

#2 “Hold Fast to Hope”

by Brent Barnett

www.relevantbibleteaching.com

1 Corinthians 13:13 says, “But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.” Faith, hope, and love are three concepts that are central to Christian living and belief. Faith is essential to life in Christ, being the grounds for salvation and the means to be able to accomplish anything truly spiritually meaningful in Christ. Love is extremely important, given that it is the mark of true disciples of Christ (John 13:34-35). But hope? What makes hope so great that it is listed as part of these three enduring qualities?

Hope is an essential foundation of Christianity, along with faith and love. Central to true Christianity is a hope in what is not yet seen (Romans 8:24) and a refusal to put our hope in anything that the world says will bring us life. Because of our hope in the eternal, we as Christians are to be focused on trying to live this life in light of our future inheritance in heaven. Our lives on earth should be dictated by a heavenly hope and confidence. This hope and focus on the life to come should be so evident to others that they even ask us about the hope that we have (1 Peter 3:15). No one would marvel at a person who hopes for the next sitcom, paycheck, or promotion. The world’s hopes are shallow, shortsighted, unsatisfying, and have nothing to do with eternal life. Our hope in the eternal is what sets Christians apart as we place our focus and hope in heaven.

1 Peter 1:13 says, “Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” We can get ourselves into trouble in our Christian lives if we don’t put the totality of our hope upon our coming inheritance in heaven. Peter emphasizes that we are to hope fully and completely upon the grace that is coming to us when Christ returns. When Christ returns to take us home, we will be glorified (1 Corinthians 15:42), we will be given new bodies that no longer experience pain (Revelation 21:4), we will be set free from the pulls of our sinful flesh, and we will go on to worship and enjoy God forever in eternal bliss. We will be rewarded for our faithfulness in this life (2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15), but it is only the merits of Christ that make it possible for us to enter heaven in the first place (Ephesians 2:8-9). This is why we have put our faith in Him. This is why we love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). And His great love and grace that led us to believe is why we can have such great hope. The God Who started the good work of salvation in our hearts will finish it (Philippians 1:6). He is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), meaning that He will take what now is a work in progress and make it holy and perfect when we are glorified. He won’t quit, grow tired, or bail out on us. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit and guaranteed our inheritance in heaven (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13, 4:30). This is such a hopeful reality because of its permanence and because God cannot and will not back out on His promises (Titus 1:2). These are sure things, things which should give us great hope. The Christians to whom Peter was

writing were enduring persecution and suffering (1 Peter 1:6). Their ability to endure would be related to their ability to keep their hope alive. It might be tempting to deny Christ if we doubt the hope that we have in eternity. It might be tempting to despair if we forget that our coming eternal glory far outweighs any temporal pleasure. Our hope must be fixed upon heaven, and inasmuch as that is the case, we can stand firm, be strong in Christ, and be faithful and obedient. Our hope makes a great difference in how we go through this life. Our hope helps keep both our faith and love strong.

Sometimes as believers it can be tempting to misplace the reason for our hope. God's good gifts and provisions in this life are reminders of His good character and love for us, but they are not the ultimate thing that we are to put our hope in. Hebrews 10:23 says, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." Our ultimate hope is in our confession of faith, our belief in Christ, and in our certainty of His love for us. He has promised us eternity, and He is faithful. Even when we are faithless, still He will remain faithful (2 Timothy 2:13). Should we start hoping in the shallow things of this world to make us joyful, God will still be faithful to us. He will lead us back to Himself and to His promises of eternal life, the only things that can truly keep our hope strong and full.

Those who set their hope entirely on the things of this world rather than upon Christ's return will find themselves enslaved to sin, to bitterness, to fear, and to emptiness. Sin must keep being committed in order for its passing pleasures to be maintained (Hebrews 11:25). Often times, we have to take our sin one step further in order for the same temporary pleasure that it can provide. The temporary nature of sin and its passing pleasures are so contradictory to the permanence of our hope and the faithfulness of our God. This is why Proverbs 11:7 says, "When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish, and the hope of strong men perishes." In other words, those who set their hope upon the things of this world will lose all hope when eternity comes. They will have chased hope after vain hope in this life, and upon their death, all hope will be gone. The righteous, on the other hand, have hope that will endure, for to them, death is swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:54). Our hope is secure and eternal, and therefore we don't have to dread death. As Paul says, "To live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). With that perspective, never is there a reason to lose hope. Let us hold fast to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His promise of eternal life forever in heaven. He is good to keep His Word, and thus we can put the totality of our confidence in Him.