

# Hope

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Littlebourne - 17th March 2024 - Colossians 2:6-15, John 12:23-33

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## Colossians 2:6-15

*6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

*8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

## John 12:23-33

*23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*

27 “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” 29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” 30 Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” 33 He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

This week we have these two passages from Colossians and John, and rather than do my usual thing of working through them verse by verse, we're going to look at them more in bits and pieces.

The topic is hope, so we're going to find hope in the fact of Jesus' death and resurrection, the fact that we too are joined with Him in that death and resurrection, and the fact that Jesus Christ has taken His place as King over all.

Hope on the basis of what has been done, hope in the future we look forward to in Christ, and hope in the present reality of Christ's reign.

## **Hope in new life**

First, we learn from these passages about a major result of what has happened as a result of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. That there is new life, not just for Jesus Christ, but for all those united to Him.

Colossians 2 v 9-12:

9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

First, union with Christ - just as the fullness of God dwells in the man Jesus Christ - He is both God and man - so we are filled with Him. We are brought into union with Him.

And being in Him, it's like we are circumcised - a sign of being part of His people - that same sign given to Abraham, but for us, it is not physical, not made with hands. Back then, before Christ came and shook things up, the sign for our covenant with God was a 'bloody' sign, a wound - but now, no blood is required, because Christ has done all the sacrifice required.

We are baptised - immersed - in Christ, and just as he has died and been raised, so too we die and are raised in Him.

Colossians 2 v 13-14:

*13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*

And a result of this is that we who were once dead - dead in trespasses, dead in uncircumcision, that is, out of covenant with God, have been raised. We are made alive together with Christ, and so all trespasses are forgiven and all debts are cancelled, and all demands against us are gone. They're nailed to the cross.

John 12 v 24:

*24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*

New life requires death - but God has given us an example of the death that must take place for new life - the seed must be buried to grow into a new plant, it has to die, often to spend the winter buried, in order to bring new life in the spring.

If the grain of wheat doesn't die - doesn't fall off the plant and be buried - it won't ultimately live. But what dies will bear much fruit.

Our hope is found in that we have died to sin, we have died to our old ways - we have died along with Christ, such that we are raised as well. There is hope in the present death and resurrection we experience here and now, but also in the future.

Jesus says (John 12 v 28-30):

*28 Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” 29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” 30 Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine.*

God the Father says, audible to those there with the Son, that he has glorified His name, and He will continue to glorify it. His name is glorified in the death and resurrection of Christ, and will continue to be glorified. How is God's name glorified? In part, through putting to death the sin in us, and raising us to new life. We need to know that God is and will be glorified - Christ knew this of course, but it is said for our benefit - we need to know it too.

## **Hope is future oriented**

Second, our hope is not limited to the here and now - it must stretch out into the future. Our hope is that this death and resurrection doesn't stop - throughout our lives, we will be progressively made new. We will be sanctified, but this takes time.

The Kingdom inaugurated at Christ's resurrection, will culminate in the general resurrection - the resurrection of all the dead in Christ, new life and complete transformation for all. We have but a taste of this now, an ever expanding taste of it in our own lives.

We can feel like things aren't changing much, or maybe even getting worse - there are certainly ups and downs. But the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed - it starts as the smallest of seeds, but grows into the largest of the garden plants and becomes a tree. Jesus also compares the Kingdom of God to yeast - a small amount that when mixed into a large quantity of dough will permeate the entire thing and make it all rise.

We can be discouraged that we don't see results - but like the yeast in the dough, you can't take it out of the dough. Circumstances might effect how much the yeast works, how much the dough rises, but you can't once you have added the yeast, take it away - it's done.

Paul tells us in Romans 5 (v18-19):

*18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*

When Adam sinned, and was cast out of the garden, it wasn't like they immediately became the worst people ever - it takes the next generation to move on to sin of the degree of murder, and things get worse from there. Sin took time to take root - but it started small. Later, it's so bad that God causes the flood, and wipes out the vast majority of humanity.

Likewise, from one man's perfect righteousness, spreads out righteousness. Just as sin spread to all men, and severely so, so righteousness will spread to all men. It will take time - but the pattern is clear and the results sure.

So our hope is found looking backward to what Christ has done for us, and our hope is found looking forward to what His death and resurrection are accomplishing - the total death and resurrection of all things in Him. The inexorable spread of His reign over all things.

