

1003
THE GOOD NEWS OF THE BLESSED HOPE, Titus 2:13

Introduction: The real trouble with the world is not that it is running out of physical resources, but that it is running out of HOPE.

The most popular philosophy of our time takes away the future. It claims that only the now is real.

Somebody said, If we lose our money, we lose a great deal. If we lose our friends, we lose even more.

But if we lose our hope we lose everything.

In the Apostles Creed Christians confess that we believe that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead.

This is one of the great articles of the Christian faith. The great hope for the Christian is the final, victorious appearance of Jesus Christ.

Admittedly, this is a difficult doctrine to interpret and apply rightly, but we should not let these things keep us from addressing the subject.

I. First, let us consider the hope of Christ's return and the lessons of history.

A. Our text speaks of "the grace of God that brings salvation," which has appeared to all Christians, teaching us that we should look for that blessed hope of the second coming of Christ.

B. This is the past, both immediate and remote. The Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world was made flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth.

C. In this verse Paul also has something to say about the continuing present.

This blessed hope teaches us that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. While the good news has a past in retrospect and a future in anticipation and hope, it is ever present in its application.

We are mistaken if we think of those early Christians as living in a vacuum apart from the everyday pressures of life.

They had to "bite the bullet" and "live where the rubber hits the road," as we say.

They were men with like passions as ours, and they were beset with the same temptations.

They struggled and sometimes failed; they attempted and sometimes accomplished, even as we do.

D. Yet through it all they were "looking for that blessed hope," and that Good News sustained them through many dark days.

Before them beckoned the unfolding future, with its promise of victory.

The dawn of a better tomorrow kept these first-century Christians on their feet just as certainly as it does 20th century Christians.

This is the part played by the "blessed hope" in the lives of Christians of every age.

E. Christians today should be longing and praying for the return of Christ. His return will mean world peace, a new social order, the removal of sin, and the vindication of God's righteousness.

II. NEXT, LET US CONSIDER THE GOOD NEWS OF THE BLESSED HOPE IN RELATION TO REDEMPTION.

A. Redemption itself has little meaning apart from the blessed hope of the second coming of Christ. Without the second coming the first coming would be incomplete.

As the writer to the Hebrews said, it is now many centuries since the cross, and "we do not yet see all things put under His feet."

If we are redeemed for this life ONLY we are of all men most miserable.

Herein is the full meaning of that great passage of Christian hope -- John 14:1-6, "I go to prepare a place for you, and when everything is ready, then I will come and get you, so that you can always be with me where I am."

B. Redemption has three aspects:

it is INSTANTANEOUS, or redemption from the POWER of sin; it is CONTINUING, or growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is ULTIMATE, or our final glorification in heaven.

C. The first coming of our Lord was to the end that whosoever would believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

In his death Jesus suffered in our place the penalty for sin. And in his resurrection he triumphed over sin and death to the end that he might redeem us from the power of sin.

And in his ASCENSION the angels appeared and promised that "this same Jesus, which you see taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven" to redeem us from the very presence of sin.

Had the story ended there the disciples might well have looked longingly and despairingly into the clouds hovering over Olivet's brow, feeling that they were left as orphans.

Down the road over which they must travel were persecution and death, but always beyond was the "blessed hope" of his glorious return, and this hope sustained them.

D. During World War II, Winston Churchill had a magnificent obsession with victory. Everywhere in the most discouraging days he lifted the "V" sign and in turn lifted the spirits of the British people. This "blessed hope" of Christ's return is the "V" for victory sign for the Christian even in the darkest days.

E. Paul taught that Christ's second coming would be unannounced--even "as a thief in the night,"--unexpected and suddenly, like a lightning bolt out of a clear sky, and inevitable, whether we are ready for it or not.

F. Many people today look upon our world and see nothing but a terrible mess.

Michaelangelo walked with a friend one day when they saw a large piece of stone. His friend saw only a large piece of marble, but Michaelangelo, the great sculptor, said as he gazed upon the same marble, "I see an angel and I must loose him and let him go."

So God looks upon this world he created and redeemed, and he says, "I see a bright new world free of death and sin and sorrow, a New Jerusalem coming down from heaven, and some day My Beloved Son is going to reign freely as King of Kings and Lord of Lords in a New Heaven and a New Earth!"

