

# Hope

By David Morsey

The world is full of hopelessness and despair.

And, well it should be, for it is a seething cauldron,

In which cosmic chaos and human malice have conspired to savage its inhabitants.

***Is there no respite? No hope for civilization?***

***No staying of the storm even for Christians?***

Assuredly. The Bible brings a message of hope—

The ultimate triumph of Divine benevolence over the forces of malice and greed.

***But wherein lies the hope? Anguish and torment rage unabated on the surface of the earth.***

***Saint and sinner seem to suffer alike, and there is no surcease of sorrow.***

***Well, what is hope? What does it mean? Hope in what? And what for?***

In English, it means everything and nothing, “I hope so;” “Land of hope and glory;” “hope chest.”

There is no usage of the word in English, that does not convey a large measure of uncertainty.

***So then, is the hope, spoken of in the Bible, a vague, uncertain thing?***

***Is “looking for that blessed hope,” only a wishful longing with no absolute certainty?***

***Does the Bible merely engage in positivist platitudes, and inane inspiration—empty hope?***

***Or, is there enduring substance in the kind of hope it offers?***

The Greek New Testament gives help. There, the word for hope is *ελπις* (*elpis*), which means “expectation.”

In the Greek classics, Thucydides uses the word in giving his reason for describing the Peloponnesian war.

He says that “he expected (*ελπιζω*, *elpidzo*) it to be one of the great wars of history.” (Thucydides Bk.I.1).

Herodotus also used the word in its basic meaning, in writing about two brothers in prison.

He says, “So they, being in prison, Meandrus fell ill. His brother, Lycaretus, expected (*ελπιζω*, *elpidzo*) him to die.” (Herodotus, Bk.III.143).

In neither of the above cases, could the English word, “hope” have been appropriate.

If, in the New Testament, we would substitute, for “hope,” the word, “expectation,” we would have its true force—

“The expectation of salvation;” “looking for that blessed expectation;” “Christ, our expectation.”

Ephesians speaks of those, who “have no hope, and are without God in the world.”

But, more accurately, they are without “expectation.” There is hope, of course, that they will still turn to God.

Old English uses the word, “expectation,” in something of a legal sense.

Charles Dickens’ famous title “Great Expectations,” applied to a young man, who had an assured inheritance.

So, we too have “great expectations” from the God, who is “the God of expectations.”

*“Now, the God of expectation, fill you with all joy and peace in believing”*  
(Romans 15:13).

*“By the grace of Christ, we have become heirs according to the expectation of eternal life”*  
(Titus 3:7).

***But, is our expectation only of the future?***

***What of our suffering now?***

***Did not Christ come to conquer pain?***

***Can we not expect health and prosperity, if we have faith?***

Neither Jesus, nor Paul expected earthly good. Nor did they encourage the expecting of it.

But, on the contrary, they experienced much earthly sorrow, and saw it as common to the people of God.

Jesus said, “Take up your cross daily, and follow me.”

And Paul said, “If we would reign with him, we must also suffer with Him.”

Jesus did not heal all the sick, nor feed all the hungry, nor solve all earthly needs of His people.

Instead, He taught focus on the spirit—“the flesh profits nothing. The self is insatiable; the world an illusion; only the spirit is real.”

***Is human desire then evil?***

***Can we not hope for earthly good?***

Both legitimate and natural are the prayers and hopes for earthly good.

But expectation is something else. For earthly bliss there are no guarantees.

Earthly expectation is the handmaiden of earthly disappointment.

Spiritual expectation is the assurance of Christ within us.

Only in the spirit realm is there equity, felicity, and tranquillity.

On the earth, there is no equity, and felicity is fickle and fleeting.

Earthly benefits are a futile focus of hope, and a faulty gauge of the favor of God.

Hope not for Christ to cool the cauldron, but expect Him to set the spirit free.