

Why are we so hopeless?

At least 7 times, the apostle Paul links together the 3 jewels of *faith, hope* and *love*. We have heard many sermons on faith and love but, when was the last time you heard a message on *hope*?

This is because we have confused Christian hope with worldly hope. Whenever the world speaks of hope, there is a negative possibility associated. "I hope it will not rain tomorrow" - (it may do so!) "I hope you pass your exams" - (You may fail!). "I hope you will be happy in marriage" - (there may be a divorce!). Christian hope has no such negative connotation. It is an eager expectation of what is certain!

Hope is an attribute of the mind and is evidenced in confidence.

Thus the writer to the Hebrews would write "*Cast not away your confidence*" (10:35) and Paul would declare before Felix and Agrippa "*I am on trial for the hope of the resurrection*" (Acts 24:21; 26:6). He is **NOT** saying, "I hope there's a resurrection and that I have not given up my career to follow a delusion". He **IS** saying, "I know that I know that I know there will be a resurrection and that I shall live with my Lord". To Paul, hope is a jewel to be compared with faith and love – treasures from the storehouse of God's wealth. It should never be confused with faith as it is completely different, even though the KJ version confuses them in Hebrews 10:23 where πιστις (faith) is substituted for ελπις (hope). ***Faith is an attribute of the heart and is evidenced in obedience.*** (See my on-line book *He Holds my Tomorrows.*)

This is why Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, exhorts us to "put on the breastplate of faith and love (*covering the heart*) and as a helmet, (*covering the mind*) the hope of salvation".

How does one receive *hope*? Paul wrote to the Ephesians (a circular letter probably to all the churches of Asia Minor), that '*I, having heard of the **faith** in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your **love** for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a **spirit of wisdom and of revelation** in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your understanding be enlightened, that you might **know** what is the **hope** of His calling*' (Eph 1:16-18). He knew they were missing this great jewel! **It comes only by revelation from God!**

Thus John would write his first epistle with the intention that his readers might come to **know** by the inner witness of the Spirit. *These things I write to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you might **know** that you have eternal life (5:13).*

Men and women in many lands and times have gone to their martyrdom because they knew – not because they believed.

Do we? Let us study again the letter of 1 John and seek to live according to its precepts so that we also might know – by the Spirit's revelation.

Let's stop being so hopeless!