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"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A St

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

We are living in a bewildered world--everything is topsy-turvy. Uncertainty seems to be written in large letters across the sky of every realm, whether it be the realm of politics, economics, or religion.

The day is dark and the clouds hang low and are black and heavy. But most everybody is living in hope of something better, or rather in the hope that things will not get too bad. The whole world is threatened with disaster as the two systems of human government arm for the death struggle. The atom bomb hangs over the earth as the naked sword hung over the head of Damocles by a single hair.

There are two great totalitarian systems in the world today--roman catholicism and communism. One is religious, the other is anti-religious. Many people think they are unalterable and eternally opposed to each other, that the best way to fight communism is to join roman catholicism. While this is somewhat speculative, it is my opinion that the two systems will ultimately get

together. In Revelation 12 and 17, there are two women, representing two religions--the true and the false. In Revelation 12, the woman is persecuted by the beast with seven heads and ten horns; in Revelation 17, the woman is extravagantly dressed and is riding the same beast. This indicates this false religion will be supported by the state. And whenever you have a state religion, the religion will be false, and the church will rule the state or government. Roman catholicism's greatest power was when she ruled over the kings of the earth. Rome's real purpose, her greatest ambition is to rule rather than to save. And her best way to rule is to be supported by the state or by the government.

This poor sin-soaked, devil-driven, money-mad pleasure-bent, world is crying out, SAVE US! Let us be frank, and confess we have no salvation for this world. This is a doomed world, just as it was in the days of Noah. But we do have salvation to offer individuals in this world. And like Paul, we should be willing to be made all things to all men, if by all means we might save some.

What is the salvation we have to offer? It is salvation from sin. Matthew 1:21, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." There is no salvation from war, for Jesus predicted wars and rumors of war to the end. There is no salvation from poverty, for Jesus said we would always have the poor with us. There is no salvation from disease and death for Paul said, "it is appointed unto men once to die."

The salvation we preach is salvation from sin with its eternal consequences. Deliverance from wrath to come. Men sin in the mass, but they are saved as individuals--saved one by one.

Someone has said the way to handle a text is to pick out the big words and preach from them. The big words in this text are HOPE and CHRIST.

Hope is a wonderful word. The dictionary definition is: the expectation of future good. Hope is made up of two things: desire and expectation. We never hope for something we do not desire, nor can we hope where there is no expectation. To desire and not expect is not

hope; it is despair.

A hopeless person is a pathetic figure. Without hope is the saddest expression in anybody's language. Sad word for the sick room when the doctor looks grave and says, "I have done all I can do, there is no hope." It is a sad word for the bus office when the manager wrinkles his brow and says, "There is no way to make this go; we will have to fold up; we can't go on; there is no hope of success." It is a sad word for the politician as the returns come in and he sees no hope of his election. For the men at sea, when the captain says the ship is sinking and there is no hope of saving her. For the army, when it is being driven back and there is no hope of victory.

Salvation from sin in its ultimate and complete sense is a matter of hope and not reality. The believer is already saved from the guilt and penalty of sin, but he is far from being saved from the presence and harrassment of sin.

Hope is concerned about the future. We never hope for what we already see or possess. Justification is a present aspect of salvation, but justification is but one aspect of salvation. Complete and full salvation is glorification, and this is future. Romans 13:11, "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."

I Corinthians 15:19, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." The Christian hope may be defined as the well-founded expectation of future good. An anchor sure and stedfast.

I. TO HOPE ONLY IN THIS LIFE IS TRAGIC. To hope only for things this side of the

grave and eternity is pathetic. And yet this is the only hope many have. Their hopes are many and varied; they desire and expect a lot of good things, but all are for this present life. They end at the grave. "WHAT THEN?"

Hope for wealth, position, and fame all end at the grave.

When Napoleon was being crowned emperor of France in 1804, there was one person who was not overawed by all the power and pomp and splendor of hero worship. And this person was his old Corsican mother. During the celebrations she was heard to say over and over again, "So long as it lasts." She knew all the glory of her son would not last. She knew there would come an end to his popularity. She knew it would not last -- and it didn't. The saddest thing about Napoleon was not his defeat by Wellington; it was not his exile on St. Helena; it was the day he died--that day in May, 1821, when his soul entered into that place of which Dante wrote, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." Hell is a hopeless place--a place of eternal despair. The hope of the rich man was soon dispelled when Abraham told him of that impassable gulf--no hope of any relief from his torments.

