***Hope

Colossians 1:3-8

COL-036***

We are studying Colossians 1:3-8. Our subject is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians,” segment number 14.

The apostle Paul prays for the Christians in Colossae. Whenever he prays for them, he is overwhelmed with gratitude to God for their faith in the commandments of Jesus Christ (doctrine), and for their mental attitude love for all the brethren. The reason for Paul's thanksgiving was that the Colossians had not been swayed from sound doctrine and the Holy Spirit love by the false teachers which had infiltrated the people of Colossae. The Colossian believers made the choice to go with what their pastor-teacher, Epaphras, had taught them of the Word of God, who himself had learned these truths from the apostle Paul.

Today, our word of truth is complete in the Bible. All human contradictions and challenges to the Bible are false. And get it through your heart once and for all, and make no apologies about it. Anytime that the Bible has spoken, it has spoken in clear, understandable terms. There is nothing hidden in scripture. If you have a proper frame of reference (a scaffold of the knowledge of the basics of doctrine), it all fits together, and it is all explained in one way or another very clearly. And most of the Bible, any idiot can read and know what it says. So, do not be dissuaded by anybody who stands up with some sophistication, as these people in Colossae were doing, who were false teachers, and telling the people you don't understand what is behind these teachings of the apostle Paul. You don't have the full understanding. You don't have the full implications, or the full applications to our society. And they gave a superiority of intelligence and of insights which they simply did not have. Never sell yourself short as a child of God who can understand the Word of God.

Now it's true that somebody has to teach you the basics. That's the grace system of perception that God has set up for the local church. And if you are faithful of obliging yourself of that opportunity (availing yourself of that opportunity) to be taught you, you have no horizons to limit you. You will go as far as you choose to go, because knowing the things of God is not dependent on human IQ. It is dependent upon that tender spirit of being willing to be taught, and to confirm what you are taught by the plain reading of the Words of Scripture.

So, the apostle Paul had good reason to be grateful to God for the response of these believers in Colossae. Today we have the Word of Truth, and it is the Scripture. What contradicts it is false. And don't be trapped by people telling you that every Scripture can be looked at in different ways. That's not true. Words mean what they say, and when the Bible is literally interpreted, which is the way it was meant to be interpreted, then it has a very clear meaning. Our word of truth is complete, and we know what it says.

**Hope**

Now the Colossians' devotions to true doctrine and to mental attitude love sprang from a third factor which is in their lives for which Paul is grateful. And we have that in Colossians 1:5, Paul says, "Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel." This word "because" in the Greek means "on account of." And it refers back to the faith and the love that he spoke of in Colossians 1:4. This "on account of" indicates what their faith and love sprang from. What was the cause for which these people in Colossae said, "Whatever I learn of doctrine, that's my lifestyle? I am going to live the faith that I am taught." Something moved them to have mental attitude goodwill toward the worst of human beings, and toward the most abusive of human beings, and for the most despicable people, yet: "My attitude toward them is hope for their betterment; willingness to put myself out; willingness to help them to do better; and, to do it on biblical principles. What moved them to be able to do that? What moves you to sacrifice yourself; your possessions; and, your life in behalf of other people? What moves you to want to know what God thinks, and then to act accordingly? It's the same thing that moved these people. It was on account of their hope.

The Greek word looks like this: E L P I S, "elpis" (el-pece'). Now, in English, the word "hope" connotes uncertainty in terms of some desire: We say, "I hope this works out." And what we are doing is expressing an earnest desire for something, but with no certainty that the thing is going to be fulfilled, or that it's going to work out. In the Bible, the word "hope," this word "elpis," is never used with the connotation of uncertainty of results. In the Bible, there is no such thing as a hope-so mentality. It is very important that you distinguish between the English connotation of "hope" and the biblical connotation of "hope." In the Bible, when the Bible says, "We have a hope for this, or a hope for that," it's a sure thing. It's a sure bet. You can't lose it. Whereas in English we use it like: "Maybe so; or, maybe not so."

