



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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Sixteenth Sermon on 2 Thessalonians Chapter Two

By Thomas Manton

And good hope through grace. —2 Thes. 2:16.

WE now come to the third ground of audience and acceptance. He hath given us ‘good hope through grace.’ This sheweth how we entertain the everlasting consolation offered in the gospel—with good hope, and this wrought in us by God. Here is—

1. The gift: *good hope*.
2. The moving cause: *through grace*.

Doct. That it is a great advantage, when we pray for consolation and confirmation in holiness, to consider that God hath already given us the hope of eternal life.

Here I shall—

- I. Open the gift.
 - II. Show what encouragement this is in prayer.
- I. In the opening the gift, let me inquire:—
 1. What is this good hope mentioned, and what are the properties of it?
 2. That this is the free gift of God.
 1. What is this good hope?

[1.] Hope is sometimes put for the object or thing hoped for; as Prov. 13:12, ‘Hope deferred maketh the heart sad;’ that is, the delay of the good

expected is very tedious and troublesome to us. So in Christian hope: Col. 1:5, 'For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven;' where hope is put for the object of it, the blessed and glorious estate which is reserved for us hereafter. The great object of hope, which yet do not exclude intervening blessings, are these:—

(1.) The coming of Christ to our comfort: Titus 2:13, 'Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;' 1 Peter 1:13, 'Gird up the loins of your minds, and be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' Hope is there described by its singular object, the coming of Christ, called there the revelation of Christ. Christ is now under a veil, his bodily presence being removed, and his spiritual glory seen but darkly, as in a glass; but then he shall appear in person and in his glory. When Christ withdrew out of sight, our comfort seemed to be gone with him; but he will come again. He is not gone in anger, but about business, to set all things at rights against the day of solemn espousals; and then he cometh to possess what he hath purchased, and to carry the church into the everlasting place of her abode. This is the great hope of Christians, and a blessed and good hope it is indeed.

(2.) The resurrection of the dead: Acts 2:26, 'My flesh shall rest in hope;' Acts 24:15, 'I have hope towards God that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust;' Acts 26:6-8, 'Now I stand judged for the hope of the promise made unto the fathers, unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. Why should it be thought an incredible thing with you that God should raise the dead?' Death seemeth to make void all the promises at once; but there is an estate after death; the dead shall rise; and to men bred up in the bosom of the church this should not seem incredible. It is not incredible in itself, considering the justice and power of God. But why to you, since all religion tendeth to it? But it is a matter of undoubted certainty all believers do look for, long for, and prepare for this blessedness, otherwise why should they trouble themselves about religion, which abridgeth us of present delights, and exposeth us to great difficulties and sufferings? But there is another life after this, where all is happy and joyful, and therefore we 'serve God instantly day and night.'

(3.) The vision of God, that at length we shall be admitted into his blessed presence, and see him as he is, and be made like him both for holiness and happiness, 1 John 3:2.

(4.) Our heavenly inheritance: 1 Peter 1:4, 'An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us: Called eternal life: Titus 1:2,

‘In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised us.’ The glory of God: Rom. 5:2, ‘We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.’ Well, then, all this is a good hope, if there be the things hoped for; for the object of our hope is the chiefest good, the eternal vision and fruition of God; this is that we must aim at as our happiness: Ps. 17:15, ‘As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.’ We must seek after it and make it our constant work: Heb. 11:6, ‘God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.’ This is that we must take hold of, as having a right and title to it: Heb. 6:18, ‘Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.’ We challenge it by the law of grace; as we fulfil the conditions, our hold is more strong, right more evident; as we get greater measures of the first-fruits, we gain more security and confidence in the spiritual conflict: ver. 19, ‘Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast.’ By good works we enter upon the possession of it, in part, as we get the first-fruits of the Spirit: Rom. 8:23, ‘We ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body;’ 2 Cor. 5:5, ‘Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.’ In whole, when we come to heaven, for then we ‘enter into our Master’s joy,’ Mat. 25:21. When we die our souls enter into that blessed place, where the spirits of just men are made perfect; not only preserved *in mane Dei* (in the hand of God), but admitted *in conspectum Dei* (into the sight of God): 1 Peter 1:9, ‘Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.’ But after the resurrection and general judgment: John 14:3, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.’ Then, in body and soul, we enter into our everlasting mansions.

