

Faith and hope

(Also available on video)

HOPE

1Cor 13:13 "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

I don't want to discuss love right now - that can be discussed at another time. However, I would like to take a closer look at the other two elements mentioned here - faith and hope. *"Now abide faith and hope ..."*

Abide means that it does not pass; it is not something that fades away. It is something that remains, something that has eternal value. *Faith and hope are eternal.*

*Rom 8:24-25 "For **in hope we have been saved**, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? But **if we hope for what we do not see**, with **perseverance** we wait eagerly for it."*

"For in hope we have been saved ..." In other words, there is something *lasting* about our salvation. It isn't something that happens now, and later diminishes. There is an *eternal* element to it. However, *hope isn't visible in the here and now*. Hope is something which is *connected to the future*. It has eternal value and that is what gives us courage for the future. *Hope is unseen*. It is important to understand this.

Hope is *anchored* to a *promise*. One does not hope for something that you already have; you hope for

something for which you have a *promise for the future*. We obtain the promises from the Word of God and that is what gives us hope – those *promises*.

*Rom 8:18 "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that **is to be revealed** to us."*

"Present time" – this is the here and now; the words *"is to be revealed"* mean that there is a *future*. *Hope* always works with the *future*. There is therefore a *coming glory*.

How does Paul know about this coming glory? He knows about it because the Bible tells us about it – there are many prophetic Scriptures which tell us of this coming glory. Therefore, those Scriptures which give us promises about the glory to come, also give us *hope* for that coming glory. Our hope is therefore not based on the present; our hope is based on the *future*, on the *prophetic promises* which have already been given to us.

Of course, promises are merely written or spoken words. They are just *words*. That is what a promise is - *words*. And those words are reliable words because they are inspired by the Holy Spirit. However, when *unreliable words* are spoken, and we place our hope on those unreliable words, then we are hoping for something which *won't happen*, something that is *untrustworthy*. Then it will be a *failure*. We must therefore be certain that our hope is anchored to *reliable words*.

THE POWER OF WORDS

Let me give you an example. Let's imagine I was still farming in Zimbabwe, and I had an employee called

John. Imagine he was a good employee and I wanted to bless him. I call him and tell him, *"John, I would like to bless you. I want to give you \$10 000. Come to my house tomorrow morning and then I will give you \$10 000."*

John is so excited he can't stop smiling. He goes home that evening and tells his whole family about the \$10 000. That night they can hardly sleep. Early the next morning they are all there at my house: John and his wife, all his children and even the grandparents. They all want to see this \$10 000 being given to John. I go outside and say to John, *"John, I was only joking, I'm not going to give you that money."*

How do you think John feels? He is devastated!

Dear friends, words lifted him up to the heavenlies and words devastated him. And all they were, were mere words - *words that weren't reliable*. Friends, *words are powerful*.

Solomon says,

Prov 18:21 "Death and life are in the power of the tongue ..."

The tongue has a huge amount of power to lift people up by means of encouragement; yet, on the other hand, words can also devastate people if used wrongly. *Be careful what you say and what you listen to* – which kind of words you receive into your heart.

The Word of God is absolutely *reliable*, and it is this Word that *gives life*; this Word promises us *hope and a future*.

We can trust in it and build our lives upon it like on a solid rock.

Faith

Let's also look at faith and connect the two, faith and hope.

Heb 11:1 "Now faith is the assurance (one grasps it firmly) of things hoped for (faith and hope in the same verse), the conviction of things not seen (future, unseen things)."

Where did we get hope? From the Word, the *reliable Word of God*; this is where our hope comes from. *Faith firmly grasps that hope.*

Friends, faith is powerful. We are saved through faith. We obtain victory through faith. The whole Chapter 11 of Hebrews tells of the testimonies of people in the Old Testament who obtained wonderful victories through their faith. Faith is powerful, but faith does not work alone – never. *Faith needs an anchor.* That anchor is the hope that we have. *Faith's anchor is hope.*

This isn't something to be spoken of lightly. People are quick to say,

"I believe."

What do you believe?

"Well, I believe in God; I believe in the Bible."

OK, you believe in the Bible. Tell me then, what does the Bible say?

“I don’t know, but I believe in it.”