The word "hope" in the Greek Bible means a favorable and confident expectation toward what is unseen, and toward what, in the nature of the case, is in the future. We have this illustrated, for example, in Romans 8:24-25: "For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope. For why does one also hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance, we wait eagerly for it." Now, the point that the apostle Paul makes here is that if you see something, and you have it in hand, and you know you're going to have it, then you're not hoping for it. You already are certain of it. It's a sure thing. Therefore, for what you see, you did not hope for.

However, all of this talk about dying and being resurrected again, in order someday to go to heaven, and to have an eternity that is beyond human comprehension – that is something we do not see. That is something that we cannot grasp. And yet, that is the hope that the Bible presents to all believers. And if we hope for what we do not see, with what perseverance we wait eagerly for it? Well, why do we wait eagerly with perseverance? Because we're sure of it. The Bible has told us that heaven is a hope. And if it is a hope in Scripture, it is a sure thing. Therefore, we persevere living a lifestyle compatible and appropriate to such a hope.

The Greek word "hope" connotes the anticipating, furthermore, of receiving something good. When the Bible talks about hoping for something, it's usually something very good. For example, in Titus 1:2: "In the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago." That is a good thing. We hope for this good thing, eternal life, which God has, in ages passed, promised to those who trust in the Savior.

We also have 1 Peter 1:21: "Who, through Him, are believers in God, Who raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God:" "Who, through Him, are believers in God." They are through the work of Jesus Christ: "They are believers in God. God the Father, Who raised the Son from the dead, and gave Him glory, gave Him what he really was – deity with all of its splendor, so that your faith and hope are in God." So, your faith in Christ is a hope which is sure to come about. What hope? You will share that glory. You are not always going to be the disappointing thing to yourself, in this way or that way, that you are now. You're not always going to be trying to justify what, down in the depths of your heart, and in the middle of the night, as you lie in your bed and think about it, you know cannot justify – what you should not be, but you have a hope that all that's going to be changed. You have a hope of absolute perfection. "When we see Him (Christ), we shall be like Him." And this is a favorable future. It's a good thing.

**Subjective Hope**

Now hope can be two things. We can have hope in two ways. And the Bible uses it in two ways. First of all, hope can be subjective. When we talk about subjective hope, that is hope which is your personal feeling or your attitude in a matter. Romans 5:2 illustrates this, "Through Whom also we have obtained an introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we exalt in hope of the glory of God." This grace in which we stand is salvation. And we exalt. That's a word of emotion. We rejoice. We're very excited in the hope of sharing the glory of God. That is a subjective hope. This connotes a sense of personal, joyful, expectation – a sense of certainty and of confidence.

**Objective Hope**

Then there is the objective hope. This hope is denoting the things desired, or the things which are anticipated. For example, in Galatians 5:5, Paul says, "For we through the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) by faith are awaiting for the hope of righteousness." Now, that's an objective hope. This is not some feeling of yours. This is something out there that you want to get. What do you want? You want what's going to take you into heaven: absolute righteousness. And you want this in your personal experience. *You* want to be perfectly righteous. *You* want to be absolutely true to God in every respect. *You* want to be totally compatible with His standard of righteousness and with His character. Now that's our hope. And we don't just imagine this. We didn't just make this up. This is what God says, "I'm going to do for you." When you see Christ, you well become like Him. In the meantime, positionally, you are there. But the hope of being like that in your experience – that's an object out there that we're looking for.

The reference here is to a confident reception of one's desires in the future. Now, back in Colossians 1:5, the word "hope" has to be used either in a subjective or objective way. "Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven" indicates to us that it's the second one here. This is in objective hope. The hope in Colossians 1:5 is something that we're looking out there for some object that someday we want to receive. Faith and love, here in Colossians 1:4 – those are subjective. That's how you feel. But hope here, in Colossians 1:5, is not an internal attitude as an object that you desire. Hope is the objective reality here of eternal life. This produces these subjective attitudes of faith and love in the believer. Because I know what I'm going to be someday, and what God is going to make of me someday, and what I'm going to receive, that's the object of my hope. That triggers in me a spirit of living by the rules of God. I live in the faith. And that triggers in me a mental goodwill attitude toward all people.

