

The Visitor's Pulpit.

The Hope Laid up in Heaven.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel."—Colossians i. 5.

Three graces should always be conspicuous in Christians—faith, love and hope. They are each mentioned by Paul in the opening verses of the epistle from which our text is taken. These lovely graces should be so conspicuous in every believer as to be spoken of, and consequently heard of, even by those who have never seen us. Paul says: "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven."

I. First we speak of our hope which is laid up in heaven as a very marvellous hope, and it is so, if we only consider that it is a great act of grace that sinners have a hope at all. That when man has broken his Maker's law, there should remain a hope for him, is a thought which should make our heart leap with gratitude. Do you not recollect when you felt it to be so?—When sin lay heavily upon your conscience, Satan came and wrote over the lintel of your door, "no hope," and the grim sentence would have stood there till to day, had not a loving hand taken hysso and by a sprinkling of precious blood removed the black inscription. "Wherefore remember that at that time ye were without Christ and having no hope, and without God in the world." Ever since by faith we looked to Christ on the Cross, a hope full of glory has taken possession of our hearts. Is not this a marvellous thing?

More marvellous still is it that our hope should venture to be associated with heaven. Can there be heaven for such as we are? It seems almost presumptuous for a sinner who so richly deserves hell, even to lift up his eyes toward heaven. He might have some hope of purgatory if there was such a place, but a hope of heaven, is not that too much? Yet brethren we have no fear of hell or purgatory now, but we expect to taste the joys laid up in heaven. Is it not a miracle of love, that such poor creatures as ourselves should be enabled thus to hope in God?

It is more marvellous that this hope came to us simply by hearing. "Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." "Faith cometh by hearing," and hope comes by faith; and so the divine hope of being in heaven came to us by hearing; not by working, not by deserving, nor by penance and sacrifice, but simply by hearkening diligently unto the Divine Word and believing unto life. We heard that the precious hand of Jesus had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and we believed and saw a way of entrance into the holiest by his blood. We heard that God prepared for those that love him joys indescribable, and we believed the message, trusting in his Son. Our confidence is in the word which we have heard, for it is written, "Hear and your soul shall live;" and we find that by hearing, our confidence is strengthened, and our hearts filled with inward assurance and joyful expectation, therefore do we love the word more and more. Will we not prize to the uttermost that sacred word which has brought us such a hope? Yes, that we will; till we exchange hearing for seeing, and the message of Jesus for Jesus himself, we will always lend a willing ear to the testimony of Jesus.

This hope is marvellous, once more, because the substance of it is most extraordinary. Brethren what is the hope laid up for us in heaven? It would require many a sermon to bring out all the phases of delight which belong to that hope. It is the hope of victory, for we shall overcome every foe, and Satan shall be trodden under our feet. A palm of victory is prepared for our hands and a crown for our heads. Our life struggle shall not end in defeat, but in complete and eternal triumph, for we shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb. Nor do we hope for victory only; but in our own person we shall possess perfection. We shall one day cast off the slough of sin, and shall be seen in the glory of our new born life. Truly "it doth no yet appear what we shall be," but when we think of the matches character of our Lord Jesus, we are overjoyed by the assurance that "we shall be like him." What an honor and a bliss for the younger brethren to be like the first born! To what higher honor could God himself exalt us? I know not of aught which

could surpass this. Oh matchless joy to be as holy, harmless and undefiled as our own beloved Lord.

We expect to enjoy security also from every danger. As there will be no evil in us, so there will be none around or about us to cause us alarm. No temporal evil, such as pain, bereavement, sorrow, labor, or reproach shall come near us; all will be security, peace, rest, and enjoyment. No mental evil will intrude upon us in heaven; no doubt, no staggering difficulties, no fears no bewilderments will cause us distress. Here we see through a glass darkly, and we know in part, but there shall we see face to face and know even as we are known. Oh, to be free from mental trouble! What a relief will this be to many a doubting Thomas. This is a marvellous hope. And then no spiritual enemy will assail us, no world, no flesh, no devil will mar our rest above. What will you make out of it ye tried ones? Your Sabbaths are very sweet on earth, but when they are over you have to return to your old world again; but there your Sabbath will never end, and your separation from the wicked will be complete. It will be strange for you on Monday morning to find no cares to be renewed, no toil to be encountered, no harness to buckle on afresh, above all no sin to be dreaded, no temptation to be escaped. Heaven is so peaceful that the storms of earth are unknown, the stirrings of the flesh are never felt, and the howling of the dogs of hell are never heard. There all is peace and purity, perfection and security forever.