~~III. Every central Christian doctrine should be crucially related to God's work in history and redemption and our present lives, hope, and history.~~

~~Let's see this in a contemporary translation:
"so that He could rescue us from constant fall
sin and make us His very own people, with clean
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III. Every central Christian doctrine should be crucially related to God's work in history and redemption and in our personal Christian lives.

We have considered the Blessed Hope and history, and the Good News of Redemption which goes along with it; now let's consider the third part of our text:

The Good News of the Blessed Hope and CHRISTIAN LIVING.

This thought is suggested by the words "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Let's see this in a contemporary translation:

"so that He could rescue us from constant falling into sin and make us His very own people, with cleansed hearts and real enthusiasm for doing kind things for others."

A. It is significant that traditionally the Christians who have had reputations for living dedicated and consecrated lives for the Glory of God have been those who have held to the belief in the second coming of Christ, and this has been a strong motivating factor for them.

There is no doubt but that faith in the imminent return of Christ contributes to living a clean Christian life in constant readiness for His return at any hour. We have too many professing Christians who try to straddle the fence and live without any real Christian commitment.

Recently some missionaries from South America were visiting in the U.S. They had a little girl named Anna who had spent all her life in Argentina.

She could switch from English to Spanish with no difficulty. When addressed in English she replied in English. When spoken to in Spanish she answered in Spanish. She could easily speak the language that was needed at the moment.

She is not alone in that ability.

A lot of Christian people can do that too.

I mean, they can speak the religious language or the language of the world with equal ease.

It all depends upon the crowd they happen to be in at the moment.

If the people around them are speaking of spirituality or piously expressing the Christian faith, they can do it with ease.

Or, if the demands of the moment are for vulgarities and obscenities, they can also do this.

Consistent Christian commitment demands more than this. God has placed us in the world to witness to the world, not to conform to the world.

True, it would be a mistake for a Christian to be so "spiritual" (quote) that he could not fit into his environment or be at home in the society in which he lives.

A Christian cannot be so identified with secular society and culture that his witness for Christ is compromised.

The need of the hour is for Christians who live pure and clean lives for Christ, who are not wishywashy boasters and imitators of the world that crucified their Lord and Savior;

and there is something about "the blessed hope" of the second coming of Christ which produces such believers.

B. In another place Paul says three things about Christians who await the coming of Christ: (I Thes. 5:1): First, we should be alert and not be found spiritually napping.

Second, we should be self-controlled, living sanely and sensibly by Christian ideals.

Third, we should be on duty as Christians at our posts, girded with faith, love, and hope.

We do not know WHEN Christ is coming,

but we do know that he IS coming,

and we know what he expects us to do in the meantime.

We are to live morally clean lives and be faithfully about our Father's business telling the story of his love and the good news that He isn't finished with this world yet.

The Christ who died for us on the cross will someday come back to deliver us to glory.

Then our salvation will be complete.

To be the kind of Christian God would have us to be in these days demands that we look carefully to the purity of the life we are living.

Life magazine once carried a picture of a man looking at a heart which had been removed and preserved. Dr. Cooley, the famous heart surgeon, was saying to him, "You are the first man in history to look at his own heart." Spiritually speaking, it is important for each one of us to take a long look at his own heart.

D.Christians should look for, and long for, and live for the "blessed hope" of Christ's return. We should watch with alertness, wait with patience, work with zeal, and walk with commitment and dedication.

E.The Christian is a herald of this good news of the blessed hope of the coming of Christ.

In the N.T. the original word for "herald" meant an agent of the king who would go through the streets in advance of the ruler urging people to clean up the streets. He would cry out "The King is coming! The King is coming!" Anyone who notices dirty streets gets only an idea of the filthy streets of the Middle East in the time of Christ, when there were no sanitary systems at all, and all garbage and other dirty trash would simply be thrown out on the street. The herald then, was the man who had the unpleasant task of trudging through the trash and filth, sometimes up to his ankles or knees, crying out the good news that the king was coming. Anybody who tries to preach the good news of the gospel today knows that the streets of life are still full of all kinds of trash. But to proclaim the Gospel is to cry out the good news that even in the midst of all this, the Greatest of All Kings is coming. On the horizon of every darkness, the light of the kingdom of God is breaking even now, and the King IS COMING!

This is the great day that awaits the Christian. Look for it with certainty; long for it with optimism. And live your life as if he were coming today!

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