

“HOPE SET BEFORE US”

(Discourse by R. H. Barber, 1913 Convention Report, starting on page 303.)

I am sure, dear friends, your hearts are all rejoicing in hope this afternoon, and I feel sure no other people in the world are entitled to hope as much as the Lord's people, and especially those assembled at this Convention. This being Hope Day, we call attention to the fact that the Bible refers to our Heavenly Father as the God of Hope. We understand there can be no proper hope unless it is based upon the promises of our Heavenly Father through His Word. Hope is only intended for the righteous, and so we find, in Hebrews, a list of righteous ones who lived in hope, based upon the promises of God.

But we desire to call attention to the hope set before those of the Gospel Age. The words of Heb. 6:17-19 apply exclusively to us, as follows: “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might 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 stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail.” Our attention is here called to a wonderful promise made to Abraham, as recorded in Gen. 22:15-18. The Church of the Gospel Age are the heirs of that promise. Notice that the Heavenly Father confirmed this promise with an oath *especially* that these heirs of promise might have strong consolation. The Heavenly Father has invited 144,000 from among the children of men to become the heirs of this promise. You and I would not dare hope to attain to this wonderful exaltation, being surrounded with evil and with our inherited sinful tendencies, were it not that God made the promise and confirmed it by an oath for our assurance. He gave it that hope might fill our hearts.

The only hope given in this Gospel Age is this hope. Some tell us they hope to be of the great company class, or words to that effect, while others say restitution is good enough for them. Neither of these constitute a proper hope, as there is only one, viz.: to be like Him and see Him as He is.

The Heavenly Father wishes this hope to thrill our hearts, that we may be comforted, and strengthened and knit together in love. This hope is for the “heirs of the promise.” The Apostle Paul tells us in Rom. 8:17 who these are: “If children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ” in the Heavenly Kingdom. Not only heirs in the sense of having the same nature, but also in the sense of sharing with Him in the great future work, which the Father has committed to him. The Father wanted these to have strong consolation, and so confirmed His promise with an oath, but He has it confirmed in still another sense, and by many other promises. The Apostle calls attention to this in Rom. 15:4, saying “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our consolation,

that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.” We find a great many promises written aforetime. The promise made in the Garden of Eden, that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head, was written for us specially. Also that of Isa. 41:10: “Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” Undoubtedly this was fulfilled to Isaiah, but the special design in giving it was for our consolation, that we might have hope. Let us be comforted by the exceeding great and precious promises in the Old Testament Scriptures, remembering these texts were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.

But another thought in this connection: All of God’s *dealings* with the ancient worthies were written that we might have hope. In the 11th chapter of Hebrews, their names are enumerated. Of Abel it is written that he offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain by which he obtained witness that he was righteous. What do you suppose enabled him to cling to the Heavenly Father and seek to please Him? It was the remembrance of the promise made to his mother. How meager it was, as compared with the exceeding great and precious promises which we have! Abel not only believed the promise, but he had reverence for God, and sought to obtain the promised blessing, by which, he being dead, yet speaketh. His faith is speaking. Though we have far grander promises, sometimes our weak faith is unable to lay hold upon them. He, being dead, speaks to us in another way. God was faithful and sustained him in the trials through which he went. The same God will be faithful to sustain us in our trials.

We remember that Enoch had this testimony that he pleased God. The same God who was willing to testify to Enoch, that he was pleasing to Him, is willing to testify to you and to me that we are pleasing to Him. If we are watching the various *experiences* of life, I am sure we will have this testimony. During the past few months I have had some wonderful *experiences*. God tells us that he will make *all things* work together for our good. A very helpful experience is to watch the little things in life, in the home, in the office, in the shop, or on the farm, that we may see God’s hand in all of our affairs, and thus have our hearts strengthened by hope. He who encouraged Noah is able to encourage us. If Noah was able to go through the experience of the flood, with only God’s word to assure him, when not a drop of water had fallen for 1,600 years before that time, and, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; and, if we see how God was faithful and transported him across that flood, we can see how the same God has made promises to us, and will be equally as faithful in carrying them out. Let us take an example from Noah. God is speaking to us by the ancient worthies.

The Apostle Paul tells us, in the 4th chapter of Romans, with reference to God’s dealings with Abraham, that his faith was counted unto him for righteousness. He tells us that

Abraham was not weak in faith. We have many more promises than Abraham. When God was so faithful in dealing with the ancient worthies back there, we wonder that we can doubt the promises to us. Yet we do. Abraham staggered not at the promise, and his faith was counted to him for righteousness. The Apostle tells us, in the next verse, why this was written: "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead." Abraham received the imputation of righteousness because he believed God. God tells us that the Lord Jesus has tasted death for every man, and provided a wonderful robe of righteousness to cover our weaknesses and imperfections, if we have sufficient faith to lay hold upon it. Let us lay hold upon the hope, as our text suggests. Let our faith be as an anchor, reaching into that which is within the veil, and which will hold the ship steadfast to its place. Sometimes we find friends trying to invent another theology, not coming through the channel from which we have received the Truth, and we do not wonder that their anchor is slipping. Our anchor should be sure and steadfast within the veil, and, if we would have the anchor hold fast, we must believe these promises.

