

Resurrecting Hope in an Age of Fading Expectations

When HOPE Dies So Does the Church



When was the last time you heard a message on “hope”? Or, have you ever heard a sermon on this subject?

“Hope” appears 121 times in the Bible and 53 of these references are in the New Testament. Anyone remotely acquainted with the Book of Acts knows full well that the spiritual atmosphere was electric with wonder and anticipation. A good number of the disciples saw Jesus ascend into heaven. As they stood there in amazement, the angel said, *“Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:11). They expected the imminent return of Jesus so they went to work and witnessed the Holy Spirit work in their midst. It was in this supercharged atmosphere where miracles were birthed and the church exploded.

Of the enduring virtues referenced in 1 Corinthians 13, hope is named along with faith and love. If this elevated quality called hope is worthy of merit of this magnitude, why is this generation of Christians seemingly hopeless? Rare is it to find people who are actively expecting anything out the ordinary.

Much has been said concerning faith and love, but precious little about hope. Personally I have listened to much preaching on faith and love, but cannot recall a single message on the theme of hope, except those dated sermons on “the blessed hope” preached several decades ago.

Is it possible that our current spiritual standstill is directly related to the lack of hope (hopelessness)? In the seventies things were abuzz in Bible-preaching churches. Souls were saved regularly. Excitement was the order of the day. Sermons about the second coming (the blessed hope) were common. Revivals occurred in numerous places. Scores came to faith and the churches were alive with expectancy.

Today we are overloaded with information, but undernourished on inspiration. Maybe the reason motivational preaching is so popular is because it is so rare. Does not the Scripture say, “Faith cometh by hearing...the word of God” (Rom. 10:17)? Biblical preaching is designed to generate faith, not quench it! Anointed preaching does not rob the saints of expectation; rather it excites optimism.

Jesus did not picture the end-time church huddled in a defensive position under the onslaughts of Satan. To the contrary, He predicted an aggressive band overtaking the very gates of hell (Mat. 18:16). Our generation needs hope, and the right kind of preaching will generate active reliance and strong hope in the promises of God.

Hope has been described as the present enjoyment of a future blessing. To “hope” simply means to anticipate with pleasure. Orison Marden said, “There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as expectation of something better tomorrow.”

When hope dies so does the church. When hope rises, the church does too!

*“Now the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may **abound in hope**, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 15:13 emphasis added).*

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