

Romans 8:24-25 (NKJV)

²⁴ 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?

First- a correction. I said that the word for firstfruits was only used one place in the New Testament. I was wrong about that. It was actually used 7 other places. I'm not sure how I made that mistake but I surely did make it.

It doesn't take long in looking at verse 24 to know that we will be talking about **hope** this morning. The word is used 5 times in 2 verses.

This is what the Holman Bible dictionary says about Hope:

Hope is trustful expectation, particularly with reference to the fulfillment of God's promises. Biblical hope is the anticipation of a favorable outcome under God's guidance. More specifically, hope is the confidence that what God has done for us in the past guarantees our participation in what God will do in the future. This contrasts to the world's definition of hope as "a feeling that what is wanted will happen." Understood in this way, hope can denote either a baseless optimism or a vague yearning after an unattainable good. If hope is to be genuine hope, however, it must be founded on something (or someone) which affords reasonable grounds for confidence in its fulfillment. The Bible bases its hope in God and His saving acts.

We need to stop here and ask ourselves- how do we define hope? I think it would almost be better if we had a different word for scriptural hope and worldly hope. If I say to you, I hope it won't rain on the picnic tomorrow, you probably aren't going to rebuke me and say- Jon, you shouldn't be resting your hope on something so uncertain. No. You would know that I am expressing a wish for something good.

But if I were to say, I am hoping that Christ will return, but he might not, you would do well to stop me in my tracks and very seriously correct that error right now. And that is what I mean. It is almost like we need 2 different words. It is very very important that we use the right definition when we go to scripture. We must see that in scripture hope is eagerly looking forward to what we know is going to happen. (repeat)

For we were saved in this hope

Some translations make it seem that we are saved BY this hope. But saved IN this hope is a much better translation. We know by now that we are saved BY Grace through Faith. If we get this wrong, we could think that if I hope well enough, if I

can just drum up enough hope, I will be saved. Praise God salvation isn't like that. We know by now that there is NOTHING we can do to make ourselves presentable to God. We know that our sinful history and our sinful state puts us in the position where we must cry out to God to do what He can do. And even the crying out is caused by His work in our lives. We cry out to him like the man in chapter 7- **24**

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

It is then that we realize that it is Christ who took upon himself all of our sin. It is Christ that took the just penalty of our sin upon himself and fully paid for it with His blood. And we are now able to trust in Christ and what He did to remove the penalty and absolute power of sin over us. We can, by faith, believe that we are, for the first time, right with God. And it had nothing to do with what WE did. All we ever did was to earn damnation. It has everything to do with what Christ did. He died for us, paid our penalty, and resurrected to His Father. So it isn't the amount of hope we have that saves us. It isn't even the amount of faith we have that saves us. In fact, even our faith isn't something we work up. It is something God gives us when His Holy Spirit allows us to see through our pretentious exterior to our sinful interior. That is a miracle. And once it happens we can't help but call out to our Savior. And at that point we finish with the man in Chapter 7 when he says

25 I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So hope does not save us. Grace does. Christ does.

Notice it says we were saved in this hope- past tense. This is the Aorist tense. Again the Aorist tense means once and done. So he is telling his believing readers that their salvation was accomplished once in the past and it is complete. Now how can that be? Doesn't scripture also talk about being saved, present tense? Doesn't it say that we will be saved in the future as well? Which is true? Well, obviously all of them are true.

We have been saved by Justification. Justification was done once on the cross by Christ when He took our sins upon ourselves. When He said "It is finished", that part of His work was finished.

Now how about the references where it says we are being saved, present tense? Well that is talking about sanctification. It is talking about the process of us becoming more like Christ. It is talking about the work that the Holy Spirit is doing in us to prepare us to live in the family of Christ forever. This is in no way improving on our Justification through Christ. But it IS providing external evidence of an internal reality. Christ is conforming our practice to our profession. Then how about the idea of being saved in the future? That is glorification. We will one day enter into the presence of Christ, free from the penalty, the power and

the presence of sin. On that day it can be said that we are fully saved in every nuance of the word.

Our text is talking about the salvation we experience in justification. So we were justified by Christ in this hope. We were saved in the sphere of hope, that what was begun by Christ would end in eternity with Christ. When we look at our text closely we can save ourselves from 2 common errors. One is claiming too little of our current state of salvation and the other is claiming too much.

