

13. Let Brotherly Love Continue (1Q 2022— In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews)

Biblical Material: Hebrews 13; Rom. 12:13; Eph. 5:3–5; 1 Pet. 5:1–4; Heb. 2:9; Heb. 4:16; Gal. 2:20.

Quotes

- Even now I am full of hope, but the end lies with God. *Pindar, C5 BC*
- At first we hope too much, later on, not enough. *Philibert Joseph Roux*
- Hope is a great falsifier of truth. *Gracian*
- Hope is only faith in relation to the future. *Ludwig Feuerbach*
- Hope is a good breakfast, but a bad supper. *Francis Bacon*
- The miserable have no other medicine but only hope. *William Shakespeare*
- In all things it is better to hope than to despair. *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*
- Extreme hopes are born of extreme misery. *Bertrand Russell*
- Man is, properly speaking, based upon hope; he has no other possession but hope; this world of his is emphatically the place of hope. *Thomas Carlyle*
- Hope is like the sun, which, as we journey toward it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us. *Samuel Smiles*
- God in his very being is the future of the world. *Wolfhart Pannenberg*

Questions

In what kind of ways is Jesus our future? How do we balance the future perspective with the needs of the present? What has the future to do with what Hebrews is talking about? Are we preoccupied with the future to the detriment of being involved in the urgent demands of the present, or is it the other way around? How do we “occupy till I come”? What is it we are most looking forward to—the city with golden streets—what?

Bible summary

Paul’s final words to his audience in Hebrews 13 cover many subjects including brotherly love, remembering those who are suffering, faithfulness in marriage, trust in God and not money, commitment to Christian leaders, avoiding heresy, holding onto hope, and a request for personal prayers for himself. Rom. 12:13 tells us to care for the needy. Eph. 5:3–5 warns against sexual immorality. 1 Pet. 5:1–4 encourages elders to care for God’s flock. Jesus died so we might live (Heb. 2:9). “We should go confidently to God on his throne of grace so we can receive mercy, and discover grace to help us when we really need it.” Heb. 4:16 FBV. “The life I now live in this body, I live by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me, and who gave himself for me.” Gal. 2:20 FBV.

Comment

Hope is an essential aspect of Hebrews. We tend to view the main theme as focussed on the ceremonial systems of the past, but Paul is keen to stress the future perspective. He speaks frequently of hope, and it’s helpful to review what he says:

“We hold on with confidence to the hope we boast we believe in” (3:6). “Confident in God’s hope until it’s fulfilled” (6:11). “Take hold of the hope God presented to us. This hope is our spiritual anchor” (6:18-19). “A better hope by which we can come close to God” (7:19). “Let

us hold onto the hope we're telling others about" (10:23). "Our trust in God is the guarantee of what we hope for, the evidence of what we can't see" (11:1)

In the current chapter, he writes that "we're looking for the home that is still to come" (13:14). The essential aspect of our ongoing relationship with our loving Lord is that it will not come to an end, even with death. The guarantee—the promise—is that we have an eternity to look forward to, an eternity not marred by sin and rebellion, but in an expanding understanding of truth and a deepening love. For what would life be if this was all? Our hope is in God himself, and in his desire to restore harmony and peace throughout his universe. "Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime; therefore, we must be saved by hope. Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore, we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we are saved by love." *Reinhold Niebuhr*.

The truth is that eternal life is assured, if we allow God to put us right with him through his grace. This transformation will be achieved finally at the second coming, that day we all hope for. For in contrast to all those hopes of the world, this is the *only* hope. This is *the* hope, for God is our hope, and we are saved by hope (see Romans 8:24).

While this world's hopes are found futile and wanting, Paul identifies the Christian perspective as the *blessed* hope (Titus 2:13), a hope *sure and certain* (Heb. 6:19). The certainty is based on the promises of God himself, and because he is trustworthy, and because we already know and trust him. Our hope is centered on the person we believe God to be.

So while Paul packs into this last chapter many counsels about the way to live in the present, he calls on us to remember we have a future with God. May we truly want to have this hope, to desire to be with our gracious God through all eternity, and to hold onto this living hope until the end. Our responsibility is to know God now, to enter into loving trust as his true friend, and plan for our future with our loving Lord. For in the end, "The future belongs to those who belong to God. This is hope." *W.T. Purkiser*. Or to use Corrie Ten Boom's words, "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God." "May the God of hope completely fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you will overflow with hope through the power of the Holy Spirit!" (Romans 15:13 FBV).

Ellen White comments

Heaven, I long for heaven; Christ is the center of attraction. Our future state is a continuation of our work in coming to God in probationary time. Heaven is the ceaseless approaching to God through Jesus Christ. The longer we are in the heaven of bliss, the more and still more of glory will be opened to us; and the more we know of God, the more intense will be our happiness--Ms 14, 1895, pp. 1, 2. (Untitled, August 10, 1895.) {6MR 4.1}

To His faithful followers Christ has been a daily companion, a familiar friend. They have lived in close, constant communion with God. Upon them the glory of the Lord has risen. In them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has been reflected. Now they rejoice in the undimmed rays of the brightness and glory of the King in His majesty. They are prepared for the communion of heaven; for they have heaven in their hearts.

A little longer, and we shall see the King in His beauty. A little longer, and He will wipe all tears from our eyes... Then by innumerable voices will be sung the song, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3). {AG 358}