

We have been engaged for the past few weeks, in a short topical study on the theme of Gospel Hope—thus far we have seen Its Definition—wherein I provided the simple definition—Gospel Hope is a confident expectation in God and His promises—we learned that faith believes the promises, while hope waits for their fulfillment.

Last week we saw Gospel Hope: Its Importance, wherein I suggested that wherever true hope goes she brings three beautiful and productive daughters—purity, patience, and protection—while hope waits for the fulfilment of promise, it also provides a present and powerful affect in the soul—it motives to purity, produces patience (endurance), and protects from despair, deception, and distraction.

This brings us this morning, to our third and final study of Gospel Hope—Its Cultivation—that is, if hope is that important, how do we cultivate or increase it—well, I want to suggest, among many other ways, there are three key ways to strengthen or increase our hope—perhaps we could say, there are three essential ingredients to the growth of hope—Prayer, Scripture, and Tribulation—each of these are necessary if we are to grow in hope.

For example, my wife is about to plant our garden, which will need at least three things to grow—dirt, water, and sunshine—while there are other things necessary for growth, these three are essential ingredients—so too, Prayer, Scripture, and Tribulation are three essential elements for the growth of the Christian grace of Gospel Hope.

- I. Prayer
- II. Scripture
- III. Tribulation

I. Prayer

1. By this I mean—if hope is a grace, that is, a gift from God, then it must be sought by believing prayer from God...
2. Every good gift comes down from heaven, from the Father of lights, and thus must be sought for Christ's sake...
3. Rom.15:13—"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit..."
4. Now, I admit, technically speaking this verse is not a petition but a benediction, which is a pronouncement more than request..
5. But, benedictions from God can and should be used as petitions to God—for they tell us what He's promised to give...
6. Paul has been addressing the controversies that existed between the weak (largely Jews), and strong (largely Gentiles)...
7. He ends this section, in 15:1-12, with several OT quotations to prove the point that God always intended to save Gentiles and make a single church...
8. V12—"And again, Isaiah says: There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope..."
9. Thus, having underscored that it's always been God's purpose, that both Gentiles and Jews would have the same hope, he ends this section with a benediction for hope...
10. [1] Hope abounds in relation to other graces—"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope..."
11. Paul desired that the Roman Christians would be filled with all joy and peace in believing—that is, by believing God and His word, they would be filled with joy and peace...
12. True joy and peace comes from believing God—believing what His word says about Him, Christ, salvation, and eternity...

13. This being filled with joy and peace by or through faith—is unto something—"that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit..."
14. In other words—to the degree that we are filled with joy and peace, so we will abound in the grace of hope...
15. And, how are we to be filled with joy and peace but—"by or through believing"—that is, through faith in God and His word...
16. Perhaps I can put it this way—we will abound in hope to the degree that we have faith in God and in His word...
17. Remember what we have been seeing over these past few weeks—faith believes the promises and hope waits...
18. Thus, our hope will only be as strong as our faith—to strengthen our hope we must first strengthen our faith...
19. Those with strong faith in God and His word, will of necessity have strong hope—the two graces go together...
20. [2] Hope abounds from the God of hope—"Now may the God of hope"—that is, God is the source of hope...
21. He is the source of all grace—He is the God of grace, joy, peace, and hope—these graces come to us from God...
22. V5—"Now may the God of patience and comfort"—that is, the God who gives patience and comfort to His people...
23. Thus, God is the "God of hope" because He possesses hope, and He is more than willing to give it to His people...
24. I really believe that most Christians fail to grasp, how gracious God is, and willing to bestow grace upon His people...
25. Dear friends, when we pray we bring our petitions to the GOD OF ALL GRACE—to the fountain of grace...
26. Furthermore, we bring our petitions to our Heavenly Father—to the God who chose us from eternity in Christ...
27. Surely brethren, this ought to be a wonderful motive for us to pray—our Father is the God of all grace and hope...
28. He doesn't merely have a little hope that He might be willing to give, but He is the God of hope—the only source of it...
29. [3] Hope abounds by the Holy Spirit—this means, we must pray that God would give to us the Holy Spirit...
30. Even though we face powerful enemies, God possesses the power to communicate gospel hope to our souls...
31. Though Christians are commanded to grow in joy, peace, and hope, nevertheless, only the Spirit truly give these...
32. Over the past several months I have been reminded how much unbelief remains even in the heart of a Christian...
33. I think this is one of the many enemies to hope—our enemies would seek to increase our doubts about God and His promise...
34. These enemies are too powerful for us to combat on our own—we need nothing less than the power of God...
35. We must pray that God would, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and for the sake of Christ, increase our hope...
36. Thus, before we leave this first heading, let me ask you a pointed question—How often do you pray for hope...
37. I think most of us would have to confess—we have not because we ask not—we lack hope because we rarely if ever ask for it...
38. Eph.1:16-18—"I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers...that you may know what is the hope of His calling..."
39. That is, that they would know more fully what is the hope that they've been called to—the hope of heaven...