Some claim too little.

These people, when asked if they are sure of their salvation... if they are confident of being with Christ forever, they would say, well no. I am not sure. They would say "I feel that would be too presumptuous. I hope that I will be in heaven, but I really can't know that for sure. I don't have the hope you are talking about and I don't know if I even should." These people make too little of our salvation. We are told all through scripture that we not only CAN know but that we SHOULD know.

1 John 5:13 (NKJV)

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

I guess we would have good reason to wonder if we are saved if our salvation was based on how good we live or how much faith we can muster up. But our salvation is not based on any of that. Our salvation is based on what CHRIST did. So how can we possibly think his work is not adequate to save anyone who has truly believed in Him? John gives us evidences that we can use to determine if we possess saving faith. But if we have faith in Christ to save us, we don't ever need to guess if what He did on the cross will work or not for us. It ALWAYS works.

Then there are those who make too much of this salvation. There are some who think that we get the whole package when we come to Christ. They expect that we can be perfect in these bodies. They expect entire sanctification- that is basically that we will be free from the punishment of sin, the dominating power of sin, and the presence of sin in this life. But they miss the fact that we are saved in the realm of hope. If we had it all, we would have no need for hope. If we had it all, we would have no reason to groan. We cannot take our current salvation that far. It is only for Christ to determine when we will be glorified. Only then will we be perfect.

Now what is "this Hope" that Paul is referring to? He is referring to verse 23 where he says,

eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. That is the

hope. Re read this passage this week and look for all the words that imply or state an eagerness for the future. This passage may have more eager looking forward to something than any other passage in scripture. We are looking forward to something that is more than a pipe dream. It is an absolute reality. And to have that reality is worth more than anything we could have on this planet. We are looking forward to real life like we have been describing in the last several weeks, life with a new body on a newly refinished planet that has been freed from the curse of sin and decay and death. It is better than any utopia you will ever read about in a science fiction book or even dream up in your imagination. That is the “this hope” that Paul talks about.

I have been thinking about this. We talk a the test for optimism and pessimism . We talk about the glass being half full or half empty. We look at the same set of facts and come up with a positive or negative slant.

A lot of so called preachers have developed a message telling us that true spirituality is being the “glass is half full” kind of people. The people who preach this are missing the boat. Psuedo Christianity is focused on this world. True Christianity is other world focused. What true spirituality believes is that the glass and its contents are going to be burned up one day and the glass **we will get** will be full. That is **faithful** optimism. That is **Biblical** hope. For now, both things are true. The cup is half full of emptiness and half full of liquid. Our lives are like that too. They have some degree of things that bring us pleasure and some degree of things that bring us pain. To paint it in a positive or negative light really isn't the issue. To view our circumstances as being **from the hand of God for our good** is all that is required. If we will just do that, and walk in the trust that God knows what He is doing, that is good enough. We don't need to paint on a smile in order to do good Public Relations for God. If we will just trust Him and Obey Him, we'll be doing fine in this life.

But at the same time, we cannot live a faithful life in this world if we do not have a *deep down in our guts* hope for what God is going to give us. Hope is key to our life here.

Let's take a look at a few things scripture tells us about hope in the believers life.

First we see that hope protects our head.

1 Thessalonians 5:8 (NKJV)

8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

Our hope of salvation is to be put on as a helmet. I believe what this means is that our hope in what God is going to do for us will protect us from those dismal thoughts that can so quickly plague us. We are such frail creatures. And one phone call can bring us news that is so dismal that we feel all is lost. How quick

we can spiral down in our thinking to where life has no purpose and everything we have ever done seems like just a great big waste. Paul even said that if our hope is just in this life, if it doesn't actually extend into eternity, we are of all people the most miserable lot.

But hope is our protection. Hope looks at truths that transcend our misery here. Hope gives us thoughts that protect our minds from despair. When Mike was facing an unpleasant task he used to say "you can do anything for a day". His point was that if the end result is great enough, you can put up with a lot of bad stuff to get it. That's kind of what hope does for us. It gives us the mental fuel to ward off the thoughts of futility. Without hope, you can't defend your mind from those thoughts. We must have hope for that.