[2.] Sometimes hope is put for the reasons and causes of hoping; and so he that giveth me solid reasons of hoping, giveth me good hope. In this sense it is taken, Heb. 7:19, ‘The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, whereby we draw nigh to God.’ By the better hope is meant the sure and comfortable promises of the gospel, depending merely on the grace of God, which gives hope to lost sinners of recovering commerce and communion with God; that is, solid grounds upon which they may expect the pardon of their sins and eternal life. In this sense, good hope is hope well warranted. The solid reasons are contained in the word of God: Rom. 15:4, ‘Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.’ The great end of the scriptures is, that we might have a sure hope in *God—quod agit tota scripture, ut credamus in Deum*. The business of the scripture is to bring us to believe in God, and

wait upon him for eternal salvation. There the rule of commerce between God and us is stated; whatever is promised is sure. There may be reason to expect some things from God's merciful nature, though we have no promise about them; but the sure and certain hope is grounded on the promise; that is an express ground of confidence and hope that will never leave us ashamed; it is well-grounded hope, therefore good hope, built on the promise and word of the eternal God.

[3.] By the act or grace of hope itself. This may be called good either in itself or with respect to the degree.

(1.) In itself: 'It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord,' Lam. 3:26. *Bonum* is either *honestum*, *jucundum*, or *utile*: it is good in all regards. It is our duty to rest assured in God's promise. It is pleasant to anticipate and forecast a blessing to come. Surely it is delightful to live in the foresight of endless glory. It is profitable to support our hearts under present difficulties and troubles, and the uncertainties of the present life.

(2.) In respect of the degree and measure of it. That is good hope which is most able to do its office, when it is lively hope: 1 Peter 1:3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope;' such as doth most support and quicken us. The more serious and earnest our reflections are upon eternal life, the better is the hope Heb. 6:11, 'Show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.' We should still keep up this sure and desirous expectation. Briefly, hope the grace is twofold.

(1st.) There is a hope which is the immediate effect of regeneration, and is a constitutive part of the new creature. Of that the apostle speaketh, 1 Peter 1:3, 'Begotten to a lively hope.' This merely floweth from our acceptance of the new covenant, and dependeth upon the conditional offer of eternal life. We take it for our happiness, resolving to seek it in God's way; without this a man cannot be a Christian, till he hope for eternal life to be given him upon Christ's terms.

(2dly.) There is a hope which is the fruit of experience, and belongeth to the seasoned and tried Christian, who hath approved his own fidelity to God, and hath much trial of God's fidelity and faithfulness to him. Of this it is said, Rom. 5:4, that 'Experience worketh hope.' It differeth from the former, because it produceth not only a conditional certainty, but an actual confidence of our own salvation. The former is necessary, for we live and act by it; the other is very comfortable, for it facilitateth all our acts when we know 'there is reserved for us a crown of life, which the righteous

Judge will give in that day;’ and do not only believe ‘a resurrection both, of the just and unjust,’ but our own resurrection unto eternal life.

But now for the effects. I shall instance in. two which suit with the prayer in the text—consolation in troubles, and confirmation in holiness.

First, Support in troubles. When we are certainly persuaded of a happy issue, we are the better kept from, fainting: Phil. 1:19, ‘I know that this shall turn to my salvation,’ &c. He speaketh it of his troubles, and the machinations of his adversaries; and this knowledge he calleth in the 20th verse, ‘his earnest expectation and his hope.’ The bitterest cross is sweetened by hope. This carried him through his sufferings, not only with patience, but comfort; as men in a storm, when they see land, take courage; it is but enduring a little more tempest and they shall be safe on shore. To a hoping Christian, his whole life is a rough voyage, but a short one.

Secondly, To encourage us in working. It is hope sets the whole world a-work: 1 Cor. 9:10, ‘That he that plougheth should plough in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.’ Certainly it is hope sets the Christian a-work: Acts 26:7, ‘Unto which promise our twelve tribes,, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.’ Why are God’s children so hard at work for God, but out of love to him, and hope to enjoy him for ever? Oh!let us continually be serving God.. Let us live always either for heaven, as seeking it, or upon heaven, as solacing ourselves with the hopes of it; do whatever we do in order to eternal life, and not be taken up with trifles, and this will put life into our endeavours. It is for a glorious and blessed estate on which we employ all this labour.