Friends, you cannot believe in something you don’t know. You need hope. And if you don’t know what is written in the Bible, then how can you have hope? Hope is built upon a word of promise that is written in the Bible – a hope which you must make your own. If you don’t have this kind of hope based on the Word which you have received and owned for yourself, then I’m sorry to say, but *your faith will be empty and will bear no fruit*. It won’t mean anything to you.

I don’t care how long you’ve been attending church; if your faith isn’t built on and firmly anchored to the solid Word of God which you’ve taken and made your own, *then your faith is likely to be empty and unfruitful*. The Scriptures have much to say on many subjects. If you study them and own those truths for yourself, then they will give you hope. Without this, I’m sorry to say, but your hope will be like an *empty bucket*, and your *faith will end up being worthless*.

In John Chapter 15, Jesus talks about the vine and the branches. He says that He is the true vine, and we are the branches. We must *abide* in Him (the true Word). If we don’t *abide* in Him, the Word (where we obtain our hope), we will become parched and we won’t bear fruit. The dry branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire to be burned. The *fruitfulness of our faith* is in direct correlation to us *being anchored* and *established in the Word* (Jesus). Without that, our *faith can bear no fruit* (John 15:1-8,16).

A sad observation

During the years that I ministered in Zimbabwe, there was a certain man who attended church every Sunday. After every service, I would stand at the door and greet the people as they left. This particular man had a habit when he greeted me; he would take my hand firmly in his big hands, look me in the eye and say, "*That message touched me deeply.*" Then he would keep looking me and add, "*Thank you very much,*" and he would go outside, light a cigarette, and continue his life without any change. In all the years that I ministered there I never noticed any real change in that man's life. There may have been some change in his heart that I wasn't aware of (and I pray that there was), but there was certainly no visible evidence of such a change of heart.

He attended church every Sunday where he heard a good message, but I'm not sure that he ever made it his own. And if you don't receive the Word into your heart and own it for yourself, you cannot obtain that vital hope which is needed for faith to work. And if you don't have hope, you can't say that you believe, because if you don't have hope, there is nothing to anchor your faith to. It is crucial that we have *faith that is anchored to hope*, and *hope that is firmly established upon the Word*.

Principles of faith

Years ago, during the early 1980s, I earnestly called upon the Lord and asked Him,

"Lord, teach me about faith, teach me please, I want to understand it."

The Lord answered my prayer and gave me the following life-changing Scriptures:

Heb 10:35 "Do not cast away therefore your confidence which has great reward."

Confidence – certainty, assurance ... Certainty about what? Certainty about the Word which I have heard and made my own. *That is hope* - the *certainty* of the *hope* of the *Word of God*. Don't cast it away. When you go through difficult times, don't cast it away. You need that hope to anchor your faith.

Heb 10:36 "For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised."

When the Lord revealed this to me, He showed it to me in the form of a simple math equation: like $1 + 1 = 2$. I am a simple person, and the Lord gave me a practical engineer brain. The equation that He revealed to me here, was:

Confidence

+ *Endurance*

= *Faith*

Faith always works, because God designed it, and He said that:

Heb 11:6 "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

So let me explain how faith works – according to this equation - as the Holy Spirit revealed it to me.

CONFIDENCE

In the distance lies the promise that can and must be obtained. It is in the future, written in the Word of God. This is our *confident hope*. It is found in the form of a promise. He *WILL* fulfil His promises.

Endurance

However, I am in the *here and now*, and the promise is in the *distant, unseen future*. The future does not necessarily mean only when Jesus returns to earth to establish His kingdom. That future is anything which I am believing for according to the Word, even in this present life. But it is *as yet future* and *unseen for me* in the place where I find myself in the *here and now*.

Between *here, in my here and now*, and *there in my hoped-for future*, is a path that must be taken. Friends, that path, however long or short it might be, is always a *path of endurance* in one degree or another. It is often a difficult path. But that path of endurance is the *path of faith*.

Faith

The path of faith starts where I find myself *now in the present* and it *reaches forward towards where hope is* – that which is in the future – that which I *cannot* see. I take hold of that hope, plant the glorious promise of the hope firmly within my heart, and with a joyful expectation, I *make it my own!* Then I *walk in the direction of that hope* until it is eventually fulfilled. Whether that hope is for health, or whether it is for

redemption from sins; whatever I may be hoping for according to the promises in the Scriptures, that hope *awaits me in the future*. That is something God said, and I take hold of it, and I believe it; I build my hope on it. Now I must walk in the path of faith towards that hope.

