

“The Full Assurance of Hope”

The Scriptures state regarding salvation, that “it is of faith that is might be by Grace; to the end that the promise ***might be sure*** to all the seed ...” (Rom. 3:16). The fact of God’s Grace being extended to us through faith is something that is ordained in order for the promise to be “made sure”, that is, not to be uncertain, or doubtful. Occasionally, those of the churches ridicule us for having an uncertain hope: i.e. that we do not know whether we will be approved at the judgment seat or not. Indeed, we ourselves can look towards the judgment seat with vexation and uncertainty as to whether or not we will be admitted to the Kingdom. But our chapter for today on the other hand, speaks of the hope of true believers as being definite and certain:

“... the ***full assurance*** of hope ...” (Heb. 6:11).

“... which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, ***both sure and steadfast*** ...” (Heb. 6:19).

If we trust in the Word of God and believe that He is able to perform that which he has promised, then we are hoping in a thing that will become a definite reality. Our hope of having a place in God’s kingdom is a “full assurance” being “sure and steadfast”, not an uncertain possibility that might or might not take place. Of what use is an anchor if it is not sure and steadfast? Even so, our faith should be “an anchor of the soul”.

TWO WAYS

The Master likened a person’s walk in life to traversing down a particular path, either broad or narrow:

“enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which ***leadeth unto life***, and few there be that find it” (Mat. 7:13-14).

Notice, which destination is ultimately reached depends solely upon what path is being followed. The narrow path does not lead to more than one place, to both destruction and life, depending upon the exertions of those who walk along it. The way of life leads only to life and not death - and therefore if we are walking along that Way, arriving at the correct destination is guaranteed!

In the case of Noah, who “prepared an ark to the saving of his house” (Heb. 11:7), entering into the Ark was his guarantee of salvation. Just so long as he remained in the ark, his salvation from the flood of waters was also guaranteed!

The Master exhorts us to “seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock, for ***it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom***” (Luke 12:32). The fact of the kingdom being given is something that enables Messiah’s brethren to “fear not”, and not cower in doubt and uncertainty. It is the Father’s “good pleasure” to give them the kingdom, and so they must trust in faith that it will indeed be given to them.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the love of Christ as something that is definite and unchanging:

“who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, not any other creature, shall be able ***to separate us from the love of God***, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35, 38-39).

The only thing that can separate us from the love of God is if we deny Him, and turn back to fulfilling our own lusts and desires: if we choose to leave the narrow way, and walk down the broad way which is more interesting to the flesh. “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (Jas. 1:14). If we choose to be drawn away by our lusts, that is the only thing which can jeopardize our standing before God. So long as we enter and remain in the antitypical Ark and walk along the Way of Life, our salvation is absolute and guaranteed. As we already cited, truly we have ***“a strong consolation***, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, ***both sure and steadfast***” (Heb. 6:18-19)

ARE WE SAVED ALREADY?

We have heard the voice of rebuke from those who should know better, concerning the certainty of the hope we have in Christ's coming kingdom. To say that we believe unwaveringly that by the Grace of God we shall be given a place in His Kingdom, makes us liable to be called "arrogant", "presumptuous", "conceited" and other epithets. But not only do the Scriptures clearly speak of our hope as an absolute certainty, it also speaks of eternal life in terms of being a present possession. Consider the following testimonies:

"... this is the record, that God ***hath given to us*** eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1Jno 5:11).

"... these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ***ye have*** eternal life, and that ye may believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 Jno. 5:13).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, ***hath*** everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; ***but is*** passed from death unto life" (Jno. 5:24).

"giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ***who hath delivered us*** from the power of darkness, ***and hath translated us*** into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:12-13).

There is a principle in Scripture, that when things are of an absolute certainty, God speaks of them as though they were already so. An example of this is the promise God gave to Abraham, "who is the father of us all (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and ***calleth those things which be not as though they were***" (Rom. 5:16-17). Though in chronology the promises to Abraham would not take place until the future, such was the certainty of them being fulfilled, that God speaks as though they were actually accomplished. This is the sense in which the testimonies cited above speak of our Hope as if we were already in possession of its fulfilment. Other Scriptures speak of it as something yet to come:

"If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, ***we shall be*** saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10).

"every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's ***at his coming***" (1 Cor. 15:23).

And so on, examples could be multiplied. The system and process of salvation as appointed by our Father does not conclude until the resurrection of the dead, and the bestowal of immortality. Until then, we are ***being*** saved, and the only sense in which we are saved already, is in a prospective sense. But so long as we do not stray from the path of life, our salvation is so certain, and so absolute, that it is as though we were already saved in the purpose of God.

An interesting passage in this context is Hebrews 3:14:

"for we are made partakers of Christ, ***if*** we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:14).

In this verse, the certainty of our Hope is again expressed in the present tense – we are already made partakers of Christ – but it is not unconditional. It is only ***if*** we have confidence and remain steadfast unto the end. There is a warning: we must take heed, lest we "fail of the grace of God" (Heb. 12:15) by turning aside from the Way of Life – for then we will "remain in the congregation of the dead" (Prov. 21:16).

PEACE AND JOY

We saw earlier that salvation is by Grace to the end that "the promise ***might be sure ...***" (Rom. 4:16). A little reflection on these things reveals the wisdom of this arrangement. If left to our own devices, we would truly

be in a miserable state, being constantly unable to achieve a satisfactory standard of righteousness. But we are not left to our own devices: the promise is “sure” because it is based upon God’s own Grace extended to us, and not of ourselves and our feeble abilities. It is not dependent upon human endeavours. From time to time, we might lament our own inabilities, and with the Apostle Paul, say “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Sometimes the burden of sin seems to be so great and we feel so unworthy that we cannot see ourselves being in the Kingdom. But it is precisely because salvation is not of ourselves, but of Grace, that we can lift up our heads in hope – a sure and certain hope, not reflective of our own personal failures.