With this security will come perfect rest; "Yea saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors." Heavenly rest is quite consistent with continual service, for, like the angels, we shall rest on the wing, and find it rest to serve God day and night, but there you shall not toil till the sweat bedews your face, neither shall the sun smite you, nor any heat. No weary limb nor fevered brain shall follow upon the service of the glory-land. It is a paradise of pleasure, and a palace of glory; it is a garden of supreme delights and a mansion of abiding love, it is an everlasting sabbatismos, a rest which never can be broken, which evermore remaineth for the people of God; it is a kingdom where all are kings and, an inheritance where all are heirs. My soul panteth for it. Is not this a charming hope? Did I not say well when I declared it to be marvellous?

This is our hope, and yet there is more, for we have the hope of everlasting fellowship with Christ. I would give ten thousand worlds if I had them, to have one glimpse at that beautiful face, which was marred with sorrow for my sake; but to sit at my Lord's feet and look up into his countenance, and hear his voice, and never never grieve him, but to participate in all his triumphs forever and forever, what a heaven will this be? Then shall we have fellowship with all his saints, in whom he is glorified, and by whom his image is reflected; and thus shall we behold fresh displays of his power and beamings of his love. Is not this surpassing bliss? Said I not well when I declared that ours is a marvellous hope? Had I eloquence and could pile on goodly words, and could a poet assist me with his sweetest song, to tell of the bliss and joy of the eternal world, yet must preacher and poet both confess their inability to describe the glory to be revealed in us. The noblest intellect and the sweetest speech could not convey to you so much as the thousandth part of the bliss of heaven.

II. Secondly let us remark that it is a most secure hope. It is so according to the text, because it is laid up or secured. The recent calamities which have occurred in connection with the Glasgow City Bank will make men very careful where they lay up their treasures; but no one can entertain any fear for the safety of that which God himself takes under his charge. If your hope is laid up with him it is sinful to doubt its security. It is "laid up," the text says, that this means that it is hidden in a safe place like a treasure which is well secured. We find it hard to lay up our treasures safely in this world because thieves break through and steal; the iron safe, the strong room, and all sorts of inventions are employed to preserve them from felonious grip; but when God becomes the guardian of our treasure, he lays them up where none can touch it, and neither man nor devil can steal it. Our hope is laid up just as the crowns and wreaths were laid up for those who won them; no one could snatch them from their rightful owners, but the rewards were retained for the winners, to be distributed when the contest was over. You see not as yet your hope brethren, but it

is laid up; it is hidden with Christ in God and made as safe as the throne of God himself.

Notice the next word, it is laid up for you. It is something to have your hope laid up, but it is much better to have it laid up for yourself. "Laid up for you;" that is for you whose faith is in Christ Jesus, and who have love to all the saints. There is a crown in heaven which will never be worn by any head but yours; there is a harp in glory which will never be touched by any fingers but yours. Make no mistake about it, it is laid up in heaven for you, "reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." "For you;"—"Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Lay the stress there and get honey out of it. "Laid up for you."

Where is it laid up? The next word tells us. "Laid up for you in heaven," "where," says the Saviour, as if he were expounding the text, "neither moth nor rust doth corrupt." This means that no process of decay will cause your treasure to become stale or worn out; no secret moth will eat the garments of heaven's courtiers, and no rust will tarnish the brightness of their crowns. Our Lord adds: "Nor thieves break through nor steal." We cannot imagine a burglar breaking through the walls of heaven. We could not imagine Satan himself undermining the bastions of the New Jerusalem, or leaping over the bulwarks which guard the City of the Great King. If your hope is laid up in heaven it is perfectly safe. If your treasure lies in the bank, it may break; if it lies in an empire it may melt away; if it lies in an estate the title-deed may be questioned; if it lies in any human creature death may bereave you; if it lies in yourself it is deceitful altogether, but if your hope is laid up in heaven, how secure it is. Be glad and bless the Lord.

To show how secure is our hope, the apostle tells us that we have an indisputable certificate and guarantee for it. He says, "We heard of it in the word of the truth of the gospel." Notice these three emphatic words, "In the word of the truth of the gospel." First "in the word." What word is this? Man's word? Man's words are so much wind. But this is God's word, the same word that made heaven and earth, a word of power which cannot fail and a word of truth which cannot lie. You first hear of this blessed hope through the word of God, and that word is the best of evidence. You know how a person will say "My word for it,"—here you have God's own word for it. We take a good man's word freely; and will we not take God's word much more readily? You have the word of God for the sure hope that believers in Christ shall be blessed for ever. Is not this security enough?