2. That this is the free gift of God. I must prove two things:—

[1.] That good hope is his gift. He doth not only give us objective grace,—this is the free and undeserved mercy of the gospel, or a sufficient warrant to hope for it, which are his gracious promises; but subjective grace: the hope by which we expect this blessedness is freely wrought in us by his Holy Spirit, which is a further confirmation of his love to us, that he hath not only given us the blessedness we hope for, but the very hope itself. The Spirit’s work is necessary—(1.) By way of illumination, to open the eyes of our minds, that we ‘may see what is the hope of his calling,’ Eph. 1:18. Alas! otherwise our sight cannot pierce so far, nor discern any reality in a happiness that lieth in an unseen and an unknown world, so as to venture and forsake all that we see and love for a God and a glory that we never saw. Nature, if it be not blind in discerning the duty of man, yet it is purblind; it cannot foresee the happiness of man, which lieth afar off from us: 2 Peter 1:9, ‘But he that lacketh these things is

blind, and cannot see afar off.' A short-sighted man cannot see things at a distance from him not from any defect in the object, but through the fault in his eyes. So the natural man, blinded by delusions, doth either not believe, or forget the world to come; though these things be set before him in the promises of the gospel, they leave no impression upon his heart. There needeth a very quick sight to be able to look from earth to heaven; therefore, till we are enlightened by the Spirit, we can have no saving knowledge of those things which pertain to the kingdom of God or eternal life.

(2.) By way of inclination. The Spirit doth not only open the eyes of our mind, but he doth also incline our hearts to mind and seek after these things as our portion and happiness: Acts 16:14, 'God opened the heart of Lydia.' There is an opening of our mind, and an opening of our hearts necessary; for the wisdom of the flesh is kneaded into our natures, and we are prepossessed and entangled with divers foolish and hurtful lusts. Though we know these things, we regard them not, and therefore the work of the Spirit is necessary to incline us earnestly to look and long, and patiently to wait, for blessedness to come: Gal. 5:5, 'For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.' Alas! otherwise we should never regard these things, certainly we would not wait for them with so much patience and self-denial, and solace our hearts with these hopes in the midst of all our labours, adversities, and troubles, when all is in expectation, and so little in possession.

(3.) By way of excitation, he doth quicken us and comfort us, by raising our thoughts, desires, and endeavours after the promised glory and blessedness: Rom. 15:13, 'Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.' It is by his lively impressions that this grace is acted in us with any profit; our hope is. acted and increased by his power, blessing the promises of the gospel to this end.

[2] That it is his free gift. That which moveth God to give us this hope is his mere love and grace.

(1.) The matter of hope is God's free, undeserved mercy. The mercy of God is everywhere made the great invitation of hope to the fallen creature: Ps. 130:7, 'Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is mercy and plenteous redemption.' Without this there were no hope for us, and therefore the saints make this their anchor-hold: Ps. 13:6, 'I have trusted in thy mercy, therefore my soul shall rejoice in thy salvation;' let others trust in what they will, Lord, I will trust in thy mercy. This is that which maketh hope lift up the head: Jude 21, 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life;' there is our best and strongest plea. But—

(2.) For the grace of hope, it is the mere fruit of the Lord's mercy; such are our undeservings and ill-deservings, that nothing else could incline him to give us this hope. He was not induced by any merits of ours, which are none; nor hindered by any demerits or sins of ours, which were many and great; only his grace moved him to bring us under the hopes of the gospel, that we might set ourselves with longing and certain expectation in the way of holiness, to seek after the eternal enjoyment of himself: 1 Peter 1:3, 'Of his abundant mercy he hath begotten us to a lively hope.' There were so many provocations on our part, such great privileges to be enjoyed, that nothing but abundant mercy could give us this hope.