40. This was in part what Paul prayed for—that the Ephesian believers would more deeply know the nature, grounds, and focus of their hope...
41. Well brethren, if it was okay for the apostle to pray this for the Ephesians, it's okay for us to pray it for ourselves...

II. Scripture

1. Rom.15:4—"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope..."
2. Having quoted Psalm 69 in v3, the apostle underscores the importance of OT Scripture to NT Christians or believers...
3. V4—"For whatever things were written before"—that is, whatever things were written before in the OT Scripture...
4. "Were written for our learning"—that is, the all of Scripture, including the OT, is written for learning or instruction...
5. He then provides one important end of this instruction—"that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope..."
6. That is—as Scripture is read and believed—it gives us strength for endurance (patience), and Spirit wrought comfort...
7. These result in hope—that is, Scripture strengthens and comforts the soul, which results in an increased hope...
8. Thus, there is no true hope apart from Scripture—Scripture is the primary means through which grace is given...
9. As a result I suggest, we must read and meditate upon three things in Scripture, if we are to increase our hope...
10. [1] What Scripture says about God—that is, we must believe what Scripture says about God's unchanging faithfulness...
11. Heb.6:17-18—"Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us..."
12. The author is referring to the promise and oath that God made to Abraham, that he would inherit eternal life in heaven...
13. But notice, these two immutable things, His promise and oath, were not only for Abraham, but "the heirs of promise..."
14. That is, they were for Abraham's true and spiritual seed—they were for those who walk in the steps of Abraham...
15. By "the promise" is meant the many times that God verbally told Abraham he would inherit the promise land (a picture of heaven)...
16. By "an oath" is likely meant the incident recorded in Genesis 15—where God has Abraham cut various animals in half and God Himself, by way of smoking furnace, walks between them...
17. In this way, God was swearing by Himself, He was in essence saying—If My promise fails, let me be cut in pieces...
18. We read in v19—"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast"—our hope of heaven is an anchor because it's weighed down by God's promise and oath...
19. An anchor keeps a ship from being tossed around, especially in the midst of a storm—it rests upon the sturdy ocean floor...
20. Our anchor rests upon the sturdy ocean floor of God's unchanging character—His immutable promise and oath...
21. Regardless how strong the storm, our hope remains sure and steadfast, because it rests upon God's unchanging love...
22. Hymn (32)—"He by Himself hath sworn, I on His oath depend; I shall, on eagle's wings up-borne, to heaven ascend: I shall behold His face, I shall His power adore, and sing the wonders of His grace for evermore..."

23. [2] What Scripture says about Christ—in the latter half of v19, the apostle switches the imagery rather beautifully...
24. Heb.6:19—"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil..."
25. He then ties our hope to Christ Himself, v20—"where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever..."
26. The image is that of the OC, where the High Priest went beyond the veil, once a year, to make atonement for sin...
27. Our anchor doesn't merely rest upon the ocean floor, it goes behind the veil, where it's tied to the Mercyseat...
28. Simply put—Christ carries our anchor into heaven itself, or perhaps more accurately, Christ Himself is our anchor...
29. In other words—our hope rests upon the person and work of Christ—WHO is He and WHAT He has and is doing...
30. He is described as "the forerunner"—that is, He has gone into heaven before us, to ensure that we follow Him...
31. [3] What Scripture says about Heaven—I am increasingly convinced, we need to think about heaven more often...
32. Heaven is a grand truth revealed only in Scripture—this is what we hope for—to be with and like Christ forever...
33. The more Christians contemplate and meditate on heaven, the more their hope for heaven will be increased...
34. For example, we are planning a trip to LA at the end of July in celebration of one of the daughter's 15th birthday...
35. The more she thinks about this trip, does resource on the various sites in LA, the more her hope grows or increases...
36. The more she fills her mind with LA, the greater her anticipation for LA becomes—the more her hope grows...
37. So too, the more we read about heaven, think about heaven, and meditate on heaven, the more our hope for heaven increases...
38. One of the most common reasons why the hope of many Christians is weak, is because they fail to contemplate what their hope is...
39. Remember, in our first sermon on Gospel Hope I suggested the focus of our hope can best be summarized in one word—GLORY...
40. Beholding the glory of Christ, partaking in the glory of Christ, and dwelling in the glory of Christ for all eternity...

III. Tribulation

1. By this I mean—tribulation (trials and afflictions), are used of God to turn our hearts from this world to the next..
2. Rom.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..."
3. Justification, v1—"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..."
4. Sanctification, v2—"through whom (Christ) also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand..."
5. Glorification—"and rejoice in hope of the glory of God"—we have not only have justification in Christ, grace for our sanctification, but also the hope of our glorification...
6. Thus, the Christian is described as having peace with God, grace to stand firm, and possessing the hope of glory...