II. If the Christian's hope stopped at the grave, his position would be the most tragic. It does not stop at the grave; it enters into that within the veil--it goes all the way to glory and is lost in the reality of heaven. The Christian's hope is the well-founded expectation to be sinless and to dwell forever in a sinless heaven with a Holy God, a Holy Saviour, and with holy people. The Christian rejoices in hope of the glory of God.

The things the believer hopes for do not come to him in this life. The things he hopes for are laid up for him in heaven.

Paul was not only speaking of believers in general but of himself in particular. What did Paul get in this life? From his heavenly Father he got a thorn in the flesh and other disciplinary measures and experiences to keep him humble. From the churches he received little--from the Corinthians not a penny. He robbed other churches to serve them. From false apostles he received bitter opposition to the truth he preached. From false brethren he got neglect and lack of appreciation. From Demas, his fair weather friend, he got a cold shoulder--Demas forsook Paul in a pinch. From the Jews he received five beatings of 39 stripes. Paul faced perils everywhere: in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of his own countrymen, in perils of heathen, in perils in the city, in perils

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in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren.

Paul was a roman citizen, but what did he get from Rome? He got free board in a dungeon for awhile and the headman's axe. The text has much larger meaning in the light of Paul's experiences.

As a rule, the Lord's people do not have the easy life that men of the world have. The Lord's people have conscious obligations that do not bother the lost. 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 honour God with their lives and firstfruits of their increase.

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 he is for his comfort. Caesar lived in luxury while Paul lived in poverty. Caesar had more of the world's goods and comforts than Paul. But Caesar's hope ended at the grave. And the difference between Caesar and Paul now is seen in the difference between the rich man and Lazarus. Caesar is having his torments while Paul is having his comforts in the presence of Christ.

The prosperity of the wicked puzzled David for awhile. It was about to make a skeptic of him; but when he went into the house of God and learned about their latter end, he understood.

A teacher of physics asked his class this question: "When can you see farther, at night or in the daytime?" Several students answered, "In the daytime, of course." But they were

wrong. The most distant object we can see in the daytime is the sun, from which the light reaches the earth in about eight minutes. But at night, we see the stars that are said to be millions of light years away from the earth. So the believer can see farther in the nighttime of sorrow than the unbeliever can see in the daytime of prosperity.

III. THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF HOPE. Oliver Goldsmith says that hope like a gleaming taper's light, adorns and cheers our way."

A study of women workers in a factory showed that at the end of the day's work some were limp with fatigue, while others were bright-eyed and wide awake. All had worked the same number of hours and it was discovered that differences in ages had not made the difference. It was found that most of the bright-eyed and wide awake ones had plans for the evening--some pleasure to look forward to. Some of these plans were not very noble and godly, but they were expecting a good time in the evening, and their hope of a good time had a good effect on their bodies and spirits. The tired ones had nothing to look forward to with pleasure--they were to face the drudgery of cooking and doing dishes and tending babies, and the company of a man who was more interested in getting the news or reading the paper than in the company of his wife.

Christians may live life on tip-toe of expectancy--bright and wide awake because of their bright prospects in life's evening, for when the day of life is over there will be a good time in glory.

To be occupied with this hope laid up for us in heaven will make us better Christians, for he that "hath this hope in him purifieth him-

self, even as he is pure," I John 3:2 and 3.

SEEK YE FIRST

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God." Matthew 6:33a.

I have been amazed in counseling with people and in talking with individuals at how many Christians have a philosophy that is of the world. They're saved, they go to fundamental churches and believe the Bible--but somewhere along the way, they acquired some worldly ideas. They listened to worldly counsel, and now it directs their lives.

I'm talking about the Christian whose whole life revolves around making money and getting rich. His whole philosophy is centered on materialism. That is the world's philosophy!

If you have that idea in life, if your aim in life is to see how much money you can make, if you measure everything by how much time or money it would take, then you have the materialistic philosophy of the world. God's philosophy is rather "seek ye first the kingdom of God," and He will add riches! The world's philosophy is, "Me first."--"Enjoy yourself, have a good time." God's philosophy is "ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." In putting God first, the Christian will enjoy wonderful fellowship and have abundant riches through Christ, with no regrets! Let's begin putting the Lord first in our lives today--and don't forget prayer meeting tonight!

B. Taylor