The Master told a parable of two men who went to pray – a Pharisee and a Publican, and they both approached God with two different attitudes of mind. The Pharisee sought salvation by works, saying: “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” The publican however, was too weighed down by his sense of sin that all he could do was to throw himself upon the mercy of his Lord. His prayer was: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner”. The Master concludes the parable, saying, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Lu. 18:9-14).

The point we wish to make from this is that perhaps the Judgment Seat will be different to what we might imagine. Sometimes the idea is presented that acceptance is based on what works we have done, and that if we have marked up more good works than bad, that will result in us being granted entry into the kingdom. Conversely, if we have more bad than good points, we will be rejected. But through the weakness of human nature, this concept will inevitably lead to a sense of failing and uncertainty about the Judgment Seat, with all the depression and anxiety that such a state of mind brings. This parable suggests that the accepted ones are not who we might think – not those who trust in their own perceived righteousness, but those who trust in the Grace of God to save them from their sins.

Being that the salvation of believers is secured and “made sure” and certain by the sacrifice of Christ, there is no need to feel inadequate, for the Grace of God will cover all of their sins. There is no need for us to lament our position as “we poor sinners” as the hymn has it, but we can rejoice with peace of mind that the Sacrifice of Christ – the greatest extension of Grace to man - is all sufficient to cover our sins. So the Apostle speaks of our situation in our Lord Jesus Christ:

“By whom also we have access by faith into *this grace* wherein we stand, *and rejoice* in the hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2).

And again,

“*Rejoice* in the Lord alway: and again I say, *Rejoice*” (Phil. 4:4)

The Hope that the brethren in Christ have, is not shrouded in doubt and uncertainty. It is written in the Proverbs: “the desire of the righteous *shall* be granted” (Prov. 10:24). This being so, Messiah’s brethren can truly “rejoice” in the hope that they share with each other. Once we recognize and understand the Bible doctrine of Grace, there needs to be no uncertainty about our salvation: as we said earlier, if we walk along the narrow way, there is only one destination that it will bring us to. There is no need for us to fear the Judgment Seat, for we trust in the power of God to save us, rather than to wallow in self-pity for our own inadequacies.

THE ROLE OF WORKS

Speaking of our salvation, the Apostle writes:

“if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9).

This being so, belief and confession go together for our salvation. We confess our belief in Messiah when we are baptized, and the life that we live subsequently. Comparing our salvation with that of Noah, the Apostle speaks of “the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). Being that baptism “saves us” it is logically necessary for us to be baptized to be saved. But notice that here again, we have our

salvation spoken of in the present tense: "... doth also **now** save us". Such is the certainty of our salvation if we remain in the Christ-Ark.

The comparison in 1 Peter is with the Ark that Noah built. Noah and his household, we are told, were saved by faith:

"By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, ***prepared an ark to the saving of his house***; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7).

Notice that in Noah we have another example of justification "by faith." But notice also, that Noah had to act upon that faith. In order for him to be saved, he needed to construct the ark. Truly it was his faith that saved him, and motivated him to build – but the work of building was also necessary: not to earn salvation by works, but rather to manifest the faith that he had. So James tells us:

"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew my thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works: (Jas. 2:18).

What we are required to do to have salvation is to believe and be baptized. And the joy of knowing this will provoke us to keep Christ's commandments and do good works. It is the logical outworking and extension of our faith that we will seek to please the One who has called us by His Grace, out of love and joy for the salvation that we have in Him. Again, Abraham is an example:

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how ***faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect***? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed in God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (Jas. 2:21-23).

Abraham believed in God, and because of that belief, he trusted in Yahweh's power to save his son Isaac, and raise him up from the dead (Heb. 11:19) – hence his willingness to sacrifice him. Even so, we must show our belief in the promises of God, by actions that demonstrate our faith. Our works by themselves are not enough to save us, for "by grace ye are saved through faith, ***and that not of yourselves ...***" but however feeble they may seem, they will nevertheless testify to the hope that is within us, as rejoicing in faith we seek to show that faith to those around us, by the way that we live our lives.

SHOWING GRACE TO OTHERS

Just as the members of Christ' body stand in the Grace of God, they must endeavour to show that Grace in our relationships with others. So, the Apostle exhorts: "Let your speech be alway with Grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). In the things we do, and the things we say, the believers should show forth the Grace of God to those around them. Again, it is written: "as every man hath received the gift, ***even so minister the same one to another***, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. 4:10). We must forgive as we have been forgiven for Christ's sake, and rejoice in the hope of coming glory.

In our considerations, we have sought to present the basic principles that lie behind the Bible's doctrine of Grace. The system of salvation appointed by Yahweh rests upon the extension of His Grace, or Favour, in providing Messiah as a sacrifice for our sins, and in bringing us to hope in his Promises for the future. But there is also a practical outworking of the doctrine of Grace: we need not look to the future judgment seat with fear and uncertainty, and angst, thinking that perhaps we are not good enough. Our being accepted is predicated upon faith, not the merits of our works, and because of this, it is "made sure" – guaranteed to all who choose to walk along the Way of life. Let us therefore rejoice in the certainty of the Hope, believing and trusting that it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom, and that it will be granted to us in due course. Then we can have confidence that we will live and reign with our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the ages to come.

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