II. What encouragement is this in prayer, if God hath given us good hope through grace?

1. God would not invite and raise a hope to disappoint it; for surely the Lord will not deceive his creature that dependeth upon his word, and therefore we are allowed to challenge him: Ps. 119:49, 'Remember thy word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope.' The words contain a double argument: the promise was of God's making, and the hope of his operation,—it is thy word, and thou hast caused me to hope; his grant in the new covenant, and his influence by the Spirit. We have a strong tie upon him, as he giveth us the promise, which is a ground of hope. Surely we may put his bonds in suit, *Chirographa tua tibi injiciebat, Domine* (Your own promises bound you, Lord). But when his Spirit hath caused us to hope, it is not with a purpose to defeat it; and therefore we may expect necessary blessings, such as are support and establishment in holiness. Sometimes God promiseth that we may believe, and then promiseth again because we do believe and trust in him: Isa. 26:3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' Actual hope and trust giveth a fresh claim or new interest, for God will not fail a trusting soul, as a generous man will not fail his friend if he rely on him. We count this to be the strongest bond we can lay upon another, to be mindful of us, and faithful to us—I wholly trust upon you. Now, much more will God do so: when he hath sent his work before, he will bring his reward with him; when he hath invited hope by his promise, and caused hope by his Spirit, he will give the mercy you hope for, for he hath prepared you for it by his preventing grace. I remember the prophet telleth God, Jer. 20:7, 'O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived;' words that seem to intrench upon the honour of God. Some interpret them as if they were spoken by the prophet in a passion; others soften them by another rendering, 'Thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded,' that is, to undertake the prophetic office, to which I was nothing forward of myself, and have found it more troublesome than I expected. But why may not the

words be spoken as a supposition: 'If I be deceived, thou hast deceived me'? God had told him that he would make him as a brazen wall, and had raised a faith and hope in him that he would bear him out in his work; and so it signifies no more but 'I cannot be deceived.' When you have God's word, and a well-grounded hope, it is not a foolish imagination or vain expectation. God will not deceive a poor creature that trusts in him for necessary things, such as perseverance and establishment in holiness.

2. He that giveth us hope will give us all things necessary to the thing hoped for; therefore when God hath called us to the hope of eternal glory by Jesus Christ, we may with the more confidence pray for necessary support and establishment in the way. This argument seemeth to be urged by the apostle: 1 Peter 5:10, 'The God of all grace, who called you to his heavenly glory by Jesus Christ, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.' God, that called us to eternal glory, foresaw the difficulties and troubles we should meet with by the way, and therefore provided grace answerable, which we are to sue out by prayer. Surely he that called them to the possession of everlasting blessedness by the Mediator, did not flatter them into a vain hope, as it will prove, if he help us not. Therefore he will assist us in these difficulties, and though he will not exempt us from the conflict, yet he will not deny strength. When we consent to his calling, it is a sure ground to our faith that he that hath called will give us all things necessary to our perseverance; for his calling, when it is effectual, will not be in vain and to no purpose: 1 Cor. 1:9, 'God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;' 1 Cor. 10:13, 'There hath no temptation taken you but what is common to men: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' The intent of his calling is to bring them to the possession of what he hath called them to. If he would at first take us with all our faults, and put us under the hopes of the gospel when we were sinners, he will follow the first grace with continual aids and supports, until he hath perfected his work; and therefore, when a people are sincere, and willing to run all hazards for Christ, God will not only give them glory at the end of their journey, but bear their expenses by the way; and therefore we need not be discouraged, and say, How shall we hold out? God, that hath given such hope as to venture upon the difficulties, will support you under them; he will add more grace to that grace that we have received.

3. They that have received good hope through grace, have God's nature and promise to rest upon; his nature, as he is a gracious God, and his promise, as he is a faithful God.

[1.] His nature, as he is a God merciful and gracious. That former experience doth fully manifest; he is sufficiently inclined to do us good, and therefore will not fail us in our necessities. He hath ever borne us good-will, never discovered any backwardness to help us, thought of us before the world was, sent his Son to die for us before we were born or had a being in the world, called us when we were unworthy, warned us, of our danger when we did not fear it, offered happiness to us when we had no thought of it; and lest we should turn our backs upon it, followed us with an earnest and incessant importunity, till we came to anxious thoughts about Christ, and began to make it our business to seek after it; by the secret drawings of his Spirit, inclined us to choose him for our portion, and to rejoice in the hopes offered. How many contradictions and strugglings of heart were we conscious to ere we were brought to this! Ever since he hath been tender of us in the whole conduct of his providence; afflicted us when we needed it, delivered us when we were ready to sink; hath pardoned our failings, visited us in ordinances, supported us in doubts, helped us in temptations, and is still mindful of us at every turn, as if he would not lose us; and shall not we hope in him to the last? We may reason as they, Judges 13:23, 'If the Lord had a mind to destroy us, he would not have received a sacrifice at our hands! And so if God had no mind to save us, he would not use such methods of grace about us.

