

## Are There Any Grounds for Hope

By Harvey Simpson

Definition of Hope..

"Hope" is commonly used to mean a wish : its strength is the strength of the person's desire.

Examples -

"I hope that I win the lottery."

"I hope we get back to the way things were."

"I hope the Dodgers win the World Series soon."

"I hope that this sermon isn't a dud."

You see this kind of hope is SUBJECTIVE, the hope is placed upon the subjects' wish for the things to come true. They may or may NOT be grounded in reality.

I mean you can hope everyday that you win the lottery and fall for the deceptive commercials showing everyone winning in the commercial. But, it's not reality. The chances are so infinitesimal that they may as well be zero. And just because you wish for it really hard, doesn't mean it is going to happen. When you wish really hard and something improbable happens, that is called a coincidence (or maybe even a God moment when God intervenes, but know this, He does NOT intervene just because YOU wish it. He intervenes because of His love and will).

I hope things return to the way they were. Is that hope based in reality? Maybe, maybe not. Maybe things will NEVER be as they were, maybe this is our new life. But, again, MY hope, doesn't change the outcome.

Will the Dodgers win the World Series soon? I hope so, but I can't influence that one way or the other. My hope has nothing to do with the reality of the team. Because I, and every other Dodger fan, still hope they will win the World Series even if they have a lousy team in the year we are hoping!

I hope this message is not a dud. I can wish really hard that this message resonates with you; it may and it may not. I can do all the work and research to give the best sermon that I can, but ultimately, it's up to the receiver to determine whether it has merit or not. My style of preaching may be preferable with some people and may turn others off completely. My hope in providing a good sermon is subjective. Yet, I still hope it has merit for you!

The other type of hope is OBJECTIVE hope. When what we hope for really has nothing to do with OUR wishes, but the object of what we place our hope. But even if our hope is placed in the object, there is still a chance that it can be a false hope. Usually when we place our hopes in the object, (person), it is something or someone that has a proven HISTORY of previous success.

Example.

I hope that the sun rises tomorrow.

I hope that the children will come home for Christmas.

I hope to see my friend and shake his hand.

In these examples the sun has been rising for a LONG time, so this isn't really a long-shot hope.

Maybe your children have been returning home every year for the last 15 years, so your hope would be based in the good history of them coming home. No great leap.

Finally, in this example the last quote is from a character named Red in the Shawshank Redemption. Red is hoping to shake Andy's hand. They became good friends over many years of incarceration.

When Red is finally paroled, he follows Andy's advice and completes a couple of tasks. I won't give it away, in case you haven't seen the movie yet. But each of the tasks that Andy asks of him, require Red to have some

faith. When he is about to do this last and final task, his hope in Andy is greatly increased because at each task, Andy set up reason for more hope and belief, so, really, he has no doubt that he will meet up with Andy again. His hope is in what Andy has done already, and Andy's character to keep his promises.

This is really the kind of hope that we are talking about when we speak of Biblical or Christian hope. It's the hope in a person (God) and the faith that He will do what He said He will do.

There are times in the Bible when God does offer temporal hope, many of the psalms about Israel and God protecting them are expressed, and that is not bad, but let us remember, that God sent Jesus on a mission of mercy to offer us eternal hope of life; so, of course, we will look at some of these writings... but before we get into "eternal hope" let's examine another type of hope in the bible.

One of the most frequent "other uses" of hope is the expression of a desire, but not one that is assured. Often, we find this expressed as "... hope to... ." It is used in reference to both unbelievers and believers: Here are some examples...

**8** Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was **hoping** to see some sign performed by Him. (Luke 23:8).

Jesus NEVER gave Herod any such promise that he would perform a miracle for the amusement of Herod. Herod, a non-believer, just wanted to see Jesus do a magic trick. He hoped that Jesus would perform for him (didn't happen though).

**19** But when her masters saw that their **hope** of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, (Acts 16:19).

The owner of the demon possessed slave girl, hoped in her ability to make cash for THEM. Paul took that hope away when he freed this poor girl from her bondage. Notice the owners didn't care a lick about her, just the hope of profiting off of her!

**24** whenever I go to Spain—for I **hope** to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while— (Romans 15:24).

And finally, Paul as he writes to the Roman Christians, has a hope to see them, as he thinks he will continue to pass through to Spain. Perhaps God didn't reveal all of His plans to Paul at this time. He really had a human hope to enjoy fellowship with other believers.

Another way that the bible uses the word "hope" is to imply a false hope, such as the misplaced hope of the Jews who were persecuting Jesus because he had healed a paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath:

**45** Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your **hope**. (John 5:45).

Here we see Jesus telling the Jews that hated him for healing a man on the Sabbath that the "hope" of Israel, isn't Moses. Moses, himself will accuse the Jews that do not believe in Jesus. Jesus clearly teaches throughout John 5 that He is equal with the Father.

The full text is ...

**45** Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. **46** For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. **47** But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

There are also examples of false hope placed in earthly treasures and money...

**16** And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. **17** And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' **18** Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. **19** And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry.'" **20** But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night [a]your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?' **21** So is

the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." - Luke 12:16-21

Although this parable is usually given as an illustration about not storing up treasures, it clearly shows that the man's "hope" is in his earthly possessions, a false hope. Look what happens to him when he places his hope in a bigger storage shed! His hope is dashed. He can't take any of the things with him into the afterlife.

**17** Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 1 Timothy 6:17

And again, with Paul's advice to Timothy, a young pastor/leader in the early church. We see that riches aren't bad, it is the false hope of riches. And that we should put our hope in God alone, who is the supplier of all things to enjoy.

So this brings us to the definition that we want for "hope" which is uniquely Christian, the hope which looks forward to spending eternity in heaven with God, which is rooted in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words...

**Biblical hope** is the confident expectation of what **God** has promised and its strength is in His faithfulness to accomplish it.

See the difference between man's temporal, subjective hope vs man's hope in God's eternal, objective promises!

Biblical hope is exclusively Christian. Only those who have placed their trust in Jesus Christ can possess biblical hope. Non-Christians do not possess the hope of which we are speaking.

**12** *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2:12-13

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, 20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 6:19 -20

The Biblical hope is a matter of faith, rather than wishful thinking. And again, it's faith in the One (God) who promises to do what He says He will do.

The Christian's Hope is characterized by perseverance and endurance...

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; Romans 5:1-4

24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with endurance (Romans 8:24-25).

For everything that was written in former times was written for our instruction, so that through endurance and through encouragement of the scriptures we may have hope (Romans 15:4).

What exactly is that hope that we are to strive for with endurance...

"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 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. John 14:1-3

Jesus here gives us HOPE in what HE will accomplish for us. The hope is eternity in a mansion with Him. And because of who Jesus is and what He has done for us on the cross, we have a REAL HOPE of forever living with Him and all the saints that have come before us and those that will follow us into heaven and His Father's House.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:3-5

Let us remember that...

In the **Bible**, Jesus brought **hope** wherever he went. He still brings **hope** to you and me today. May we find ourselves able to open our hearts to the **hope**, healing, and redemption that comes from God who, in Jesus, is utterly and demonstrably for us.

So, yes there are "grounds" for hope and those grounds are the Solid Rock of Jesus Christ, who doesn't change; ever. That's a good thing.

Finally, as Andy Dufrense said in the Shawshank Redemption...

"Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies." -Andy, The Shawshank Redemption.

Song All My Hope is in Jesus

As we reflect on this hope that we have in Him, let celebrate the Lord's supper together...