God is going to prove us, as to our faith in these promises, every hour and moment of our lives from the time of our consecration. I wish to call attention to a personal experience which we had recently, not with any desire to boast, but believing it may be helpful to others, encouraging them to watch God's providences in the little affairs of life. Within the past week I was going to take a train coming toward this convention, and it was necessary to take a local train to come to the city of Detroit. I was to be on the road from six o'clock in the morning until five at night, going 132 miles, having a wait of three and one-half hours on the way. It was a warm day, and I dreaded the wait, but I decided not to allow it to worry me, but to enjoy every moment. And that is what we should do if we want have the Lord's blessing. We should not make mountains out of mole-hills; we should make up our minds to have a fine time. A brother brought me to the station with an auto, and here was a long train drawn up, five minutes ahead of schedule time. We found it was a through, fast train for Montreal, which did not stop at that station according to schedule, but we climbed on the train and went through to our destination without a stop. When I sat down in the train I said: "The Lord had that train for me." But you say, if the Lord always rewarded our faith in every instance in that way, where would be our trials and testings? In this experience the trial would have been not to have the train there. Sometimes he grants us blessings of this kind, just to see if we will give him the credit, or if we will credit it to fate, or accident, or something of that kind. God has many experiences of this character for his people. We will be helped by watching our experiences and noting how His providences are operating toward us in this time, as we observe them in the lives of the ancient worthies in times past.

We arrived at a station in Indiana some time ago, and found no one at the station to meet us. The thermometer registered 105 in the shade. We were informed that the post office

was nearly a mile out, and the brother with whom we were to stay, about a mile farther along. I started in the direction of the post office, leaving my grips near a store. After walking a distance, I took a tract from my pocket and handed to a man walking along the road. He said, "Hold on, you are the man I am looking for." He then told me I was not to come to his home, but was to go to the hotel, near where I had left my grips. I did not credit that to accident either.

I had another experience when I was not used that way, during the recent floods in Ohio. As I came near to Columbus, the railroad was not running into Columbus within about three and one-half miles. We had two heavy grips to carry. The flood had thrown down buildings, and the streets were filled with debris, and there were great holes in the streets, some of which had water in them from two to four feet deep. It was dark, and there were no lights, but there was plenty of company. As I walked along with those heavy suitcases, it seemed that my arms stretched every minute; but I took it good naturedly, and did not murmur. The blessing came. A lady inquired where I was going, and I told her. She said she knew the way and would direct me. She walked along with me, and we began to visit, and I forgot about my arms. The conversation was of a pleasant nature and took my attention from my burden, and the walk seemed quite short. The Lord says, "As thy days are, so shall thy strength be." Evidently He gave me the needed strength. If we are not watching for these experiences, we will not get the blessing. The Lord is giving us these experiences for the same reason that he made oath to that covenant, so that we may have strong consolation.

Let us notice another of these ancient worthies—namely, Job. He had lost his sheep, and oxen, and cattle, and camels; his ten children had been taken from him; he was covered with boils; and even his wife had turned against him. Everyone was trying to discourage him, but Job said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." The Apostle calls attention to this saying, "Take my brethren the prophets for an example of suffering affliction and of patience." These things are written for our admonition. God did not at once deliver Job out of his difficulties, but let him go through them; nor will he always deem it best to deliver us quickly. You remember in 1st Corinthians 10:13 the Apostle tells us that God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but will with the temptation, also provide a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it. Not that he will necessarily deliver us from the trial, but he has promised sufficient grace that we may be able to bear it. Those who will be with Jesus in the Kingdom must have trials to develop faith. God will permit the trials. We cannot expect to be spared from them, and he wants us to go through them rejoicingly, as Job did. If we find ourselves complaining, finding fault with God, we have not faith in the promises. All things will work together for good to the Lord's people. So let us rejoice in every circumstance that may arise, laying hold upon that promise, realizing that the Heavenly Father is interested in us.

We are also reminded of Joseph's experiences in Egypt. I am afraid many of us would have been prone to become discouraged under such trials as he had, prone to complain. But Joseph was loyal, his confidence in the fact that God was working the whole matter out wisely sustained him, even when in the prison; and we remember how God rewarded his faith. All of these things were written for our admonition, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.

We remember how Daniel, the prophet, against the command of the king knelt down three times each day with his face toward Jerusalem, before the window and offered prayer to his God. What confidence he had in the promises of God, even when cast into the den of lions, yet sometimes we are not able to stand the test with all the wonderful promises which we have, and having before us all of these things written aforetime for our consolation. I tell you there is no one in the universe in whom God is so much interested as the 144,000. If you and I want to be of that number, we want to acknowledge that interest, be grateful, and have confidence in the Heavenly Father. He wants us to have strong consolation.

