workers or non-Christian family members have noticed a refreshing difference in your attitude, thinking, and acting. In fact, as we noticed in last week's class, Scripture anticipates that non-Christians will notice a difference in the way you as a Christian will live. Peter tells Christians that they should be ready to give an answer to everyone regarding the hope they have in Christ.

The reality behind Peter's exhortation is this: How we live reflects or indicates whether we have real and lasting hope.

Today, we want to consider together what Christian hope, what we as Christians have to look forward to, and how this should help us live lives that glorify God.

What Christian Hope is NOT

Let me first be clear about what Christian hope is not.

Christian hope is not:

- ◆ It is not worldly. IN other words, it's not confidence in what this temporary life, apart from communion with Christ, has to offer us. As Paul writes, in I Corinthians, that is no real hope at all. If there is no hope beyond the grave, which could take us at any moment, then let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die, FOR there's no hope beyond what this life offers us.
- ◆ Christian hope is not uncertain optimism: It's not based upon what we do not know, on unknown variables that could, in fact, change everything at the last minute, as in I hope God really is a good God, and that I've done enough to get

into Heaven when my time comes. While hope in this sense may reflect better the way the word is mostly used in today's world, *that which is subject to guessing, speculation, and possible change of rules, is no real hope, either.*

- ◆ Christian hope is not religious wishful thinking, as in if Christianity doesn't prove to be true, then, well, I guess I haven't really lost anything in the end if it makes me happy, now. Again, Paul, says no! *If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied above all men.*

If Christian hope is not hope is not worldly; if it is not uncertain optimism; and if it is not religious wishful thinking, then what exactly is Christian hope?

What Christian hope IS

Well, as we begin today, let's be clear that Christian hope can be described in at least two ways. It is:

- ◆ **Confident expectation** that promises of God are true.
- ◆ **Full assurance** of our salvation based on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

II. The Basis for Christian Hope

Now, we should be mindful that, particularly in today's world, confidence that one could possibly know the meaning of life, let alone what one should expect when one dies, is at an all time low. So, how can we possibly state that the hope we enjoy as Christians can be described as confident expectation and full assurance?

To answer that question we need to note at least two things that provide the basis of our hope in Christ:

The promises of God. The first thing to note is that Christian hope is rooted in the promises of God. What should make this stand out to --- and give us confidence --- is that we are fortunate to have an entire book, the Bible, as a record of God's promises to His people and the fulfillment of those promises throughout history. What God says happens. And important for us, is that the past faithfulness of God to the promises He has made and fulfilled already, should give us confidence that the promises not yet realized will also be fulfilled according to His sovereign wisdom and purpose.

More specifically, as Christians, our hope is centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ. First, our hope is centered on Christ, because God's promise of redemption has been fulfilled in Christ. The whole of Scripture points to Christ. Christ has fulfilled the moral requirement of God's law given in the Old Testament. He is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah who would suffer for His people. And His in His death and resurrection, He conquered the sin and death that separates man from God (Is. 53, predicts the suffering of Christ, Descendent of David as foretold in)

Secondly, our hope is centered on Christ because of the fact that He died, rose again, and now reigns victoriously. This being the case, we can have confidence that what He claimed is true, including the future promise of eternal life we have with God if we are Christians. If Christ didn't rise from the dead, there is no such thing as the Christian hope testified to in Scripture. We could not have the certainty we, in fact, have.

Paul makes this precise point clear in I Corinthians 15:17. He writes, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." But Christ did rise from the dead, therefore, we have hope.

****So Christian hope is rooted in the promises of God, who through Christ has made redemption possible by conquering sin and death.****

The grace of God. The second thing we should note is that we can have confidence because of God's grace. If the promises of God were not so inextricably linked to His grace to us as sinners, then all the inducements of the afterlife would hold little comfort for us. In other words if God promised human beings eternal life, but left it up to us to achieve it and gave us no final reason to think that we could stand before Him in confidence, then what hope would there really be for us? We'd be back to uncertain optimism, or even despair.

John Piper sums up the link between grace and hope like this: "If God were not a gracious God, we would have no hope. We could cross our fingers. We could have strong desires and wishes. We could even perhaps decide, by sheer dint of will-power, to be positive thinkers and thus make the best of our brief and uncertain lives. But there could be no talk of moral certainty about good things in the future. There could be no confident expectation that all things will work out in a wonderfully happy way for us."

I was just reading an introductory book on Islam, and although I confess I'm not all that familiar with the religion, the author notes that generally Muslims don't have any final assurance that when they stand before Allah, even if they have lived a upright life, that He will accept them into paradise. He sovereign, but it's almost as if his acceptance is arbitrary.