The Christian's destiny of heaven is what causes him to live in doctrine, and to exercise mental attitude goodwill. One's faith in doctrine lifestyle and mental love are cause by the certainty of the hope of heaven that you possess. This is the third thing about the Colossians for which the apostle Paul is thankful.

He says about this hope, that it is laid up. Because of this sure thing, eternal life, with all of its consequences and all of its glory, is laid up. This word "laid up" in the Greek is "apokeimai" (ap-ok'-i-mahee). It means to be reserved or stored up. For example, Luke 19:20 illustrates the use of this word "stored up" or "laid up." This is the parable of the 10 talents. And the master comes to one of the servants: "And "another came, saying, "Master, behold your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief." And there's the illustration of the meaning of this word "laid up." He kept it put away in a handkerchief. It's carefully put someplace where it is safe. It is encased, as it were, in something.

**The Crown of Righteousness**

Also, this is illustrated in 2 Timothy 4:8: "In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing:" "In the future there is laid up." There's the word. There is put aside ("apokeimai"). There is stored up for me in heaven the crown of righteousness. Some Christians will receive this crown of righteousness. These are the medals of honor of heaven. A crown of righteousness goes to Christians who have lived their lives in a maximum time in temporal fellowship. They've just maintained experiential righteousness as the practical norm of their lives. They've been instructed in the Word. They took it to heart. They did not rationalize it away. They did not pretend it did not apply to them. They didn't pretend that they couldn't live without it. They just did it. And then they kept their known sins confess. And that combination of living in doctrine with sins confessed gave them the power to live in righteousness day-by-day on this earth, right in the devil's world, and right under his nose. And people who spend their lives mostly in that status are going to be recognized forever in heaven with this crown of righteousness. So this is laid up; hidden; and, secure for those of you who are qualified for it in heaven.

**The Three Heavens**

The idea here in Colossians 1:5: "Because of the hope laid up for you" – this is to be viewed as the hope which is stored: already prepared; and waiting, thus stressing the certainty of the hope. Don't miss that. Because of this hope, eternal glory in the presence of God, is stored up. Therefore, it is a certainty: "For you (the saints of God) in . . ." Where? "Heaven." This is the Greek word "ouranos" (oo-ran-os'), O U R A N O S. That's the word for heaven. And in the Greek Bible it is plural: "Stored up in the heavens." And as you know, there are three heavens. There's the heavens of the atmosphere where the birds fly. There's the heavens of the interstellar spaces where the planets rotate and revolve. And then there is the heaven which is the very throne room of God, which is the third heaven. And this plural brings into picture all three heavens – that we have a hope which affects all three of those areas that we, one way or another, will be related with, and we'll be having contact with specifically.

**The Third Heaven**

Specifically, of course, the focus is on the third heaven, the place where God the Father Himself dwells. Our hope is in the third heaven where Jesus Christ Himself is seated at the right-hand God the Father. Mark 16:19 tells us that that is where He is.

This refers to a hope which is stored up for the believer in heaven, in the form of absolutely certain eternal life, with all that that connotes. The Christian has a hope. That hope is his eternal life. It's stored up in heaven. It is protected. It is in total security. And it's an absolute certainty.

Now you say, "Yeah, okay, that's good." But I stress that to you for the simple fact that most people in churches in vast denominations are taught that they'll never know whether they're going to heaven until they die and find out, because the certainty of eternal life is not there for them. They don't understand *how* you get saved, apart from human doing, and as an acceptance of a gift. Consequently, they do not understand that you're kept saved by the God who saved you in the first place with which you had nothing to do in the first place to be saved. Therefore, you cannot contaminate it. And this is a significant point. It is stored up for us in the heavens where Christ is at the right hand of God the Father. And it is an absolute certainty.

