

THAT BLESSED HOPE

(This sermon is not in outline form)

Titus 2:11-15

There are some number of people in our community (town) and tomorrow men and women will be going out to meet their duties, responsibilities, jobs of every sort. There will be problems to solve, questions to answer and things that may well take the heart out of the bravest and best of them. There will be burdens to be borne whose staggering weight will threaten to crush that person to the ground.

What do you suppose/think that will cause these people to rise and go forward and press on in the mighty struggle of daily life and even wear a smile on their lips? What is it? What else could there be but HOPE?

Take hope away from people, the strongest, the bravest and the best of people will despair as it would seem one's very soul was being pulled out.

Look at that person lying down, utterly crushed, unnerved, full of darkness and horror. Nothing you do affects him/her. He/she is indifferent to everyone. Warn, plead, beg, threaten, still he/she does not arise. That person has no hope. BUT let someone bend down and whisper in his/her ear the glad word of HOPE and behold! His/her eyes will begin to shine once again, his/her face will light up, he/she will leap to his/her feet and stretch forth his/her hands again taking hold of the world and winning this time.

Without HOPE it is impossible to live. NO matter what may be one's "equipment" one cannot live, one cannot achieve without hope.

The Christian cannot be without hope. For without hope his/her feet are weak. His/her steps are slow and his/her hands drop by his/her side. He/she is defeated even before he/she starts.

There is but ONE hope the Bible speaks of and that is the hope of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the air to take the Church up to meet Him.

The Thessalonians watched and waited for Jesus Christ to return. Some among them died and the living were troubled lest the dead in Christ should miss the great coming. Paul wrote and told them that they were not to sorrow as others whose dead did not die in Christ Jesus. Paul told them that the Lord is coming down into the air and the dead in Christ will not miss that great event for they will be the FIRST to realize it. The Lord will raise them first, then those Christians living will be changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air..

THIS IS THE HOPE set before them. This is the hope set before us. This is the hope Paul wrote of. This is the hope John wrote of. This is the "BLESSED HOPE."

You have noticed cemeteries and the memorials of the dead. Lonely churchyards with family burial plots, the larger the town, the larger and whiter the "city of the dead." Think of that day coming when those dead Christians shall hear a voice and rise. The day when death shall be defeated and a grave never more be dug nor filled with God's Children. That hour of resurrection triumph will be at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The New Testament records a few accounts where Jesus raised the dead.

- The young maid (whom Jesus said was sleeping), the daughter of Jairus, and the young man in the funeral procession about to be buried and Jesus stopped the procession and raised him. Then there was Jesus' friend, Lazarus.

- In each case, the dead was raised by the coming of the Lord Jesus.

It is by the coming of the Lord and by the coming of the Lord, alone, that the dead in Christ will be raised.

If the Lord did not come, Himself, the dead in Christ will never be raised and resurrection will never take place.

There is not the slightest warrant in the Word of God to hope for the resurrection of the Christian dead apart from the second personal coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Take the second coming out of the Bible and the grave dirt clods are packed down hard and fast upon the heads of our hopelessly dead.

Take the second coming out of the New Testament and there is not one word of hope one can hold out that the Christian dead will be anything more than disembodied souls.

In heaven, yes, with the Lord, yes, but so long as their bodies lie moldering in the earth, their victory over death is only partial. Partial as long as Satan holds onto those bodies in the graves.

Christ does not become the "resurrection and the life" as long as the dead remain in their graves. Christ is a living contradiction if He fails, for HE has risen, triumphant over death, complete, immortal and all those bodiless souls around Him, remind Him that all is not over. Incompleteness abounds! YEA! every moment that His risen body flashes forth in its splendor, it proves the incompleteness of those for whom He died.

Because Christ is surely coming a second time, that coming means the deliverance of the body of the dead Christian.

Because it means the Christians complete redemption from the power of death.

Because it means the revelation of the Christian in an immortal, glorified body like Christ's own.

Because of all this, the coming of the Lord is held out righteously and logically as the BLESSED HOPE.

Not only are the Christian dead to be raised, but Christians living in that moment are to be changed, transfigured, made deathless, incorruptible and immortal.

In a moment, at the coming of the Lord, the wrinkles will disappear from the brow of age, the sick will be cured, health will leap through every vein and youth immortal shall clothe each changed, transfigured and translated saint.

THIS IS THE HOPE HELD OUT TO US.

Hold this coming as a hope, believe it really as the Word of God, as the Son of God, Himself, declares it be - imminent and you will be impelled to do all your hands find to do and with all your might.

What if the Lord should come tomorrow? Who can measure the horror of awakening that would be yours to see these very friends and companions shut out to the endless woe and YOU SAVED in spite of all your weaknesses because the Lord kept faith with the covenant of blood which you have claimed.

The greatest joy to look forward as a Christian is when you shall be caught up to meet the Lord. What joy you shall have when you feel that change take place in your body. BUT there is a blackness and a great darkness that would overshadow your joy and that is will people you know (family, etc.) be caught up with you? Will you all bow together at the feet of the Lord? Will you walk together down those golden streets? Or shall you or any of your friends hear the words, "depart from me...?"

It should break our hearts to think that someone we know would be left behind if Jesus were to come today. Turn now and claim the blood of Jesus, your substitute, the one who died in your place.

Let Jesus save you so you, too, can be filled with the great hope of His second coming and hurry to tell your family and friends about this great hope.