But when we as Christians stand before God all we have to do is point to Christ. God has been gracious to us in Christ. He has made Christ's righteousness our righteousness. Therefore, His work on our behalf is the only case we need to make before God, and we can have confidence that that will be sufficient for us to inherit all we've been promise in Christ.

So, again, to summarize, let's agree that, in contrast to religious wishful thinking or uncertain optimism, Christian hope is:

- ◆ **Confident expectation** that promises of God are true.
- ◆ **Full assurance** of our salvation based on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

III. Aspects of Christian Hope

Now that we understand the basis our hope, we want to briefly highlight some of the things that Christians have to look forward to. And, as we begin our discussion regarding the specifics of Christian hope, and how it should encourage you as a Christian in your walk with God, I thought it would be helpful to briefly remind ourselves of some basic realities of current our lives.

These realities should serve as an important contrast with the specifics of our hope in Christ.

First, we still sin. We noted in the second class, Living by God's Ways, that positionally we are in Christ, meaning that when God sees us, He sees us through the perfection of Christ. However, we still struggle with the flesh. So, we are, in a sense, holy and blameless before God, but we are still beset by sinful thoughts, desires, and actions.

Secondly, we still experience pain and suffering. Not only do we still sin, but we still experience all the consequences of our sin and of living in a fallen world. This includes emotional pain from severed relationships, whether through abandonment or death, and physical pain from sickness and disease. Contrary to what some teachers might tell us, God does not promise us freedom from the effects of sin. In fact, Christ promises His followers just the opposite.

Thirdly, our lives will end. This may sound morbid, but of course it's true. With the exception of a couple examples of OT individuals, and those who may be taken up when Christ returns, we will all experience death. Everything we know in this earthly life --- the relationships we enjoy, our possessions --- will one day end.

And not only will our individual lives end, but the world as we know will be destroyed. In 2 Peter 3, Peter writes that the world will be destroyed by fire and that new heaven and a new earth will be established. So both on the small and large scale, life as we know it is temporary and fleeting and is coming to an end.

These are fundamental realities of our human existence even as Christians: We still sin, we still suffer, and life as we know it, will end.

Q: It may seem odd to begin with these sobering realities, but, as Christians, why do you think it would be important to have a firm grasp of these realities?

A: Protect us from expecting too much from this life, and to strengthen our anticipation of the next.

Once we have this firmly in our mind, the questions arise: What do we have to look forward to as God's children, and how does our expectation of these things intersect with our daily lives.

Aspects of Christian Hope (continued...)

There are many things we could highlight today, but, for time's sake, let's briefly highlight four, specifically ones that in some way respond to the imperfect reality about which we just spoke.

Resurrection from the dead/Return of Christ. I start with this because if we never make it out of the grave then, again, as Paul says in I Corinthian 15, “we are to be pitied above all men.” Death is after all, the great problem we face. It’s the primary result of sin. And if we don’t rise from the dead, then this means that the power of sin has not been broken. But in fact, we know the power of sin has been broken by Christ.

Again in I Corinthians 15, Paul says that because Christ has been raised, in verse 54, “Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where o death is your victory, where, o death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through Christ Jesus our Lord.” Again, this directs our thoughts and confidence back to Christ. The reason we can have confidence that we will be resurrected is because Christ has been rose from the dead and conquered death for us.

Now, we should especially note that the resurrection of the dead occurs at the same time that Christ returns visibly to gather all Christians still living, as well as those who are dead, to be with Him forever (I Thess. 4:13-18). The truth is that some Christians will not face death. And, as a Christian still living, this could be you. Think about that! Christ could come at any moment, and you could be in His presence forever...According to I Thessalonians 4:18, we should encourage each other with these words. We are to live our lives as if Christ’s return could come at any moment.

So, this life is ending/will end, but there’s more to come. And it’s that life, our eternal life with God, that provides us hope to live as we do in this life.

Secondly, we should note, that we look forward to...

Sinless perfection. We read throughout Scripture, in Ephesians 1:4 for example, that God has created us in Christ to be Holy and Blameless. Now, I want to be clear the perfection we will experience is Christ’s perfection not ours own that we’ve somehow earned. Perfection is a gift of Christ that God gives to us and by it we able to be in God’s presence.

However, the gift, to overkill the analogy, won’t, in a sense, be fully unwrapped and enjoyed until Christ comes again and our resurrected bodies have been glorified. At that time, the effects of the fall will be gone.

Now, this is remarkable if you consider where we were in Titus 3. Remember from our first class in that passage we learn that apart from Christ we are marked by sin and evil desires, discord and strife both **internal** and **external**. And we know that even after our conversion we still struggle to leave our sinful desires at the cross.

Well, it should encourage us to realize that we have been declared righteous in Christ and one day we will experience what it’s like to be completely free from the sins that still vie for our hearts and minds.

So, we look forward to our resurrection and to the completion of our salvation. Thirdly, we also look forward to time when there will be...

No pain, suffering or death. A moment ago we noted that we still suffer and experience pain and death in this life. Well, in Revelation 21:4, as the apostle John describes life on the new earth, he writes, “He [God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

So not only will we no longer struggle with sin and all of the deceitful ways it deprives us of joy in Christ, but our new lives will be without all those things that typify life in this fallen world. We go from a world marked by death and decay to a world of eternal, everlasting life.

The final and most important thing I will note today is that we look forward to...

God’s eternal and abiding presence. In Revelation 22:4, the revelation of Scripture essentially reaches its culmination. We read the remarkable statement put forth by John that one day Christians, “...will see His face and His name will be on their foreheads.”

What makes the statement so remarkable is that it represent the full restoration our fellowship with God. If you remember back in Exodus, God’s face was what was denied to Moses when he requested to see God. Moses had to be in hid the cleft of a rock, able only to see that back side of God as His glory passed by, otherwise he would be completely consumed before God’s holiness (Ex. 33). This side of our glorification, we can’t possibly see God and live. We would be devastated, which only underscores our God’s holiness and our imperfection.

The fact that we will behold His face means that our salvation is complete: We see God as He is, and we can be in God’s presence without fearing judgment and death.

So everything we experience of God now through being in Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit is but shadow of the intimacy we will one day enjoy in God’s full presence. And there we will revel for eternity in His glory.

John Piper sums the hope of Christians up well. He states, “Our hope is that the love of God will grant us joy in the all-satisfying glory of God which will continue through death and increase for all eternity.”

Again, there are many things we could highlight that Christians have to look forward to. But now that we discussed the basis of our hope in Christ and some of the specifics of it, we want to briefly discuss the practical affect our hope should have on our lives.

But before we move, are there any questions?

Practical Application: Living in Hope

In 2 Peter 3, Talks specifically about the fact that one day this earth will be destroyed and that there will be a new heaven and the new earth, and he’s asks the question in verse 11: “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?” He tells

them/us that we ought to live holy and godly lives as we look forward to the day of the God and speed its coming.

In other words, the certain expectation of the future should motivate us to live in a way that reflects the hope that we have in Christ. So, I have listed just three things, although, there could be many to discuss...First our hope should:

Help us to endure temptation.

Q: Why should our hope in Christ help us endure temptation?

A: It gives us a much needed long-term perspective when sin keeps our minds focused on the here and now and misplaced desires for ease and self-gratification. Of course, this doesn't only apply to temptations of the flesh...could be standing up under persecution, not quitting the disciplines that lead to Godliness, however difficult they seem.

In 1 Peter 5:8-10, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast." So, 1) *our temptation is temporary.*

Along these same lines, Paul in Philippians compares the Christian life to a race. He sees the end, and at the end He sees the prize: the resurrection of the dead and eternal life. He writes, "Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heaven wards in Christ Jesus." So, 2) *we see the end of our salvation, which helps us endure our brief trials on earth.*

Encourage us to live lives of faith and work for God's glory.

Q: Why should our hope in Christ, help us to live lives of faith and work in this life for God's Glory?

A: At the most basic level, we recognize that this world is not our final home, we will be taken from, it will be destroyed and replaced with a new Heaven and a new earth. Our mindset is fundamentally oriented towards the things of God, towards God's purposes and His eternal glory.

In Hebrews 11, after describing the faithful who have gone before us, the writer in verse 13-16 explains the reason they lived lives of faith and did the things they did, "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country---- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."

There are many, many practical implications we could consider here of how our faithful lives should reflect our hope...But it suffices to say that we work for a lasting treasure and this affects everything: our values, priorities, work, etc....

So, with our finances, we give sacrificially to God's work and to our needy brothers and sisters as a sign of our trust in God and His ultimate provision for us.

We sacrifice our personal time to invest in others spiritual well-being; we put the newspaper down and turn off the TV to study God's Word and let it govern our thoughts and actions towards God and others; and we use our gifts not primarily for professional advancement but for the spread of the Gospel and the building up and edification of the Church.

Again, our mindset is fundamentally oriented towards the things of God, towards God's purposes and His eternal glory. And ironically enough, it's by being so otherworldly that we most glorify God and accomplish His purposes on earth.

CS Lewis writes, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next.... It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get Earth 'thrown in': aim at Earth and you will get neither."

Keep us from despair

Q: How does our hope in Christ keep us from despair?

A: *There is nothing that this life can do to us, that will separate us from God. So we have no reason to fear and can rest confidently in the work of Christ on our behalf.*

I don't know of anything better I could possibly say than what Paul says in Romans 8. *Someone READ Romans 8:28-38*

- ◆ God is sovereign
- ◆ Confidence in Christ's work

V. Conclusion

ANY QUESTIONS?

Pray