

The Hope of the Resurrection

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Viktor Frankl in his book, Man's Search for Meaning says that man has to have some meaning in life. He needs hope. Viktor Frankl should know. Here's an individual who was an Austrian-born Jew who spent three years in concentration camps. He had an immigration visa that he could have taken advantage of, but he chose to stay behind and take care of his parents. Then his visa expired, so he got caught in that net and was sent to the concentration camps. A little bit of irony there is that it was because of another Austrian-born German by the name of Adolf Hitler. He was a doctor of psychiatry. While in the concentration camps, he watched people and observed the reason they survived. The ones that survived were the ones that had hope.

We also need hope. We've been given God's calling and an understanding of the true meaning of life. We know that there is more to this physical existence. There is some hope for us. There is a promise for us; we've been called and chosen, we've repented and have been baptized. God has given us His holy spirit and we have the understanding we need. We have the understanding of the hope and promises that God has made to us, and those transcend everything else in our lives if we pause to think about that. We know that we have an opportunity for eternal life and a future in God's kingdom once this physical life is done. We are going to be changed. We trust God for that promise and we do have that hope.

That's only going to happen one of two ways. We'll either be changed at Christ's return, and we will look at that scripture in a while where it says we'll be changed in a twinkling of an eye (those that are still alive). Or we will be resurrected from death. We will die. We don't know when that will occur. We don't know when Jesus Christ is going to return, so we have to assume that we will be resurrected from the grave. In either case, we have that promise and that hope.

This is what I would like to talk about today, the hope of the resurrection. We are coming upon the spring holy days and as we go through the holy days every year, we actually rehearse God's plan for mankind. That is God's plan for mankind. God wants to, at some point, offer that hope and promise to all mankind. However, we have that hope now, and in a personal sense as we go through the holy days, we are rehearsing God's plan for us. That's the reason we rehearse the holy days each year. We go through the ritual, of you will, of the holy days. If we are actually engaged in the holy days and aware of God's plan, which all of us are, that should be a source of encouragement and stability for us, spiritually, mentally and every other way. In a spiritual context that should be a source of hope for us.

We have that famous scripture in Ecclesiastes from Solomon; there is a season for everything, a time to live and a time to die, and all the other seasons we go through in our lives. He's talking about the cycles of life.

Just thinking about that, I went to Google regarding the average heart beats that we can expect in a lifetime. This is just an average. Some people have a faster heart beat and some have a slower heartbeat. The average heart beats in a lifetime per year is 37,869,120. If you multiply that by 70, you will come out with 2,650,838,400. If we live to eighty, we will be well over three billion heartbeats. The point I am trying to make is that, at some point, it will stop. Our physical life is going to run out and will be over.

So our ultimate hope is in the resurrection, in the change that God gives us. Again, that will come one of two ways. In most cases, that hope of eternal life will come in the resurrection. I looked up “resurrection” in one of the software programs I have, and it is also referred to in scripture as ...

- The hope of salvation
- The hope of God’s calling
- The hope of the gospel
- Hope of eternal life
- The hope of glory, and many others

Those are all essentially saying the same thing. When you think about how important that should be to us, to our make-up, encouragement and spiritual stability, it’s not surprising at all that Satan has engineered almost everything we see around us to sabotage that in some way. He wants to undermine and destroy that.

Please turn to 2 Timothy 3 with the thought in mind that Satan wants to undermine our hope. He wants to get us distracted and give up on that hope. That’s part of his plan. When we look at society and culture around the world, he has been reasonably successful in doing this. God is allowing him to do that. In 2 Timothy 3, a well-known set of scriptures. This is from the New King James.

2 Timothy 3:1. *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:*
(NKJV)

I remember one individual back when we had the church in Pasco who attended Ambassador College in Big Sandy, and he said there was a deacon that used this scripture in every sermonette he gave ... *“In the last days perilous times will come.”* But this is true.

- 2) *For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
- 3) *unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,*
- 4) *traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*
- 5) *having a form of godliness but denying its power ... (NKJV)*

If we think about that, there is a form of godliness all around us. We can look at all the various churches, and I'm not going to knock the various churches. They believe what they believe. One of these days we will help them to understand what they need to know. If you think about that phrase, "*denying the power*," we're going to be resurrected by the power of God. We will see some of those scriptures later on.

