

The Hope of the Gospel

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What is the hope of the gospel of Christ? The hope of the gospel is not about living your best life now. It's not about health, wealth, peace, and prosperity. It's not even about friendship and fellowship. It's not about this life, this planet, or this physical body. If the hope of the gospel is about here and now, the apostle Paul says we are too be pitied! **1 Corinthians 15:19**: *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."*

Rather, the hope of the Christian life is built on one very specific expectation - the promise of eternal life. The Spirit says that *"having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life"* (**Titus 3:7**). Paul explains our hope like this in **Romans 8:23-25**:

...we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

We are hoping for the redemption of our bodies, when we are delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious children of God. So then, the Christian hope is not about what we see here and now; otherwise, hope is not hope! Instead, we joyfully anticipate the day when this corruptible body is transformed into *"incorruption"* (**1 Corinthians 15:53**) and mortality is swallowed up by life (**2 Corinthians 5:4**)! This hope is the anchor for the soul (**Hebrews 6:19**).

How can we be sure this expectation is valid? Because God has already proved He is faithful. **Romans 15:4**: *"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."* Our hope is based on observation and evidence. For example, the life of Abraham is presented as proof that God can be trusted, that we can place our hope entirely in Him. **Hebrews 6:11-19**:

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself...

Seeing then the immutability of His counsel, we lay hold of the hope set before us.

What about you personally? How do you know this hope is yours? Because God has given you His Holy Spirit as a guarantee. Paul explains in **2 Corinthians 5:4-5**,

For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

The Holy Spirit is our witness that we do belong to God, that God will save us, and fulfill His promise of eternal life.

But how does that work? How does an invisible resident of our bodies prove anything? A feeling? A voice? A miraculous sign? Speaking in tongues? No, these are not the evidences of God's faithfulness. The visible proof that we have been sealed by the Spirit and prepared for eternal life is the fruit of the Spirit. When a Christian receives the Spirit by faith through baptism into Christ (**Acts 2:38**), this begins a real and substantial personal transformation. **Romans 6:22**: *"But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life."* The fruit of the Spirit is just the beginning of a process that ends in eternal life. He is God's guarantee, pledge, promise, and down payment on eternal life. He is proof that God is willing and able to deliver in full.

What can take this hope away? Nothing can. That's the point of **Romans 8:35-39**:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This passage gets a lot of attention for what it doesn't mean. This passage does not say that it's impossible to fall away from Christ and be lost. So what does it say? When you are attached to Christ, there is no force in this world strong enough to separate you from the love of God. Persecutions will hurt you, but they cannot destroy you. Temptations will find you, but they cannot defeat you. Satan will harass you, but he cannot condemn you. Death will catch you, but it cannot keep you. The power within you is greater than the powers against you. When you suffer, you have a Comforter. When you're tempted, you have a Deliverer. When you sin, you have an Advocate. When you are in Christ, you are secure in the love of God. This is the hope of the gospel of Christ.