[2.] His promise, so that we must trust his faithfulness, after we come under the hopes of the gospel. There are two great promises to support us: his presence with us in the midst of our afflictions, and our being ever present with the Lord in eternal glory. This is that we have hope of; all the difficulty is, how far God hath promised his presence with us. Certainly he hath promised it: Ps. 91:15, 'I will be with them in troubles;' and again, 'I will be with them in fire and water.' And again, certain it is, that God is most with his afflicted people, as the mother keepeth most with the sick child, or the blood runneth to comfort the wounded part. And again, that he will never leave us to unsupportable difficulties: Heb. 13:5, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you;' a negative gradation. And besides, there is a general promise, though the particulars be not absolutely made certain to us; namely, that 'all shall work together for good,' Rom. 8:28. That giveth us but a probability of health, and outward protection, and deliverance, of a ready support in every temptation, because we are uncertain how far they are for our good; but for necessary grace to our preservation, there is express

provision in the covenant: Jer. 32:40, 'I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good,' &c.

4. It giveth us encouragement in prayer; because they that have k his hope are so much exposed to the scorn of the world, because they trust in an invisible God, and look for all their recompense in a world to come. They think Christians are a company of credulous fools, I that please themselves with dreams and fancies: Ps. 22:7, 8, 'They laugh me to scorn, because, they sag, he trusted in the Lord;' 1 Tim. 4:10, 'We therefore labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.' Christians thought their reward sure, and therefore endured all things; but atheists and infidels scoff at them, and at all their comforts, as fanatical illusions, and persecute them. Therefore God is in point of honour engaged to stand by them, and to justify their hope and trust; not always by temporal deliverance, but by spiritual support and establishment; that it may be seen there is a Spirit of God and glory resteth upon them, that is glorified by him, however he be evil spoken of in the world, 1 Peter 4:14. God will do so in condescension to his people. Nothing goeth so near their hearts as a disappointment of their hope in God. It is a mighty damp to their spirits when God doth as it were spit in their faces, and reject their prayers: Ps. 25:2, 'O my God! I trust in thee; let me not be ashamed.' At such times the Lord seemeth to countenance the slanders of their enemies, and to cover their faces with shame.

Use 1. To persuade you to get this hope of eternal life wrought in your hearts.

1. This is the characteristic and note of difference betwixt God's people and others. By this we are distinguished from pagans, who are described to be such as 'Have no hope, and without God in the world,' Eph. 2:12; and 1 Thes. 4:13, 'Sorrow not as them without hope.' But Christians are such as have 'good hope through grace;' and by this we are distinguished from temporary and slight believers: Heb. 3:6, 'His house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end;' so also ver. 14, 'If we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.' Their hope is slight and fluid: the temporary loseth his joy and comfort, which he conceived in the offers of the gospel, and so either casts off the profession of godliness, or neglecteth the power and practice of it; but the true Christian is serious, patient, heavenly, and holy; because he is always looking to his end, and sweeteneth his work by his great hope, keeping up his taste or lively expectation of the mercy of Christ to everlasting life. Nay, this differenceth the children of God, those that are in their conflict from those that are in their triumph, the sanctified and glorified; those that are in their way, and those that are at home. They that are at home are enjoying what we expect,

and in possession of that supreme good that we yet hope for; they have neither miseries to fear nor blessings to desire beyond what they do enjoy; they see what they love, and possess what they see. But the time of our advancement is not yet come, and therefore we can only look and long for it; this is our work and present happiness.

2. Now the covenant of God is contrived to raise hope in us. The Jachin and Boaz, the two pillars that support it, are mercy and truth Micah 7:20, 'Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham;' Ps. 25:10, 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies;' and Ps. 138:2, 'I will praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and truth; for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;' and in many other scriptures.

[I.] The mercy and grace of the covenant.

(1.) In the frame of it, where excellent benefits are dispensed upon free terms, that our faith and hope may be in God. The Lord would not leave the sinful creature tinder despair, but hath provided a way how we may be reconciled and glorified: Ps. 130:4, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' Mercy opens the door for us; the very offer speaks much mercy, the terms are mercy. So much duty is required as is necessary, and doth arise from the nature of the thing. Violence would be offered to the reason of a serious creature, if such things were not required.