When you look at some of the beliefs in the world, they believe that salvation means that you're going to go to heaven, or maybe salvation means you have been forgiven your sins and you can just continue with your life. Some religions believe that you're going to be taken to paradise when you die. That's what your salvation is going to be. Continuing in verse 5:

5) ... *And from such people turn away!* (NKJV)

Paul doesn't mean that we should despise those people, but we shouldn't accept those false ideas of what salvation means. Paul also said, of his times and ours, it was this present evil age.

Especially in these last days, it's going to be perilous and dangerous. What Paul was warning Timothy about were the dangers of that, both physically and spiritually. We know that we are living in a society that is increasingly void of any knowledge of God. They reject God blatantly in just about everything that's going on in society around us. We know one of the ways that comes across is part of what Christ said. He said in Matthew 24 that, "*because lawlessness will abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*" In society, we can see how that coldness expresses itself just in an attitude. There is very little courtesy. Even in the church sometimes, there's a lack of care and concern, even some hostility among us. Brethren are easily upset. It seems like once somebody gets upset, they become hypersensitive and almost everything upsets them.

Christ also said that he who endures this onslaught against the things we believe, the hope in God's promises ... "*he who endures to the end will be saved.*" We will see later on that Paul had that goal and it is what we should be focused on. We are constantly bombarded by things in this anti-God society.

I saw an article in the paper recently on the back page. One of the hotel chains are throwing out all of the Gideon Bibles from the hotel rooms. So these things are happening to rob us of the hope and the faith that we have in God's promises.

In Galatians 5:22 it talks about the fruit of God's spirit. Some of the first ones mentioned are love, joy and peace. Those are the things that get destroyed and get shaky for us. Those words are about stability. When we lose the love and the joy and the peace in any form, physical or emotional, that's talking about stability. If we don't keep a clear hope and a clear focus on that hope that we have of the resurrection and all of God's promises, we will lose that stability in our lives.

Dale mentioned about the forbearers in early life, and also we have forbearers in history that were God's people. We will look at Hebrews 11 later on. We are going to see that this hope of the resurrection was a very stabilizing factor for those individuals.

What are some of the things that can rob us of that hope? Well, for some it is society around us, that attraction. We are told that we can be sidetracked by that very easily. We have the lesson and example of the Laodiceans. They have no need of anything. That could be referring to a number of things. Maybe they have no need of anything spiritual. In the parable of the sower where seed was sown among thorns, that's an analogy about the cares of this world. The deceitfulness of riches, the pleasures of life, and it says those things can choke out the word of God. In the word of God we have that hope and we have those promises that we should focus on. If we allow those to dominate and consume us, there just won't be time for the things of God, there won't be any room for God in our lives.

For other people it may be the challenges of heavy burdens. It could be health trials, family difficulties, job trials or any number of things. We've seen all those things. We have a prayer list that is full of those things. Should these overwhelm us to the point where we don't focus on these promises we have from God? Certainly we have this promise and hope of the resurrection. I'll try to show as we proceed how important that should be to us.

For some people prophecy can be a source of worry. A psychiatrist would call that anticipatory anxiety where you are always waiting for the other shoe to drop. People see things happening in the world and, unfortunately, I think a lot of that has to do with the things we learned early on in the Church of God. I know some will disagree with me on this, but I think we had an unhealthy focus on prophecy. We don't want to be paralyzed and have paranoia where everything that happens is some kind of omen that the end is near. That can be a depressing and debilitating thing. We've seen people buy passports and worry about going to the place of safety and all of that. Yes, we know there are things that will happen in prophecy. We can look in Revelation 9 at the fifth and sixth seals where it talks about a third of mankind being killed. That's probably over two plus billion people, a third of mankind. That's a staggering number of people. In a very short time they're going to lose their lives. We know also in Revelation 9 where it talks about things being so bad that people will prefer death than to continue to live. It will be a horrible and frightful time.