Peter walks on water

In the book of Matthew Chapter 14, there is a story about Jesus, walking on a stormy sea towards the disciples who are in their boat. They are afraid because the sea is tempestuous. Suddenly they see this Man walking on the water. They think it is a ghost. Peter, on realising that it is Jesus, says to Jesus,

"Lord, if it is You, tell me to come."

Jesus answers him with only one word:

"Come."

Friends, that word, *"come"* is a powerful word to which Peter can *anchor his hope*. Jesus said, *"Come."* He didn't mean, *"Come, and you will sink."* He meant, *"Come, and you will also walk on the water."* His Word is trustworthy.

Perhaps He is speaking to you, whatever storm you may find yourself in. He says, *"COME."* Get up out of the boat of your unbelief. Get up out of your sin. Get up out of your bitterness. Get up out of your painful past. Get up out of your boat of religious comfort and unbelief and sin.

Mat 11:28,29 "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden ... and I will give you rest."

Peter is in the boat and Jesus is on the sea and there is a *distance between them*, a distance covered by a stormy sea. Now is the time for faith. Peter must *get out of the boat*, and he must *begin to walk*. The whole distance of this impossible situation that he must walk in faith, is *in the direction of the hope* that is in front of him, based on Jesus' single word, *"Come."* He anchors his hope to Jesus' word of promise, because Jesus said, *"Come."*

Friends, if Peter wants to get to Jesus, his Hope, he must *continue walking* (endurance) on this stormy sea. Halfway on his journey, his faith falters. He looks around him, and what does he see? He sees *high waves* and a *strong wind blowing*. Right there is where the devil comes to tempt us, on the stormy sea. He wants to challenge our faith and bring about unbelief.

The devil tempts him with *a lie*. The devil always comes with lies! What is the lie? Peter sees the *waves* and the *gusts of wind* blowing, and he *begins to doubt*.

Tell me, if the sea was calm and the waves still, would Peter naturally be able to walk on the water? The answer is *NO!* The tempestuous sea therefore has *absolutely nothing to do with the miracle he is experiencing* - walking upon the water. Peter allows the devil to throw him off course by *taking his focus off his Hope* and making him doubt by reason of the tempestuousness of the sea. The moment that he takes his eyes off his hope in Jesus' reliable Word and looks at the *sea of impossibilities* and the stormy elements around him, his faith begins to fail him, and he sinks.

Is that the end of the story? No. Jesus quickly comes and grabs him by the hand and lifts him up again. Friends, if you have failed in your faith at some point, Jesus is there to lift you up again – to place you back onto the water again so that you can *walk your miracle again*.

And by faith, Peter and Jesus walked together back to the boat.

The path of faith

Friends, sometimes there is a difficult path that must be travelled upon, and that is the path of faith. And that is where we are. Wherever you are on your life's journey, you are on a journey of faith, but you cannot walk on that *path of faith* with *confidence* if you don't have *hope*. And you *cannot have hope without the Word of God*.

It is therefore imperative that we have a *firm understanding of the promises of Scripture*; and that is why I have written all these books, to give us an understanding of the truth of Scriptures, and with that understanding, hope.

Books

In the various series of books, both mine and others from recommended authors, we quote at least 5000 verses from Scripture. These books teach about what the Scriptures say about the Holy Spirit, what the Scriptures say about the end times, what the Scriptures say about a deep relationship with Jesus and how to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. They teach on what the Scriptures say about marriage and business and many other issues of daily life that people experience every day.

We share many testimonies of the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit in the lives of ordinary people, and those testimonies are always an encouragement to our faith so that we can anchor our hope firmly to the Word of God. Once our hope is anchored, then we have something to walk towards with confidence by faith, without fearing the storms of life. We walk in the direction of our hope.

May the Lord help you to obtain insight into His Word, and may that insight not only serve as interesting, intellectual information for you, but may it be something onto which you can *steadfastly hold*. May your heart be filled with the exuberant joy and expectation that comes with the fulfilment of the truths of God's promises; that it will give you *an anchor for your hope and faith*. May you be able to walk with *endurance* towards the sure fulfilment of your faith, bearing much fruit with great joy.

Henry Jackson