Our text goes on to say, "the word of the truth;" so then it is not a word of guess or conjecture, or of probable inference, but of infallible truth. My brethren of the modern school, my wise brethren have a word of excoitation and outcome, and development; but the word the apostle preached was the word of the truth—something positive, dogmatic, certain. Ugly as the word may sound, the Lord grant that we may never be ashamed of the thing which is called dogmatism nowadays, which is none other than faith in God's truth. We believe the word of God not only to be true, but to be the word of the truth. "Let God be true and every man a liar." There may be other true things in the world, but God's word is the essence of truth, the truth beyond all things else that may be true.

Note the next word, "The word of the truth of the gospel," or of the good news. That is to say, the sum and the substance of the good news is to be found in this glorious hope. If you extract the essence of the gospel, and get the truth, which is the central germ of the glad tidings, you come at that blessed hope most sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the veil.

III. It is a powerfully influential hope. Brethren I have already told you that this hope is the parent and nurse of love, for the text says, "The love which ye have to all the saints for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." Now that is no trifling fountain of action which leads believing hearts to love, since love is always a work of grace. Oh for more love in this distracted world. Whatever in this world promotes Christian love is to be admired, and since the hopes that we shall be forever together before the throne of God lifts us above the little disagreements of society, and makes us affectionate to each other, it is a thing to cultivate with care.

Love is one part of the powerful opera-

tion of hope upon ourselves, but hopefulness affects others also. Where the hopefulness of saints is conspicuous it leads ministers and gracious people to give thanks to God. Paul says, "We give thanks to God and the Father, praying always for you since we heard of your hope." Moreover, hearing of their hope led the apostle to pray, and if you will follow me in reading the words which follow the text, you will see what Paul desired for his friends at Collosse. In the ninth verse you will see what he prayed for. "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and desire that you be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Having believed in Jesus and loved his people, you are going to heaven. Brethren let us learn the will of the Lord now and so be educated for the skies. Here we are to go through our apprenticeship that we may be able to take up our freedom in the city of the new Jerusalem. Here we are at school preparing to take our degrees among the saints above. Are we to enter heaven ignorant of what the will of the Lord is. Surely we ought to know something of the ways of the place, something of the rules of the court.

Then the Apostle prays, "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Is it not fit that you who are to ascend to Enoch's heaven should walk as he did and have the testimony that you please God. You are going to dwell at God's right hand where there are pleasures forevermore, would you not wish to do all you can to please the Lord before you see him?

Next he says, "Being fruitful in every good work." Why if there is to be such a rich reward of grace, let us bear all the gracious fruit we can, and if the time of working is so soon to be over, let us be instant in every holy labor while yet the season is with us. Who wants to go into heaven empty handed; who wishes to spend the time of his sojourn here in idleness? Oh, no, let us seek to be fruitful to the glory of God that so we may have an abundant entrance into the kingdom.

The Apostle further adds, "Increasing in the knowledge of God." If I am going to dwell with God let me know somewhat of him; let me search his word and see how he has revealed himself. How can I enter heaven as a total stranger to him who is the king of it? Is not the knowledge of God as needful as it is desirable? Those who have a good hope of heaven will not rest without knowing the Lord, from the least even to the greatest of them.

Once again, the Apostle says, "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." A hope of heaven is a mighty strengthener for bearing the ills of life and the persecutions of the adversary. "It will soon be over," says a man who looks for heaven, and henceforth he is not over-weighted with grief. "It is an ill lodging," said the traveller, "But I shall be away in the morning." Well we may be strengthened with all might by the hope of heaven; it is but reason that the exceeding weight of glory should be cast into the shade this light affliction, which is but for a moment.

You will say "But have you not wrought this part of the chapter into your subject without any warrant?" No. Here is my warrant in the next verse. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." I have been following the evident track of the Apostle's thoughts. The Lord gives us a hope of glory, and then he gives a meetness for it, and that meetness is largely wrought in us by the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of our hope. Cultivate, then, your hope, dear brethren. Make it to shine so plainly in you that your minister may hear of your hopefulness and joy; cause observers to take note of it, because you speak of heaven, and act as though you really expected to go there. Make the world know that you have a hope of heaven; make worldlings feel that you are a believer in eternal glory, and that you hope to be where Jesus is. Often surprise them as they see what they call your simplicity, but what is in truth your sincerity, while you treat as a matter of fact the hope laid up for you in heaven. The Lord grant it for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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