

R12.2 May 2022 Blog

Faith – Part 3 of 3

(Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture passages are from the New King James version)

1 Pet 1:20-21 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your **faith** and **hope** are in God.

Heb 11:1 Now **faith** is the substance of things **hoped** for, the evidence of things not seen.

In sharp contrast with Scripture, here is a paraphrase of what most of us typically hear from non-believers on the topic of faith and hope:

*I have **faith** in my ability to do more good than evil, therefore my **hope** to arrive in heaven (if there is such a place) is placed in a god who will weigh my good deeds and my bad deeds, grade me on the curve of comparison to other humans, and be obligated to let me in; therefore, I may live as I please so long as I don't do anything really bad (as defined by me).*

As we have discussed, faith and hope are inextricably linked. You must have hope if you have faith in something. Note that even the atheist and the agnostic have faith (their hope is that their belief system is right). We also know that a person fears in the direction of their hope. A person's fear is focused on the potential of not getting his hope. Faith and hope for the Christ-follower; however, are unique and beyond understanding in the temporal sense because the foundation is supernatural and is rooted in the unseen. A person cannot reason his way into salvation. He first must be called into relationship with God through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 1:24, Heb 9:15, Jude 1:1, Rev 19:9).



Faith and **hope**, based on God's gracious gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, are worthy of meditation throughout one's life.

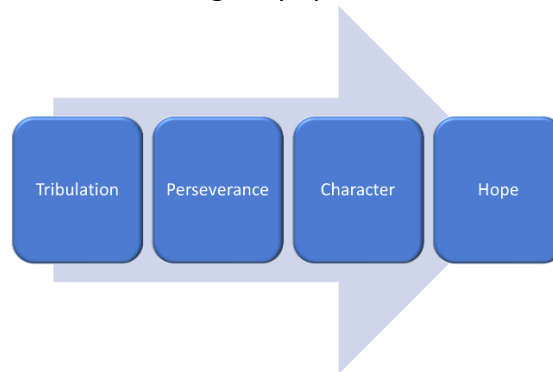
In this installment on the subject, let us focus our attention on what is foundational and consider application in light of Romans 5:1-5, because we will all face difficult circumstances on this side of the grave if we're living for Christ.

Romans 5:1-5 Therefore, having been justified by **faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by **faith** into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in **hope** of the glory of God. And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations,

knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, **hope**. 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.

Consider:

1. God justifies an individual based on **faith** alone, declaring men free from guilt and acceptable to Him. Nothing else is required. God does what is necessary, man brings nothing to the table, not even good works.
2. If it *were* possible, what would you give to have everlasting peace with God? Before pondering this question, consider the reality that every human being is a rebellious sinner at war with God and destined for eternity in Hell. This question is a corner stone to Christianity.
 - a. Now, what does it mean to have peace with God, not an internal sense of calm, but an objective, external reality?
3. Self-examination question: Are all your hopes riddled with doubt?
 - a. Is Jesus your Lord? Do you realize that it is Jesus who provides access to God's grace if you place your **faith** in Him?
4. How is one to glory in tribulation? Do not mistake tribulation as Paul uses it here to be limited to the normal pressures of living life, it includes the extreme oppression or persecution that comes from following Christ in this hostile world. Tribulation produces perseverance (meaning endurance, the ability to remain under tremendous pressure without faltering), and perseverance produces character (meaning proven character, one who is pure in following Christ), and proven character yields **hope** (a **confident hope**, one that may be counted on for eternal life in the very presence and glory of God). This kind of **hope** does not disappoint because it has been provided in perfect love by God who has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit.



If the foundation of salvation is not sure and solid, neither are the **faith** and **hope** supported by it. It is only with Christ (a stumbling block to the unbeliever – 1 Cor 1:23, and a cornerstone to the elect – Mat 21:42, Acts 4:11) as our foundation that we can possibly live out Romans 5:1-5.

Application:

1. What I hope for determines who I have faith in, and who I have faith in determines that for which I hope. Take some time to identify your hopes and who you have placed your

faith in to deliver on those hopes. Next, define which are temporal and which are eternal.

2. Remember, your fear is focused on the potential of not achieving that for which you are hoping. Take time to review and reinforce your beliefs in God/Jesus and their work in your behalf.
3. Apply understanding of biblical faith and hope to these two conversations, which you will frequently encounter in our culture today. Prepare for how you can engage as Christ's ambassador:
 - a. *"Things are just so awful these days with all the crime and meanness. I sure hope we can return to the good ole days when it was like Mayberry and we were able to leave the keys in our cars and the doors to our homes unlocked."*
 - i. I refer to this as a nostalgic hope. It is a temporal hope and in sharp contrast to a biblical hope. What is the person hoping for, and in whom are they placing their faith? Identify their fear.
 - b. *"I can't stand the thought of what climate change is doing to our environment. I hope the governments of the world can unite in their efforts to make people do the right thing."*
 - i. This is the new religion of our age. It is clearly a temporal hope, but people rally around it, and in doing so call into question God's sovereignty (is He really in control, and does He have my best interest at heart?). What is the person hoping for, and in whom are they placing their faith? Identify their fear.
4. From last month (it bears repeating): The great hope is that God is in control and has my best interest at heart...always.