

4) It is a good hope (2 Thess. 2:16). The word for "good" is the Greek for inner excellence. This text says it comes through grace. There is no other medium for hope, but the grace of God.

Conclusion We have reserved for us the right of free choice. Since God has called upon you to believe on Christ and be saved, do it now. You will know the joy of the "hope of His call." If you already know the Lord as Savior, ask Him to enable you to enter fully into the reality of the "hope of His calling." Blessed are the enlightened hearts.

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

"The Hope of His Calling"
Ephesians 1:18

Introduction

1. There are two prayers of Paul in this book (1:15-23; 3:13-21). Every evidence from the New Testament suggests that Paul was a man of much prayer. In fact, his oft-mention of specific prayer leads us to believe that he had long lists of prayer for his friends (cf. Phil. 1:4).

2. This prayer has three sections: a. Its occasion (vv. 15-18a). b. Its substance (vv. 18b-19a). c. Its explanation (vv. 19b-23). Basic to the entire prayer is the portion which gets at the reason for prayer: Paul longed for the Ephesians to really understand what they enjoyed in the Lord (vv. 17-18a).

3. One of those blessings which the saints at Ephesus had by vital relationship to Christ is "the hope of His calling." Paul yearned for them to get a true grasp on the meaning of this brief phrase. That is why he prayed for an enlightened heart (v. 18a). Just what does this phrase involve? Here are some thoughts:

1. GOD'S CALL

a. It is personal

The personal possessive pronoun marks this out as "His" call. It is therefore a divine and sovereign one. This is not the call of an organization or prophet, but of the very God Himself. The concept of God's call may be traced to Genesis 3:9. From that point innumerable times are recorded when God called (cf. Gen. 12:1; 1 Sam. 3; Isa. 6, etc.). What a blessed thought that He Himself deigns to refresh Himself with us by His call!

b. It is perfect

The call noted here is what one might refer to as efficacious. It affirms that God is able to persuade, to induce, or to prevail upon man's understand-

ing and will. It so operates that a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ in the exercise of faith that no one so called ever fails to respond. This is the force of John 6:37a. There is no violence done to the individual's personal responsibility and accountability (John 6:37b). But it is also certain that all who have been given by the Father to the Son will assuredly come in response to His call (John 6:39). Quite obviously, this is not the general call extended in such passages as John 12:32 and Revelation 22:17. Admittedly, these truths are inexplicable to unredeemed flesh. Those who are saved glory in the grace of God so displayed. This truth in no way dampens one's ardor for evangelism.

c. It is protective

To pursue the thoughts of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, it is important to note how God does protect man's will in His dealings with him. It appears clear that man does exercise his own will without any hinderance or coercion (John 5:39, 40; 7:17; 1 Pet. 1:5). Rather than debate these obvious truths in His Word, it is the better part of spirituality to accept them and proceed in the worship and work of God with confidence. Questions not fully answered here will be assuredly known there (Isa. 55:7-9; cf. 1 John 3:2).

d. It is productive

The call is not a dead end street. It rather opens up to hope. The call is in fact the efficient cause of hope. Hope is what the call inspires. No wonder God is willing to record that His call is "high" (Phil. 3:14), "holy" (2 Tim. 1:9), and "heavenly" (Heb. 3:1).

2. BELIEVER'S HOPE

a. It is personal

It will forever be true that the child of God accepts for his own personal gain what God provides for him in grace. But the truth of the matter is that the hope is summed up in the Person of Christ, hence it is personal (Col. 1:27). The hope which rises from His call is here related to "glory" and also the "mystery" which

in turn is connected with Jews and Gentiles in one body. The body of Christ commenced at Pentecost (Acts 2) and it was there that the union of Jew and Gentile in one body was made (Eph. 1:22, 23; 3:1-12; 1 Cor. 12:13). Oh, to fill one's heart with Christ and those who are related to Him in the body!

b. It is eternal

The eternality of hope is gained by virtue of the relation it holds to eternal life. Hope is the basis upon which faith and knowledge rest (Titus 1:2). That same book makes hope the standard for our present enjoyment of the inheritance of the children of God (3:7). In both of these texts, eternal life is involved. Paul links hope with our salvation (1 Thess. 5:8) and of course our salvation is eternal (Heb. 5:9). These truths add real fiber to the "hope of His call." We have not come into something which is transient. His call which issues in hope does not fade.

c. It is practical

1) It is a better hope (Heb. 7:19). What the law and the Old Testament cannot provide, God has wrought for us in the Person of Christ. What a comfort for those who struggle with works to perform, but lose hope. Ours is a better hope through the blood of the new covenant in Christ Jesus our Lord (Matt. 26:28). It is better than the law.

2) It is a set hope (Heb. 6:18, 19). The anchor is here used as a figure for the believer's hope of eternal life. Coming in a chapter which has been badgered by argumentation is indeed encouraging. The believer already has his anchor inside the veil secure in heaven. What a rich statement of the unflinching hope which does not yield to stress. Glory to God.

3) It is a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3). Connected to the resurrection of our Lord, it is obvious that the hope here supports the believer's resurrection, too. This is not some church pronouncement, but the Word of the Lord. Thank God the hope is not an academic article, but a living vital truth.