1 Peter 1:4 says, "To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." Now either you're going to believe that, or you're going to blow it off. Eternal life is reserved in heaven for you. It's not reserved in heaven for you providing you do something. It's not reserved in heaven because you did something. It is reserved in heaven because of something that Christ did for you, and you said, "Okay, I'll accept it." Once you've accepted it, it is yours forever.

In Hebrews 6:17-20, the writer says, "In the same way, God desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise, the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that, by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement: we who have fled for refuge, and laying hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul – a hope both sure and steadfast, and one which enters within the veil into the holy of holies, where Jesus has entered as forerunner for us, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The Melchizedek order is superior over the Aaronic order."

What is the writer saying? He's saying that we have a hope – a hope of a certainty of eternal life. We have the hope that Christ has brought us through the veil into the holy of holies, where only an absolutely perfect righteous person can be. And Jesus Christ is our forerunner. He is our example. He is the pacer. Where he goes, we go. And what we're being told is that we have the absolute certainty of someday having this hope realized. Now, that is the anchor of your soul. How in the world are you going to be preoccupied with serving God if you do not have your soul anchored in the certainty that you have eternal life?

You are going to be more preoccupied with whether you, at some particular point in time, like the Roman Catholics like to say: "You are in a state of grace." A Roman Catholic's day is occupied with: "Am I, at this moment, in a state of grace, because if I die, I better be in a state of grace, or I am doomed." And constantly, the Catholic is trying to do what he thinks will keep him in a state of grace. And the Bible says that Christ has placed you under the grace of God, and He keeps you in the state of grace. You don't have to think about it again. But if you have to constantly worry about that, and if that's not the anchor of your life, then you are not going to be preoccupied with the Word of God. You're not going to be preoccupied with expressing mental attitude love. You're going to have a lot of anxieties. You're not going to have time for love when you have anxieties, and frustrations, and concerns like that. Those are the things that become the anchor of your life, and that kind of an anchor will drag you down. We have the hope that God Himself has provided as the anchor of our souls.

The hope of the Colossians is the result of believing the gospel of free grace salvation through Jesus Christ. They have this hope in Colossae because Epaphras, the agent of the apostle Paul, brought them the gospel. They believed it, and they were baptized automatically, immediately into the person of Christ by the Holy Spirit so that they are now in Christ. They are in Jesus Christ. And where is the Lord Jesus? He is in heaven.

Colossians 1:27, a little later here, says, "To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you – the hope of glory." Why do you have the hope of being in the image of God? Why do you have the hope of carrying the glory of God? It is because you are in Christ. You will be in his image.

Go over to Colossians 3:1-4: "If then you have been raised up with Christ positionally, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God."? Does that strike home to you? "Keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." Set your mind on the things above – not on the things that are on earth. Now, that has to cut to the heart. How often we are so devoted to the things of this earth. That's what preoccupies us. And the things of this earth – those are the things that we pursue. And God help you if any Christian, or any preacher, or any group of believers gets your nose out of joint. You'll see to it that you will treat them accordingly, and give them what they deserve. And you will resent them to high heaven. But you'll not resent to high heaven that you yourself are wallowing in the things of this earth. And like a pig in the mud hole, you think that you have the greatest of all lives.

Now, we have to take this seriously or we have to blow this off as not being true. If then you've been raised up with Christ, you're no longer in that contaminated, sin-nature-dominated lifestyle: "Keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on this earth. For you have died. Your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." When Jesus returns to this earth, you will be right there with Him, and you'll be sharing all the glory. It'll be all over you, visible to everybody about you.

The hope that the Colossians had is a result of the believing free grace salvation, and the certainty of their eternal life. The salvation that the believer now hopes for has the sure destiny of resurrection in a sinless body. That is what we are looking for. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We do all we can to keep it in good shape. That is the proper and right thing to do, the Bible tells us. But when it finally breaks down, and deteriorates, and can't go any further, we have a sure hope. What is it? It's going to be resurrected. It's all going to be put together again in a perfect condition.