You remember the hope of the resurrection was one thing which encouraged Job. He said, "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." He expected to live upon the earth again, and asked that he might be hidden in sheol until God's wrath would be past. Have we confidence in the resurrection? We have trials not worthy to be compared with Job's and find ourselves murmuring and finding fault, forgetting that we are murmuring against God. He has promised that all things shall work together for our good. Many of the things which gave hope to these ancient worthies were only *foretold*, whereas to us they have been *fulfilled*, which should give us the greater consolation. We should never be discouraged. We should not be discouraged, when we find some opposing our efforts in circulating the truth. Sometimes the friends are disheartened when they have arranged for a public meeting, have grown very tired scattering the tracts, and through the opposition of those who know not the truth, or by a heavy rain coming just at the time for the meeting, only a small number are in attendance. We should remember, as suggested in 2 Cor. 13:8 that they can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. If only a small number come out, perhaps there is little wheat there. Perhaps there may be only one or three grains of wheat in that vicinity, and the Lord could as well see that they would be among a company of 30 or 50 as in a gathering of 2,000. We have seen some of the friends shedding tears because their efforts had seemingly been in vain. We should remember that the Lord is doing the harvest work. How differently we understand Him than we did a few years ago. We thought He was trying to force us to serve Him by using the whip of eternal torment, but now we have learned that He has given us promise after promise, every one intended to make us have strong consolation to comfort us.

It is our privilege to know more about the Heavenly Father's plans and purposes than any people in the past. We enjoy blessings which those living in the early part of the Gospel age did not have, and which those living in the dark ages surely did not have. We see fulfillment of the Scriptures which they were not permitted to see. God's goodness is manifested to us a thousand times more than to those in the past, and He has given us these experiences that we may have hope, that we may never be ashamed.

The Apostle tells us this hope maketh not ashamed, and if we have the hope we will not be ashamed. Some seem to be ashamed of their hope. They take their volumes and Towers and hide them away so their neighbors and friends will not see them. Also sometimes when the friends have an opportunity to present the truth to a friend or neighbor who asks a question, they seem to be ashamed of the truth. It is Satan who puts such thoughts into our minds. He says, "Be quiet, do not say anything. They may tell you something they have heard about the truth, or Brother Russell, or someone else." If we have a proper hope it maketh not ashamed. We have the exceeding great and precious promises, in addition to those contained in the Old Testament Scriptures, and we surely should not be ashamed of our hope.

Take this thought of all things working together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. The text says "*We know* that all things work for good." How do we know? If we have no faith we do not know, and we can have no hope, but if we have faith in that promise we know because His word tells us so. Then we have a hope which corresponds to that faith. Such a hope makes glad the heart of man, and is even manifested in their faces. Our Heavenly Father has given these promises so we may rejoice, even in persecutions, in distresses, in tribulations or in any trial. We may lift up our heads and rejoice, even when they say all manner of evil against us falsely. We are trying to win a place in the Kingdom, and this must be accomplished through severe trials. Some are deterred from making a consecration, fearing they would not be able to carry it out. The Heavenly Father has given these promises as an offset. If we feel that we would be unable to make our calling and election sure, the promises assure us that the Heavenly Father is on our side and He will help us to come off conquerors and more than conquerors through Him who bought us. Those who would flee for refuge should lay hold upon this hope set before us. There is another hope, but the hope set before us is to be like Jesus.

God gives us a hope for our neighbors and friends, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and others, who would not listen to the message at this time. Some of these have proven that they have no faith in God's plans and purposes, they do not read the Bible, nor try to be pleasing to the Heavenly Father. God has given us the exceeding great and precious promises of restitution for those of the world, so that we might have hope at the present time. As the Apostle says, we do not sorrow as do others who have no hope. We see some mourning over some of their friends who have died. A few years after I received

the truth I buried my father. He would not accept the truth. When he was dead I said, "I am glad as can be for you. You will not know a single thing until the times of restitution of all things. Then you will be in the hands of the blessed Redeemer. You will have a long, sweet sleep until you are awakened at the time when there will be a blessing, blessing, blessing in the reign of the dear Lord." We sorrow not as others who have not this hope. If our loved ones were in the truth there is much more reason why we should not sorrow. If we expect them to be in the Kingdom we should rejoice. The Heavenly Father has given us a basis for our hope, not only in the promises, but also in His dealings with the ancient worthies in times past. As we see how wonderfully He worked in their lives we should be filled with exceeding joy. If we have faith in the promises our faith will manifest itself in a joyful demeanor in our words and conduct. We will bring joy and peace to others, and not be stumbling them, or doing what will injure them. We will not be speaking words of doubt or fear because to have a proper hope, based upon proper promises, means to have our hearts full of joy. When we find ourselves anxious, fearful or discouraged, there is something the matter with our faith, and, correspondingly, there is something the matter with our hope. We should go to the source of comfort, to the Word, and there be filled with these promises and thus revive our hope. Since God is for us in this wonderful way, who can be against us? In the words of Rom. 15:13, "Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit."