

What do We Hope FOR

by RANDY NUSBAUM

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phillipians 1:21)

We can see great hope in this scripture. But not everyone sees the same hope here. What is the hope found here? Multitudes of Christians will focus their attention on the words "to die is gain." This is their hope. They desire not to die, but to gain after they die and go to heaven. Their hope is mansions, streets of gold, crowns, an escape from hell or an escape from the trials on earth. The whole theology and christian thought of these people is centered on this kind of hope. They endure the things in this world waiting for this hope. They do good deeds in an effort to strengthen this hope. This is the hope of many today.

These things (mansions, streets of gold, etc.) are sure to come to all christians and will be a great blessing, but I contend that this is not to be the hope of the christian. If this is our hope, then our hope is not in line with God's hope. The scriptures say "hope that is seen is not hope" (Romans 8:24), but the Father sees streets of gold and mansions daily, for heaven is His home even now. Concerning an escape from hell or the trials of this world, well the Father has never experienced either nor ever will. These things are not what He is hoping for, for He already has these.

The Father has a hope that existed before He created heaven and earth. Our hope is centered in what we can "gain". What about the Father's hope? Are we so self-centered that our hopes and goals are different from our Father's? Paul expresses the need for us to know the proper hope in Ephesians 1:17 & 18: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened: that ye may know the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

I want to especially center on those few words: "that ye may know what is the hope of His calling" or why He saved you. What is His hope in saving us? That statement in itself shows that salvation is not the hope, for He saved us with a view toward a greater hope and purpose. So Paul urges every christian to quit making the hope something we "gain" and instead, to learn His hope. The hope is not "to die is gain" but is the first part of that verse: "For to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). We find it just as clearly written in Colossians: "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.**" (Colossians 1:27)

This hope is more than just accepting Jesus as Saviour. This hope calls for the knowledge that we are dead (Colossians 3:3), and by knowledge we allow Christ to be the life in the vessel. This calls for a continual laying down of our life so that Christ might be manifested in our mortal bodies. The third chapter of Philippians, verses 7 and 8, shows that the hope of God will not be gain for us: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

God's hope will require loss and not gain. In order for God's hope to be fulfilled, we will have to take all of our religious assets (verse 4-6) that we consider gain, yea and all things, and count them loss. Those seeking only gain will come short of the glory of God, but those who are decreasing daily and learning Christ will not be found among those who have no hope, for He is our Hope.***