Hope heals our hearts

John 14:1-3 (NKJV)

1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

This passage doesn't use the word hope, but it implied in everything that is said. We all have heart trouble from time to time. We think things are falling apart. We feel that all is lost. We feel like we are hopelessly lost and abandoned in our trip through life. Well this is what Christ told us. He is basically saying, don't stay in that state. Don't put up with those thoughts and the malaise they bring upon you. No. Here is the antidote. Christ has gone to prepare a place for us. We are not abandoned. We are not insignificant. God is not distant. Do you realize what this is telling us? We are in Christ's thoughts.

Have you ever prepared a party for someone, maybe a surprise birthday party? Tell me this. When you are preparing the party, who is utmost in your thinking? Isn't it the person you are preparing the party for? So as Christ prepares a place for us, who do you think is on His mind?

And after you prepared that party, did you think oh, never mind. I think we will just forget about it? No. You looked forward to the day you would get to spring it on your friend or loved one. That's what you did it for. Well that's how it is with Christ's return. If Christ has spent all this time preparing a place for us, do we really think that He would forget to return? Of course not. And the absolutely amazing thing is that He is looking forward to His return to bring US to His party. He wants us in His company. This isn't just wishful thinking. This is truth promised by God's Word! We can bank on it.

Hope Anchors the soul

Hebrews 6:11-19 (NKJV)

11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,

12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

.....17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,

18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

Hope protects our heads

Hope heals our hearts

And hope anchors our souls

Our souls are prone to wander, they are prone to go after foreign gods. In our lives our souls are prone to be seduced by any number of appealing things around us.

The devil continually tries to seduce us with the appeals of this world. Our souls can easily be like boats that are drifting with the currents around us. We often allow our surroundings to determine our direction.

Well hope is the cure for that. When we become fixated on the heavenly city, when we become convinced of the glory of the heavenly pay day, when we look longingly and expectantly for the eternal reward that Christ has promised us, our souls become anchored. They become fixed. Those who are close to us don't wonder about us. They aren't concerned that one day we are spiritually hot and the next we are spiritually cold. One day we are prioritizing spiritual things and the next day we become absorbed with the world. No, hope provides an anchor that makes our lives predictable. You can know what a person will do who has his eyes on His Master. He will be doing what his Master wants done.

Hope is reason for rejoicing

Romans 5:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 12:10-13 (NKJV)

10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

We don't need to think about this very long. When you know something good is going to be happening, you have something to rejoice about.

A good example comes to mind with people who have set a date to get married.

Their whole lives revolve around that specific date. In fact their lives are measured by that date. Even as the bride and her family pour a massive amount of work and money into the event, the bride rejoices in her heart at the upcoming event.

That is what hope does for a person. And that is essentially what we have to look forward to. We are the bride of Christ. We look forward to the day that the church will be given to Christ. And we will live forever as family. Even on our worst day, we have more to rejoice about than the wealthiest billionaire. Our hope is certain. And it is so good it is worth rejoicing about.

Hope fuels pure living

1 John 3:2-3 (NKJV)

2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

We see here that our hope is related to how we live. And that only makes sense. Have any of you gone to a high school reunion? We probably aren't much of a reunion crowd. I went to one once. I wonder how many pounds have been lost due to reunions. Anyway, this tends to be something people try to prepare for.

They want to look like they looked 20 years ago. Good luck with that.

Well our reunion with Christ is something worth preparing for. We will see Him. And we will be like Him. He will change us to His image. But we will take into that event who we are. We will stand before Christ fully known. Do we really want to stand before Him as people who have secretly rebelled against him in our private worlds? Do we really think there is no consequence for faithless living of any kind? Do we not understand that Christ is worthy of all obedience and trust? Well if we truly eagerly look forward to seeing Christ, we will prepare for the reunion. We will live in a way that pleases Him. We will live in a way that honors Him.