## **Hope because Christ reigns**

Which brings us to another aspect of this hope. Third point - the surity of our hope resting on Christ's rule and reign.

Our passage from Colossians says that Christ is (v10) "the head of all rule and authority".

Verse 15:

*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

He has bound the strong man - remember in Mark 3, as the scribes accuse Jesus of being in league with Satan. They say that he casts out demons by the prince of demons - but Jesus replies (Mark 3v23-27):

*...“How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. 27 But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.*

Jesus has come to bind Satan and take the world back. His enemies are now disarmed - in disarray. He has triumphed over them and taken His rightful place as King, the rightful ruler of the world.

The most quoted Old Testament verse that the New Testament writers use is Psalm 110 verse 1:

*The Lord says to my Lord:  
“Sit at my right hand,  
until I make your enemies your footstool.”*

That verse is quoted 6 times in the New Testament, and alluded to at least 9 other times, so we should pay attention to it. For example, in Acts 2, in Peter's sermon at Pentecost, Peter says that this Psalm, written by David, refers to Christ. He says (Acts 2:36):

*Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,*

*“The Lord said to my Lord,  
“Sit at my right hand,  
35 until I make your enemies your footstool.”*

*36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven, to sit at the right hand of the Father, on the heavenly throne, until such time as all God's enemies are comprehensively defeated, put under the feet of Christ.

Our hope is found also in the rule and reign of Christ. If I asked the average Christian "who is the ruler of this world?", what responses would I get? The answer in scripture I think is clear - it's Jesus Christ, the risen and ascended Son of God. We often give Satan far too much credit, and far too exalted a position.

Jesus says in our passage from John's gospel (v31):

*Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.*

The decisive event has happened - the former ruler of the world is cast out.

John 12 v 23:

*23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*

Now is the time - Christ's glorification is not some distant event, his being the King of the world is a reality that took place in His resurrection, his enthronement in His ascension.

## **Living out this hope**

How then should we live, in light of this hope?

Colossians 2:6-7:

*6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

Walk in Christ - be rooted, built up and established in the faith, through Him. Paul says 'as you received Christ', so walk in Him. We don't walk on our own - we work out our salvation, because Christ worked it in us. We are already dead and raised with Christ, so we should be consistent and live out the new life we are given.

v8:

*8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*

Don't be taken in by the enemies of Christ - be on the winning team. Don't be taken captive by what are lower things - human traditions rather than God's perfection. Paul uses the term στοιχεῖον (stoicheion) - a word that can refer to a base principle, or the elements that make up the natural world. So don't take the natural in place of the supernatural, the worldly for that which goes beyond the world, the old world for the new.

John 12 v 25-26:

*25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*

Whoever clings on to this world, won't get it. Whoever is willing to lose worldly things, will gain much more. We are to die to the old world, the old way of things, and live to Christ, and His ways, following Him. We need to be willing to die and be reborn.

There's a new King, and we therefore have changed allegiances. We have changed priorities. And where He is - there shall we be also.

Christ's authority is our spur to action. Remember the great comission (Matthew 28v18-20):

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Jesus prefaces his command, his comission to the infant church, with this: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me." All that follows is a 'therefore' after that. All that we do is in light of His rule and reign. His kingly authority is our spur to action.

So our hope is secure - Jesus tells us, in the great comission, and in our passage from John, that He is with us always, that where He is we will be also. The outcome is certain.

## **Conclusion**



So to recap - there is hope to be found in the knowledge of Christ's death and resurrection - what happened for us. There is hope to be found in the future glory we will enjoy with Christ as a result of what has been done. And there is hope found in the rule and reign of Christ over all things - certainty of outcome, because He is in control and is defeating all His enemies.

The last verse in our passage from John's gospel says (v33):

*He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.*

He told the disciples listening to Him there, in this last week before He went to the cross, that the kind of death He was going to die was a death that would result in His and the Father's glorification. His death was the death that changes everything. Earth is under new management.

Paul writes to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:

*20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet."...*

Christ has in fact been raised from the dead - and this is but the firstfruits. We look forward to the end, when death itself is defeated in fullness - when all are raised to resurrection life, never to die. And this takes place after Christ has destroyed every rule and authority and power that stands against Him.

We look around us at the world and often feel pessimistic. But there is great optimism to be had - there is hope that all will be made new, as was started when Christ was made new for us.