(2.) In the dispensations of the blessings of the covenant. Now, Gal. 6:16, 'To as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and on the Israel of God.' There are many infirmities and frailties, but God passeth them by when there is sincerity. Our faith is weak, and mingled with doubtings, our love to God clogged with much inordinate self-love, our obedience often interrupted, too much deadness and coldness in holy things; yet these do not cast us out of the favour of God, nor make void our interest in the covenant, where the heart "or the main is set to serve him; and please him: Mal. 3:17, 'I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.'

(3.) At the very close of all it is grace: 'Hope unto the end, for the grace that is brought unto you at the revelation of Christ,' 1 Peter 1:13. Then there will be the fullest and largest manifestation of God's love and free grace. There is grace brought to us now, by the revelation of Jesus Christ in the gospel; but when his person shall be revealed, grace shall be seen in all its graciousness. We see his grace in the pardon of sins, and that measure of sanctification which now we attain unto, that he is pleased to pass by our offences, and take us into his family, and give us right to his heavenly kingdom, and some taste of his love and remote service. But when pardon shall be pronounced by the judge's mouth, when he shall take us not only into his family,

but into his palace and Father's house, and give its not right only, but possession, and we shall be admitted to the immediate vision and fruition of God, and be everlastingly employed in heavenly praising and delighting in him, then grace will be grace indeed.

[2.] His truth and mercy openeth the door for us. Truth keepeth it open; mercy is the pipe; truth is the conveyance. Now God bindeth himself by promise, and hath ever been tender of his word. We may see for the present that a covenant-interest is no fruitless thing. He hath confirmed this hope to the world by miracles; to us within the church by the seal and earnest of his Spirit, or the impression of his image, preparing the hearts of the faithful for this blessed estate: Eph. 4:30, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption;' 2 Cor. 5:5, 'Who hath given us the earnest of his Spirit.' He hath appointed ordinances to revive our hopes: 1 Cor. 11:26, 'For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.' By daily experience we see many of God's children have gone out of the world cheerfully professing this hope; we have the same Father, 'of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,' Eph. 3:15; are reconciled to him by the same Christ: Col. 1:20, 'Having made peace through the blood of the cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.' If he be so good to that part of the family that is now in heaven, he will be good to them also that are working out their salvation with fear and trembling.

[3.] What an advantage it is to the spiritual life to have good hope wrought in us through grace.

(1.) It maketh us diligent and serious. Christianity implieth a serious application of our heart and mind to do what Christ requireth, that we may obtain what he hath offered; to do it as our first work and chief business: Phil. 2:12, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;' Heb. 4:1, 'Let us labour to enter into that rest;' that is, employ our utmost care and diligence. Now all the executive powers are fortified and strengthened in their operation by hope.

(2.) To be patient and mortified, that we subdue our lusts, and bear the loss of our interests with an humble and quiet mind: Rom. 12:12, 'Patient in tribulation, rejoicing in hope.' And for lusts: 1 John 3:3, 'He that hath this hope, purifieth himself even as he is pure.'

(3.) To be heavenly and holy; the one respects our end, the other our race. For it is not a few dead lifeless thoughts now and then, but the continual and delightful foresight of eternal bliss. What is the way to heaven but hope? And who more pure and holy than they that look for such things? 2 Peter 3:14, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing

ye look for such things, be diligent that ye be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.'

Use 2. Well, then, get this hope. But what must we do? You will say, It is God's gift: yet you are bound to use the means.

1. Remove the impediments: 1 Peter 1:13, 'Be sober, and hope to the end.' Draw off the affections from carnal vanities, and the delights of the senses, and consider what God offereth to you in the gospel: there can be no certain and desirous expectation of better things, while the mind and heart is so occupied and thronged with vanity, and deadened by carnal satisfaction.

2. Wait on all the opportunities of profiting, and use the known means of grace more conscionably. Certain it is that the grace of hope is of God, not acquired, but infused; but God will bless his own means. The propounding of the object, the offering of the solid grounds, maketh way for the infusing of the grace: Titus 1:1,2, Paul was the apostle to 'bring them to the acknowledgment of the truth, for the hope of eternal life.' And it is called, 'the hope of the gospel,' Col. 1:23, because it is wrought by the preaching of the gospel.

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