1 John 3:2: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him just as He is." That is our total sinless resurrection.

Furthermore, we're told that because this hope is always a certain thing, what does each passing day mean? Each passing day means that you're closer to that hope of eternal resurrection and the glory of God than when you first believed that message of the gospel. Romans 13:11: "And this do, knowing . . ." And what he's talking about is love: live by the moral code. Verse 10 specifically stresses love.

Then in Romans 13:11, he says, "And this do (live this way), knowing the time – that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep. For now, salvation is near to us than when we believed." Who's asleep? The Christian who is out of fellowship with his Heavenly Father. That's the guy who's asleep. That's the person who who's out of step. That's the person who's wasting his life. That's the person who is grieving the Holy Spirit. That's the person who is not filled with the Spirit. That's the person who is quenching the Spirit. Do you know what "grieving the Holy Spirit" means? "Grieving the Holy Spirit" means to do something contrary to the doctrines of scripture, and refusing to cease and desist. Grieving the Holy Spirit means sinning. And when you grieve the Holy Spirit, here's a principle of Scripture; you break it; you keep breaking it; you refuse to stop; you rationalize and justify; the spirit of God is grieved; and, you are not filled. You are not under His control. Do you know what "quenching the Spirit" means? "Quenching of the Spirit" means that He lays upon your heart, and lays upon your mind, that you should do something, and you don't do it. You should react some way with your skills; with the time that you have of your life; or, with your money, and you don't do it. That's quenching the Holy Spirit. And I would caution you to be very careful about saying, "No" to Him when He places a burden of action on your life, and on your heart. You have nothing to lose but the blessing of God when you obey Him.

"Knowing that it is time to awaken from sleep." It is talking about Christians who are spiritually asleep because they're out of fellowship. The Christian now expresses his confident hope of salvation in the future with faith living in doctrine, and with mental attitude love toward all men. Our hope is the resurrected living Jesus Christ. His once-for-all sacrifice paid for our sins in order to free us from death – from eternal death (from eternal separation from God our Father).

In John 11:25-26, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die."? Do you believe this? What a question. Jesus, on the occasion of the death of Lazarus, says, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me . . ." He is saying. "He who trusts in Me for that salvation." This is not he who invites Jesus into his heart. This is not he who invites Jesus into his life. It is not he who gives himself to Christ, . . . or any of these other terms that are pop Christianity terms. But I just say: "You're telling the truth, God. And I do believe the truth of the gospel: "Well, you're going to live even if you die physically. Everyone who lives and who believes in Me, you'll never die." Do you believe this? Well, if you do, then you have a hope. You have the hope reserved in heaven of resurrection.

We do not believe in, nor do we preach, a Christ who is still dead on the cross. That is no hope. The reason we don't do that is because the stress in 1 Corinthians 15:17-19 is on that living Christ: "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless, and you're still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep (Christians who have died in Christ) have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are, of all men, most to be pitied."

In Roman Catholicism, the image is always on a dead Christ. In a Roman Catholic Church, you are surrounded by images of Christ on a cross. The crucifix is the key image of Roman Catholicism. The emphasis is upon a dead Christ. And the emphasis is upon a mass which is repeated sacrificing of Christ in a bloodless sacrifice, so that the emphasis is always upon a dead Christ. That is no hope. Our hope is because Christ has been raised. If he's a dead Christ, and that's the focus of our attention, we don't know whether what he did for us on that cross really covered our sins. It's only because he has resurrected, and once-and-for-all never to be sacrificed again, that we know that the job was done to the satisfaction of God the Father, and the Father has been satisfied concerning the payment of death for us.

The certainty of the hope of being saved from the lake of fire does make all of the hard times that we may experience now tolerable. That's what Paul points out in Romans 8:18. Paul says, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us." The glory of entering heaven – that is our hope.

