

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. *Hebrews 12:12-13*

THE CONSOLATION OF HOPE

Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee. *Psalm 33:20-22*

There are many detractors of the teachings of "Christianity" who describe it as simply a belief which centers around a "pie in the sky by and by". Such detractors are as ignorant of the truth which is set forth in the true gospel as those who think that the primary purpose of preaching the gospel is to try to keep folks out of hell. While we are certain that all men, without exception deserve to be destroyed in the pit of hell, we are equally certain that the elect children of GOD to whom the gospel is sent, have never been appointed unto this destruction. *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."* (1Thes 5:9-10)

In light of this fact, Paul admonishes the children of GOD, (those he refers to as the children of light v.5) to *"be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation."* (1Thes 5:8) It is this "helmet" which is the very protection that enshrouds the believer's mind, giving him peace in the midst of all manner of difficulty and trials that would, otherwise, completely beset him as he traverses this lowland of sin and sorrow. *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.---- The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."* (Psa 46:1-2,11)

The LORD is as real to the believer in the present age as HE shall be through the ages to come. That man who has been born again by the SPIRIT of GOD has been given the SPIRIT of a son which cries *"Abba FATHER"*. Though he does, with great anticipation and delight, contemplate that life which is to come (when this mortal has put on immortality, and he is freed from this corruptible flesh), yet he enjoys the sweet consolation of hope in the present time. This hope is, (in its substance), no less an authentic possession of joy than that which shall be his in the ages to come when all veils are removed and he sees his LORD face to face.

It is this HOPE that is the salvation of the elect. *"For we are saved by hope:"*(Rom 8:24) *"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."* (Col 1:27) The HOPE of GOD's people is CHRIST. While the very basis of their hope of eternal life rests upon the complete atoning work of JESUS CHRIST in their behalf, the fruition of that HOPE is made manifest to them in HIS very person as HE sends HIS SPIRIT to dwell in each one. *"Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"* (II Cor 13:5)

They have no expectation of being accounted as righteous according to the law, except in the imputed righteousness of JESUS CHRIST as their SUBSTITUTE, yet the very grounds upon which they are enabled to rejoice in that work done for them is the operation of HIS spirit in them, which causes them to have hope in HIS mercy which endures forever. This is a sweet consolation indeed

which, though, sometimes hidden in part, due to the chastening hand of the LORD, yet they are never forsaken, and confess with Job, *“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”* (Job 13:15) *“Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”* (Psa 43:5) The children of GOD are given grace to hope in HIM and no other.

This HOPE is their CONSOLATION when sin has overwhelmed them. There is no child of GOD who is not a sinner. *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”* (1John 1:8) *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”* (1Tim 1:15) There is no greater bitterness that could ever grip the soul of one of GOD’s little children than that which is illustrated in Peter’s denial of HIM.

When by all rights Peter should have been cast off by the LORD, yet HIS eye gazed upon Peter at the very acme of his disobedience. *“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”* (Luke 22:61-62) It was only later, when the chastening of the LORD, had born its fruit that Peter was consoled by the very ONE that HE denied. (see John 21:15-17) *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”* (Heb 12:11)

This HOPE is their CONSOLATION when the troubles and trials of this life threaten to destroy them and they are brought face to face with their own mortality and the frailty of this flesh. Paul was taught this very principle when given his “thorn in the flesh”. *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”* (II Cor 12:9-10) *“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”* (Phil 4:11-13)

This HOPE is their CONSOLATION when the darkness of the grave overshadows them and the pains of death shake these trembling houses of clay. *“The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.”* (Psa 116:3-6) Dying grace is not needed until such an hour as death beckons with its chilly hand and the grave opens its mouth. Yet in just such an hour as that HE is the believer’s refuge, even as David testified, *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”* (Psa 23:4)

This HOPE is their CONSOLATION beyond the grave. *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”* (1Cor 15:19-20) *“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1Cor 15:55-57) The culmination and sum of the believers hope is in the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST. As HE arose from the dead, so shall all of those be raised who are HIS at HIS coming. *“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”* (1John 2:28) *“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, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* (1Pet 1:3-5) (see II Thes.2:16)

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