Hope fuels boldness

2 Corinthians 3:9-12 (NKJV)

9 For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

10 For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels.

11 For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.

12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—

Paul makes the connection here that the confidence of glory makes us bold of speech. Again, this only makes sense. We have a hope for something we will receive that no man can take away. If we have any sense at all we will be loyal to Him who will reward us. So we represent him boldly, even at great cost. Why are we bold? Because no matter what they do, they cannot take away our reward. They cannot take away our future. We are safe. We are secure. We are loved. We are protected. They can kill us, but they cannot ultimately harm us. Hope gives us this freedom to speak. Hope makes us reckless in that sense. And hope makes us uncontrollable by the powers that be. And that will infuriate them.

Hope is commanded

1 Peter 1:13-15 (NKJV)

13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

We are commanded to rest our hope fully on the grace we will be given at Christ's return. And it won't happen naturally. It is something we must be active in doing as Christians. We must take control of our minds. We must have our minds functioning clearly. A believer has to hold as a priority our ability to think.

Because most of what happens in us spiritually happens in our minds. We cannot grow spiritually if we cannot think. We cannot minister to others if we cannot think. We cannot discern good from evil if we cannot think. We cannot carry out our responsibilities if we cannot think. So controlling our minds is a very high priority in spiritual matters.

Here we are told to remain prepared to think. Don't be drunk. Don't allow your reason to be blurred. And in doing that we must use our minds to put our hope where our hope should go.

The world around us has false hope. They trust in this world to provide them fulfillment and happiness and joy. How sad that must be. That is all they have. Everyone has hope. But only Christians have a true hope. It is only us that can confidently rest on the promises of God knowing that God CANNOT lie so He will surely deliver on all of His promises. So it only makes sense that we would use

our minds to fuel the tank of hope. It only makes sense that we would re-orient in every situation to the glory that is held out for us in the end. It only makes sense we would rest our hope on what WILL happen when Christ returns.

And along with our last point we see that hope does not disappoint

Romans 5:3-5 (NKJV)

3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

See how this works? In a Christian's life bad circumstances lead to great hope. Really, when do you most hope for Christ's return? When everything is falling on your lap? No. When we suffer. Tribulation produces a resilient "keep on keeping on" in a Christian. And the habit of keeping on creates the kind of person that can be depended upon to continue to keep on. And being that kind of person creates a longing and looking forward to that which is to come. And when we longingly look forward to what Christ is going to do- we will never be disappointed by that. God loves us and He will surely do what He says He will do.

Now, let's quickly look at the last of the verse.

but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

Here is a logical argument to make a simple point. The nature of hope is to look forward to something that you don't have, that exists in the future. If we possess it in the present, if you possess it now, it is no longer hope. It is something, but it is not hope. So we cannot confuse those things that we are told to hope for with those things that are promised to us in this present life. We do not have perfection. The groaning is perfectly appropriate because there is something to groan about. But there is better coming.

Now to review where we went this morning:

Hope guards the head

Hope heals the heart

Hope anchors the soul

Hope is reason for rejoicing

Hope fuels pure living

Hope fuels boldness

Hope is commanded

Hope does not disappoint

Think about that list. Does that describe us? Are these attributes of ours?

Are our heads guarded from the downward spiral?

Are our hearts healed from a continual troubled state?

Are our lives anchored so that our faithfulness can be depended upon?

Are we rejoicing because, no matter what, we know where our home is?

Are we keeping our lives pure because we know we will see Jesus?

Are we bold in speaking about Christ because we know we will be with Him?

Do we take control of our minds and chose to look forward to what Christ will do for us?

If not, our problem is a lack of hope, a lack of faithfully believing that what God says is true, a failure to set our affections on things above. This is vital. And the more I study the more vital it appears. We must fix our attention where it belongs. We must consider what Christ has in store for us and allow our hearts to become fixated on that.

Think this week of how much we have to rejoice about. I don't know what your circumstances are. I guaranty you there is something in your life that will at least give hope a run for the money. There is something that will tempt you to be distracted from the sure and eternal hope we have. There is something in your life that will call you to be depressed or dismayed or distracted from hope. But hope has really got to fill our minds. If we want to live the Christian life the way it needs to be lived, hope is crucial. And if God promised a great future, and he did, and if God never lies, and He never does, and if God has the power to deliver on His promises, and He does, You and I who believe in Christ have the richest source of hope on this planet. Let's live like it.

Faith looks back to the completed work of Christ. Hope looks forward with eager expectation of what is to come.