Christians, furthermore, are irrevocably citizens of heaven, and that is our hope. Philippians 3:20 tells us that.

There are certain things that are facets of our hope related to heaven. One is ultimate salvation. 1 Thessalonians 5:8 says that we will receive ultimate salvation, which means that we will have the sin nature removed, and we'll be as perfect as God.

We will also have absolute righteousness. That is our hope. Galatians 5:5 tells us that, in heaven, we'll be as perfect as Christ.

Then that hope includes resurrection in a glorified body (I Corinthians 15:52-55) – a body that can never die again, because it is sinless, and can never sin.

That hope includes eternal life. Titus 1:2 and Titus 3:7 tell us that we will have eternal life; that is, we will never be separated from God again.

It also includes possessing the glory of God (Romans 5:2, Colossians 1:27, Colossians 3:4). All those tell us that we will have the glory of God upon us.

Now, that is a real hope: ultimate salvation; totally free from the nature; absolute righteousness; resurrection; a glorified body; never able to sin; eternal life; no separation ever from God; and, God's glory upon us because we are in Christ.

Now, what God has stored in heaven for His children can never be taken away by Satan. And anyone who thinks that you have a hope of eternal life, which someplace along the line you can lose again, does not understand the plan of God, and how one is saved in the first place. The Christian's sure hope stored in heaven, however, is a strangely neglected and rejected doctrine compared to all the preaching you hear on faith and love. Have you ever noticed that? Preachers are always talking about faith, and they're always talking about love. Those two subjects get repeated again and again. But how often do you hear sermons upon the Christian's hope? It gets a passing notice. It gets brushed aside. Do you see how clever the devil is, such that even in the pulpit, he will guide the areas of emphasis if that pastor-teacher is not careful? Hope is what it's all about. This, as we have read is the anchor of our soul. It is nothing else. It is that objective hope – the thing that we are going to have in heaven. Now, once you get your eyes set on that, it's going to give you a lot of guidance for your life, and you're going to be able to take the hard times with a lot better stride.

Our present actual experience from our salvation is very small. We don't have anything in this experience. We're going to gather Thursday. We're going to have some good testimonies, as always. We're going to reminisce and rejoice. The grateful ones will. Those who aren't, won't even be here. But the grateful ones will be here, and they'll have some magnificent things to say. But after it's all done, and 11 o'clock rolls around, we haven't heard anything of what we really possess in the hope of eternal life. It's just a faint little glimmer that will be shared. Most of the great effects of regeneration await us in heaven. That is where the really exciting part of our hope lies.

This is stressed to us in Titus 2:13, where Paul says, "Looking for the blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." That's where your focus should be – looking for the blessed hope, the rapture, the coming of Christ, because then and only then will you enter into the realization of what it's like to be in Christ. Boy, to those Bereans who've gone out from us, and are now in heaven, could they ever give us a testimony on Thanksgiving Day? Could they ever give us something that would thrill the depths of our souls? None of us, at our best, will approach anything like what they've discovered.

It was the apostle Paul who had the great experience of actually being in the third heaven. It was so magnificent; it so staggered her; and, it so blew his mind, that God said, "Paul, you must never tell the magnificent consequences of your hope that awaits you in heaven. You must never tell people what you've seen up here. You must never tell people what people are like up here; what their lives are like; and, what they are like. You must never tell that. And perhaps the reason for it is that people might be tempted to say, "What am I standing around here waiting for?" And they might even contemplate suicide: "I want to go there." Or they might live very carelessly with their lives. But God says, "No, I need those lives. Those are for service until I'm through with them." But the apostle Paul said, "Okay Lord." And God said, "I know you mean that Paul, but I'm going to give you an ailment. And you're never going to get rid of it. You can visit Dr. Seuss and Dr. anybody else, but they're not going to be able to heal you. This thing is going to stay. And every now and then, when you get dangerously close in your preaching to falling back to telling people what you saw, this thing is going to kick in, and you're going to get this jerk, and you're going to say, 'Uh-oh, God is reminding me to hold back on this.'"