7. V3—"But not only that, but we also glory (rejoice) in tribulations"—this of course is a rather amazing statement...
8. Paul says, we not only rejoice in the hope of future glory, but also in present tribulations—knowing what tribulations produce...
9. Paul then says, tribulations produce perseverance, perseverance produces character, and character produces hope...
10. In other words—Christians rejoice in their hope of glory, and they also rejoice in all that produces that hope...
11. Tribulations produce hope indirectly—that is—tribulation produce perseverance and character, which results in hope...
12. [1] Tribulation—this word literally means "to press together"—it refers to a pressure of soul caused by troubles...
13. It's a broad word that includes afflictions or troubles of all kinds—health, relational, financial, and spiritual...
14. And yet, it's often used to describe religion persecution and mistreatment, endured because we are Christians...
15. In fact, several commentators suggest this is the primary point of Paul in this passage—that of religious persecution...
16. [2] Perseverance—tribulations produce perseverance—that is, tribulations strengthen our spiritual legs—which enables us to endure...
17. For example, when I was little, a neighbor of ours, trained for the NFL—he would push his wife in their car up a hill...
18. This was back in the late 70s, when cars tended to be very heavy, and he did this to esp strengthen his legs...
19. This is similar to tribulations—they are like mountains in our lives, intended to strengthen our spiritual legs...
20. [3] Character—this Greek word means "a proven or tested character"—or perhaps more literally—experience...
21. Trials or tribulations are teachers or professors, that not only strengthen us, but provide for us Christian experience...
22. The word "character" refers to a person tested and refined by God—it refers to an experienced or mature Christian...
23. Thus, tribulations give us character—they teach us experience or knowledge that the things of this life are temporary...
24. This is why usually, older more experienced Christians, are those who have a stronger hope of things eternal...
25. They have endured many tribulations and trials, and this has given them experience, which has taught them the brevity of life...
26. I was speaking to an older Christian a few days ago—I believe he said he recently turned 66 years of age (or else he was about to)...
27. He told me that the years move much faster when your older, and this life increasingly looks shorter and shorter...
28. Oh Christian friend, regardless how old you are, let tribulations have their intended goal of producing hope...
29. Let every form of tribulation and trial teach you, that this life is brief and fleeting, and your best life is yet to come...
30. Stuart Olyott—"The buffetings of this world stir up our hope of, and our longings for, heaven. The more the world turns its back on us, the more sure we are that God loves us. Will he who loves us fail to bring us home? Would his Spirit stir up within us a hope that will never be realized?..."
31. Thus, in closing, I want to suggest three motives or incentives for all Christians to cultivate the grace of Gospel Hope...
32. [a] Those with great hope know great joy from God—the Scripture often brings together rejoicing and hope...

33. Hope allows us to rejoice even though everything around us is in confusion—hope allows the bird to sing while caged...
34. Hope of eternal glory in a special way feeds or fuels Christian joy—hope is the oil that kindles the lamp of joy...
35. A hopeless soul is a joyless soul and a hopeful soul is a joyful soul—a soul that sings both at night and at day...
36. [b] Those with great hope perform great works for God—those with great hope do great things for God's glory...
37. Gospel hope emboldens the soul to work hard for God—it motivates the soul to be courageous, daring, and brave...
38. This is also true of a carnal or worldly hope—why does a man work so hard but for the hope of money or fame...
39. For example—think of men who've crossed land and sea, in hopes of finding gold, riches, treasure, and fame...
40. What drove them from their homeland, at great personal cost—what enabled them to face all manner of hardship...
41. HOPE—hope of temporal riches and fame—hope of striking it rich—hope of temporary pleasure and honor...
42. Well, brethren, if this is true with reference to a carnal and worldly hope, how much more should gospel hope motivate us...
43. Not to find temporary riches and fame, but to have eternal riches and joy—to spend eternity with Christ in heaven...
44. [c] Those with great hope give great pleasure to God, Ps.147:11—"The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy..."
45. The LORD finds pleasure in those who hope in Him—He finds joy in His people who put their confidence in Him...
46. WHY—because He loves His children He rejoices when they are hopeful—when they are full of confident expectation...
47. Everyone of us will eventually face death—the question isn't—Will you face death, but—How will you face death...
48. Christians face death with hope—they know for the sake of Christ, death has been defeated on their behalf...
49. And thus, they know that death brings gain—for them to live was Christ, and so death brings gain, because it brings them to Christ...
50. And yet, for those who lived for themselves, all of their hopes will end with the grave—they will prove as useless as a spider's web...