

Rom. 5:1-5; Psalm 42:1-5; Christian Hope I. Hope's Opposite II. Hope Defined

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, this morning we are taking short break from Luke to consider the topic of Christian Hope. Hope has been on my mind lately- and I was told our Adult Bible Study considered this hope a few days ago. But what is hope? Where do we find it and how does it benefit us? The word- hope- is a common one. We hear it said- I hope you catch your flight or I hope you have a safe trip. Even President Obama's book is titled- the "Audacity of Hope." In it he wrote- we need to remind ourselves that we all share a common hope and common dreams. So do we all share a common hope? Is hope more than a common dream- a desire for a better life? Well, today we are going to see that Jesus Christ alone secures a lasting hope for His people. The definition of hope that we are going to use is this- Christian hope is an ardent desire and constant expectation for what God has promised.

### **I. The Challenge to Hope**

We start by defining what hope is not- or the opposite of hope. In our first reading from Psalm 42 we found that the psalmist was contrasting fear- to be disquieted and his down cast soul with the presence of hope. So the opposite of hope is fear. The opposite of hope is an expectation that everything will go bad- that things will get worse- that there is no hope for the present and surely no hope for the future. From the pit of despair Job uttered these words, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, And come to an end without hope." The opposite of hope is to worry about the unknown- and to fall into despair concerning the future. The opposite of hope is what we call "Murphy's Law" which states- anything that can go wrong will go wrong. Or the common thinking- bad things happen in three. Without hope, the individual spirals into an ever-deepening pit of despair that goes from one degree of darkness to another. So in defining hope we notice that hope is the opposite of fear, anxiety and despair. The thinking that nothing good can come. Without hope, we spend our days in fear of bad luck or chance! (Doubt is also a challenge to Hope. To think that God will not or cannot keep His word!) Webster defines hope in this way: "a desire with anticipation : to want something to happen or be true." The way in which most people speak of hope is

something like this- I hope to do better on this test. Even without studying and with little expectation of doing better- hope is presented as a desire- akin to wishful thinking. Hope is not a desire that has no basis- it is not wanting something that you have little expectation of receiving! The fact is, humans want a lot of things. They hope to win the lottery- but they have little or no reason to expect that they will. It is almost like they are saying- I hope to have but I have no reasonable expectation that this hope will be attained. Human hope is a desire without foundation- a wanting without expectation. It is possible that I get what I hope for- but not probable. Many times, hope is spoken of in contrast to what should be expected. A desire for something that is unlikely! The hope that all men share is little more than a want. But even if there was some probability, for most people hope remains a desire. I had hoped to see you today. It was something I wanted, but I was not sure. So the word hope in common usage is found in the context of uncertainty! We hope for what we do not know and are uncertain about! But for the Christian, our hope is built on what we know to be certain and true! As Prov. 10 says, the hope of the righteous is gladness, But the expectation of the wicked perishes. The fact is, those outside of Christ cannot have this hope! Eph. 2:12 says this- those who are separated from Christ are alienated, having no hope and without God in this world. But now, you have peace in Christ! Christian hope is not shared by all human kind. Christian hope is not blind or baseless.

## **II. Hope Defined**

How then does the Bible define hope? The word hope- as we find in Rom. 2:5 is "Elpis" which means an expectation of good- a firm and confident expectation of certain blessings. As we defined in our introduction, Christian hope is an ardent desire and constant expectation for what God has promised. Hope, for us, is a longing expectation for good things- a desire for true blessings and expecting these promised blessings to be delivered! To know the good that will certainly take place! What good things do we hope for? We hope for the good things that God has promised. Our text from Rom. 2 says that we have obtained access by faith in this grace and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God! We have access and we a promised glory! There is a present benefit that we enjoy- which is access to God. Because of our being

justified by faith in Christ, we can now stand before a Holy God and we do now dwell before Him as His children. But what hope clings to is the benefits to come- we hope in the glory of God! We have the promise from God that those who now stand in righteousness before Him will one day be glorified and will dwell in His glory with Him! It is this confident expectation of future blessings that hope is concerned with! How do we know we will receive this glory? How does hope know that good things are coming? Because they have been promised to us by God! As Titus 1:2 states- in hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began! The reason our hope is solid and firm- the reason it is not just some wishful thinking but steadfast and firm- is because our hope is built on God and His Word! Since God cannot lie, hope has the ability to look beyond the present and cling to the certain future! Hope is not clinging to possibilities, but absolute certainties! We know that we have a glorious future to look forward to! Where does God promise these blessings? In His Word! Rom. 15 puts it this way, through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope! The Scriptures tell us how and why we should and do have hope! As we come to know the Bible better- the greater our understanding of what God has promised- the higher our hope will rise! Scripture builds our hope! The Bible reveals what God has promised to do- and hope clings to this promise- because by faith we know that God is faithful! As Psalm 119 puts it, remember your Word to your servant, in which you have made me to hope! This is my comfort in affliction! We have peace with God- and we have a firm hope that this peace will remain for all eternity! Why? Because the Bible says so! A Christian knows that good things are coming- can that moves us forward with confidence in this world. Our hope for a blessed eternity is a future promise because it has been gained for us! And Christ has secured these promises for us! The basis for this hope is Jesus Christ and His ministry! I Tim. 1:1 says- Christ Jesus is our hope! To say this another way- it is because of Jesus that we can have hope- He has secured these blessings which hope clings to- He is our only source of lasting hope! Without Jesus, any hope is a fickle wish! But with Jesus, all the blessings and promises find their yes and amen- the glory of God; as v. 2 said- through Him we have access in this grace and because of Him we can

have hope for tomorrow! We know that good things are stored up for us- because of our union with Christ. It is faith that believes the promise- but it is hope that expects to receive the good that is promised!

What is the consequence of this hope? As we saw from Psalm 42, Hope not only calms our fears and quiets our anxious souls, hope also leads to joy! Listen again to v. 2- we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God!

Joy is the natural response when we have this firm foundation and expectation of divine blessings. As Psalm 146 says, happy is He whose hope is in the Lord His God! We have a joy in knowing what God has promised will be received- a joyful confidence that remains ever firm! It is hope that enables us to have joy even in trials. Knowing that God is working through trials to bring about His promised good end in us and for us! It is hope that enables us to go through suffering- and rejoice in God through it! As v. 4 says, suffering produces endurance that molds our character- and this character produces hope- and hope does not put us to shame! Hope is not disappointed because it will not be let down! It is our hope that enables us to go through trials with an eye to the future, good result and promised, blessed end. So that this hope moves us to rejoice in all things- to have a firm joy in the God who keeps His promises! Hope encourage us to look forward- beyond what is now seen- to be patient in the trials of today knowing of a better tomorrow. It is hope that gives us courage to face trials and dangers- giving us confidence and boldness- because the crowns and glory are so great that the things of today are not even worth comparing! Even in the presence of death, we do not grieve as those without hope!

To conclude, Christian hope is one of those blessed things that remain- faith, hope and love these three! Our hope in God changes how we relate to and receive trials, struggles, dangers and sufferings- because hope looks up and bends forward! The Biblical concept of hope is not an uncertain wish or desire- but rather a firm confidence in future blessings! Jesus Christ alone secures a lasting hope for His people. Godly hope will not disappoint- we will not be let down by hope because it is sure and trustworthy! As Rom. 15 states, May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope!