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THE BLESSED HOPE

BY: C. D. COLE

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," Titus 2:13.

We cannot emphasize too much that the blessed hope is the believer's hope--the hope of the man who has lost all hope in himself and everything else, and has found the good hope in Christ. The lost man is without hope and without God in the world. The world, as such, has no hope. Judged by its own statements we live in an almost hopeless world. The future is dark and foreboding to the leaders in all walks of life. Statesmen are puzzled and admit that they can find no way out. Scientists look to save the world--save it from self-destruction before it is too late. Medicine and surgery are doing a wonderful job in patching up humanity and prolonging the life of the sick and crippled, but this is not the blessed hope. There is no hope for this world--it is a doomed world out of which God is saving souls by His word and Spirit.

The Return Of Christ

The return of Christ is the blessed hope of the child of God. *"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," Titus 2:13.* Now the coming of Christ is not any hope for the world, but rather its doom. *"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction*

from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power: When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day," II Thessalonians 1:7-10. The return of Christ does mean hope for inanimate creation, and maybe for the animal creation, but it carries no hope for the Christ rejector. *"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now,"* Romans 8:19-22.

Why Is The Second Coming Of Christ Called The Blessed Hope?

We suggest several reasons:

1. I think it is because that when He comes we shall see the face of our Beloved. I believe the face of our Lord Jesus Christ will be the most beautiful sight anybody will ever behold. We walk by faith now, not by sight, so that we say, *"Whom having not seen we love."* The blessedness of seeing Him is so great that He made it an object of prayer. *"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the*

world," John 17:24. And we are going to be like Him. *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,"* I John 3:2.

The famous black preacher, John Jasper, lay on his dying bed. His master was trying to comfort him. He said, "John, you have had to live in a log cabin with a dirt floor down here, but you will soon enter a mansion prepared for you by Jesus Christ." John Jasper replied: "Yes, Master, if so be the Lord will be pleased to give me a mansion, but I want to see the face of the Lord Jesus." The master said again: "John you have had to go in rags down here, but you will soon be clothed in glorious raiment." The old man replied: "Yes, Master, is so be the Lord will be pleased to give me beautiful garments, but I want to see the face of the Lord Jesus who loved me and gave Himself for me." What is the hope of the bride but to see the face of her Beloved after His long absence? But the face which is going to be so lovely to His people will be terrible to look upon by His enemies. *"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"* Revelation 6:15-17.

2. It is called the blessed hope because at the return of Jesus Christ our salvation will be complete. Now the ground of salvation, the cost of salvation, the certainty of salvation, and much of the joy and peace of salvation are all settled and finished. The one offering that makes us perfect before God has been made. The complete price of our redemption was paid at Calvary. It was then and there Jesus paid it all. We believers have forgiveness now. We are justified from all things. There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. But we are not yet glorified. The lost image of God has not yet been restored to us. *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren,"* Romans 8:29. When you have the toothache or headache or some other physical pain, cherish the thought that one day you will have a body that will not sigh and groan.

Not only do we groan because of the infirmities of our bodies, we also groan and mourn over the infirmities of our spirits. We mourn over our sins; we hunger and thirst after righteousness and when He comes, we shall be filled. We have the desire to be good, but we do not have the power to be good as we want to be.

3. It is called the blessed hope because at the second coming of Christ there will be a vindication of our faith. I believe all the Bible has to say. And I believe all it has to say is profitable and that we need to hear it. *"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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,"* II Timothy 3:16. When this Bible says that salvation is by grace through faith, without any works, I believe it. When it says there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ, I believe it and trust Him and Him alone. When it says that He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; that He died as the just for the unjust; that He bare our sins in His own body on the tree; that His blood cleanseth us from all sin, I believe it and have no

other hope or faith. When it talks about the depravity of the natural man, I believe it. When it says, no man can come to me except he be drawn by the Father, I believe it. When it says, all the Father has given to the Son shall come to Him and be saved, I believe it. When it says that Christ has other sheep outside the Jewish fold that He must bring in, I believe it. Many of us have been misrepresented, and slandered and opposed because we believe all of this Book. But when He comes, our faith will be vindicated. We can wait for His vindication. He laughs best who laughs last.

4. It is called the blessed hope because at the coming of Christ, the faithful will receive their rewards. *"Behold, I come quickly and my rewards are with me."* We must distinguish between our salvation which is by grace, to which we contribute absolutely nothing and the rewards to be given for faithful service. It is all right to work for pay, providing we are willing to wait for our pay until Christ comes. God wants us to believe that it pays to serve Him and suffer for Him, but He tells us this pay is in heaven. *"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you,"* Matthew 5:12.