The great Christian life is here. We hardly know what it is. We just have a faint glimmer. The greatness of our Christian life – that is our true hope that is in heaven, and we can only imagine that in a very small way. This world is not where it's at for the Christian, and yet most of us center on this life (this Christian experience) as the fullness of our lives.

Well, we do have great experiences with God. He does do great things with us. We have to remember: "Don't focus on this. Focus on what is beyond. That's where it's really at." This false balance has to be corrected between our present Christian experience and our future expectancy. Our future expectancy has to have greater concern and priority. We cannot imagine what our hope reserved in heaven for us entails. Even in our book of Colossians, back here in Colossians 3:1-2, told us: "Keep seeking the things above our crisis, where Christ is seated at the right hand." Set our minds on things that are above. Well, remember that tomorrow morning. Don't just go plowing into your day, and everything you think about is this life, and God's blessings, and the good things that are here. Get your eyes up there where your real life is, and think to yourself, "How can I enrich my eternity?" I doubt that there is anybody in heaven right now who does not wish that they had a little more time to come back, and a little better understanding of how to prepare for the enrichment of their eternity – to put an additional glow, and a glory to their hope.

Philippians 3:19-21, "Whose end is destruction; whose God is their appetite; whose glory is their shame; who set their minds on earthly things." This is the way it is with the people of the world who are the enemies of Christ. But in verse 20: "For our (we Christians) citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has, even to subject all things to himself."

So when the apostle Paul says, "I thank God so much because of the hope that you live in the light of – that hope which is laid up for you in the heavens: that hope which is where it's really at for all of you. And because you are understanding, and because your lies are focused on that great thing which is before you, then you know how to live here. You will not waste your life. You'll be students of the Word of God. You'll take doctrine seriously. You will not look to the world, and say, "Look. The world doesn't agree with that interpretation." You won't even look to other churches. You won't even look to other Christian groups for justification for you to do what is evil. And I have to listen to people who give me some real doozies on their mental gymnastics to try to evade a condemnation that is clear in the Word of God, and to somehow justify it in American society.

Remember that it's the goal of all the institutions of Satan in our society today to do one thing, and that is to normalize divine abominations. That's all that the world is doing: to take the filthiest, grossest abomination (and I'm using God's word for it), and to make that the normal conduct in our society. People whose hope is not set upon the perfection of Christ that we will have in heaven will tolerate the normalizing of abominations. We do not, and we will not apologize for it. But I'll tell you that you will be hated for it. You will not be appreciated for it. And as Paul goes on in the rest of this verse, he now touches upon the thing that is the basis of this kind of authority. And the implication here is that this is why you Christians are treated as the garbage of American society today, when you are the princes and princesses. You're the royalty. But all the lowlife knaves are in control. They have their hands on the levers of power. But that should not intimidate you. And you should not ever forget that the hope that you have in heaven is someday to be just like Christ. And nothing can take that away from you. Nothing can undermine that. Nothing that Satan can do undo what God has done for you. The only thing that can happen is that you will get your eyes off that hope, and you will think that right here in this life is where it's all at. And this will be the whole focus of your living. You'll have all of eternity to wish that you could come back and do it over again. Do you want to do that?

Father, will we thank You for the Word of God: alive; powerful; and, instructive to our minds. And we pray that You bless our admonition by the apostle to focus upon our great hope, which is reserved for us in heaven – the hope of being with You forever in total perfection, and enjoy beyond our fondest dreams, unspeakable – a life that God has prepared for us. We look for it with great eagerness, with great anticipation, and with that as the focus of our thinking, we live here in the faith of doctrine, and we live here in mental attitude goodwill, using all of our resources to express that love from the gospel to the full counsel of the Word of God, to young people; older folks; and, to all those who will listen to us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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