I never try to get even with those who try to harm me, for when they try to harm me, they only add to my rewards when He comes. Whenever I preach the truth and somebody gets mad at me and tries to injure me, that is a cross, and if I have a cross here, it means a crown yonder. When my courtesies are met with curses, it means a blessing in the day Christ comes. What little money I give to the church of Christ is not given to pay for salvation, but for rewards when Christ comes. If we had the right attitude towards rewards we would keep the angels busy writing down what we are doing for the Lord. Does somebody say, "I serve Him through love, not for rewards." You make an unnecessary distinction. If you really love Him, you will love His rewards. If you really love Him, it will make you immensely happy to hear Him say, *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."*

*"Hope on, hope on, O troubled heart
If doubts and fears o'ertake thee,
Remember this--the Lord hath said,
He never will forsake thee;
Then murmur not, still bear thy lot,
Nor yield to care of sorrow;
Be sure the clouds that frown today,
Will break in smiles tomorrow.*

*"Hope on, hope on, though dark and deep
The shadows gather o'er thee;
Be not dismayed: thy Saviour hold
The lamp of life before thee;
And if He will that thou today
Should'st tread the vale of sorrow;
Be not afraid, but trust and wait:
The sun will shine tomorrow.*

*"Hope on, hope on, go bravely forth
Through trial and temptation,
Directed by the worth of truth,
So full of consolation:
There is a calm for every storm,
A joy for every sorrow.
A night from which the soul shall wake
To hail an endless morrow."*

PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR!

Slow Me Down, Lord.

*Lord, this year teach me
the art of taking minute
vacations--of slowing down to
look at a flower, to chat with
a friend, to pat a dog, to read
from my Bible.*

*Remind me each day that
the race is not always to the
swift; that there is more to
life than increasing its
speed. Let me look upward
into the branches of the tower-
ing oak and know that it
grew slowly and well.*

*Slow me down, Lord, and
inspire me to send my roots
deep into the soil of eternal
values, that I may grown
toward my eternal home.*

*Through Jesus Christ
our Lord. Amen.*

SOWING THE SEED

BY: AL GORMLEY

"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground. And should sleep, and rise night and day, and seed should spring and grown up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself: first the blade, then the ear; after that, the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come," Mark 4:26-29.

The commission to the church Jesus built is a mission of sowing the seed or preaching the gospel to every creature and teaching them all things that Jesus commanded. This parable tells us a great truth about sowing the seed. *"The seed should spring up, he knoweth not how"* is a verse Baptists need to ponder. The seed sown is the Word of God. The Word of God like any other seed is dependent upon God to give it life. A farmer puts a grain of corn in the ground and depends upon God to give it life. I think Baptists need to learn this simple lesson. Jesus said in John 6:63 that *"It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."*

I have heard people say that you must win people to yourself in order that you might win them to the Lord. I believe if we will sow the seed in the manner God tells us in Psalm 126:6, God will take care of the giving of life to the hearts in which the seed falls. *"He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."*

The Seed

Mark 4:26 says to cast seed in the ground. In Mark 4:16, the Word of God is declared to be the seed. As we have already said in John 6:63, the seed is life. In Hebrews 4:12, the Word of God is said to be quick or living. The Word

of God is living. It is like Jesus Christ who lives, who is raised from the grave. Anytime you proclaim the Word of God you are sowing good seed which is capable of giving life to the hardest heart. Every Word of God is pure and living.

The Word Of God Is Powerful

Hebrews 4:12 says the Word of God is powerful. It was by the Word of God that God spoke this world into existence. Psalm 33:6 says, *"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."* There is no energy crisis when we preach the Word of God. Paul says in Romans 1:16 that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. God used the Word to cause a person to be born again. *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever,"* I Peter 1:23. The Word of God liveth. The Word of God must be preached before any man can be born again. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. See I Corinthians 1:21.

The Word Is Incorruptible

Some feel that when the Word does not bring forth immediate results, the sower has failed. But remember that the Word of God is living. Also, that it is incorruptible and that it abideth forever. If the Word of God does not give life to the hearer, it will one day face that same man in the day of judgment. *"He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day,"* John 12:48. So it is the responsibility of the sower to sow the seed. God will either give life to the hearer or if a man rejects the Word, he must give an account to God. Man is responsible to hear the Word of God. We are responsible to preach the gospel to every creature. Men are responsible to hear. And above all that, God is taking out a people for Himself accord-

ing to the good pleasure of His own will.

The Word is Effectual

When we preach the Word, it will always be effectual. Baptists need to ponder Isaiah 55:11 carefully. God's Word *"...shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."* It will not return unto Him void.

Life Is A Mystery

Just as life from any seed is a mystery, even so the new birth is a mystery. The only answer to both is God. God gives it life. God is sovereign and gives life to those that are His sheep. We must sow the seed. We lie down and sleep, but the Word of God is working in the hearts of the hearers, convicting them. Many times we witness to a person and we rest in peace, but the hearer cannot sleep as God does His work by the living Word. When God begins a good work with the Word, He will finish it. See Philippians 1:6.

Conclusion

Our responsibility is to sow the seed. God will use it either to the saving of souls or the judgment of the lost. Either way, we have assumed our responsibility and the blood of men is off of our hands.

May God help pastors to encourage all of our church members to sow the seed. Not just from the pulpit but from every child of God. The reason for the energy shortage in Baptist churches is that many wells of living waters (every child of God is a well of living water) have been capped and churches are using only the pulpit. Go into all the world and preach the gospel.