In thinking about that, how easily we forget what Christ said. This is just a reference, but in Luke 12:32, Christ said, "*Do not fear little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" We will see later on where God actually guarantees those promises that He has given to us. Remember the context in Luke 12. We have other references in Matthew and Mark, but the context there is that He is telling people not to worry like the rest of the world does, but to seek God's kingdom first and keep that in focus. This ties together in the hope and the promises that we have been given.

Jesus also said there will be persecution. He said, *"If they hated Me, they will hate you."* That is going to be a fact of life. He said that eventually we will be hated by all nations for His namesake. We talked about how God has been kicked out of motel rooms and we know He has been kicked out of the schools in our country. In some countries Christians are being hunted down and systematically killed because they are Christians. In the name of Christ they are being killed. Again, in the parable of the sower, the seed that fell on stony ground was overcome by tribulation and persecution.

Whether we talk about trials, persecutions, upheavals or distractions, whatever it might be, these things can have a devastating effect on us spiritually. Satan knows we are most vulnerable in our minds. That is where that occurs. If Satan can get our thinking off of what we should be focused on, if he can get us away from the hopes and promises of God and any future at all, we get to a point where we have no direction or purpose in life. That is when we are in the greatest spiritual danger. We realize there are a number of forces out there that will overwhelm us if we are not careful. Paul gives us information on protecting our minds in 1 Thessalonians 5. This was important in Paul's day just as it is today. We need to protect our minds. Things can happen to us physically. We can get run over by a bus, but that only takes care of the physical. What we need to be concerned about is our mental outlook, our attitude, our focus and all of that. Paul talks about protecting our minds.

1 Thessalonians 5:1. But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

2) For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

3) For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they (the world) shall not escape.

4) But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

5) You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. (NKJV)

We have been enlightened. We know what God's promises are and we know where our hope lies.

6) Therefore let us not sleep (or be oblivious), as others do, but let us watch and be sober. (NKJV)

Watching, as we know, is watching personally. We must watch our mind and keep spiritually engaged on the things of God.

7) For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. (NKJV)

There is no spiritual awareness.

8) *But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. (NKJV)*

Here is another way to put the hope of the resurrection. We know that the helmet is an analogy to protect the head, so wearing a helmet and keeping our mind and our focus on this hope becomes a source of protection for our minds.

9) *For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation ... (NKJV)*

That's looking forward to a time when we will have a spiritual body, and eventually that is going to happen.

9b) *... through our Lord Jesus Christ,*
10) *who died for us (we will commemorate this shortly), that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. (NKJV)*

That is going to happen.

11) *Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. (NKJV)*

Encourage each other and don't let things get us down. Don't give up. Don't come to that point.

So the helmet we must wear, the analogy that Paul uses, is the hope of salvation, to rely on those promises. It is a protection for our minds. If we think about it, this is a tremendous antidote for the things that assault us constantly and can undermine the spiritual things in our lives. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

1 Thessalonians 4:16. *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (NKJV)*

We will be resurrected.

17) *Then we who are alive and remain (still physical at that time) shall be caught up together ... (NKJV)*

We will be changed in a twinkling of an eye, as we will see in 1 Corinthians 15.

17b) *... with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*
18) (Paul concludes) *Therefore comfort ... (NKJV)*

That word "comfort" is from the Greek "paraklaleo" and it means *alongside*. In other words, it is a comfort in a way where you would come up to someone and just put your

arm around their shoulder and pull them close and say, "Come on, don't give up. Hang in there a little bit longer. You're going to get through this."

18b) ... comfort one another with these words. (NKJV)

These are words of encouragement. So the truth of the resurrection and the return of Jesus Christ are intended to be a source of comfort, encouragement and strength for us. Jesus was very clear about the hope of the resurrection especially in terms of the troubles that lie ahead. We can see that in Luke 21. Sometimes we just read over these things. I've certainly been guilty of that. We know this parallel of Matthew 24 and Mark 13. This following scripture refers to the coming of the Son of man.

Luke 21:25. *And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; (NKJV)*

This could be a reference to not only an atmospheric thing going on, but it could be mental turmoil. It kind of implies that in the next verse.

*26) men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
27) Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.
28) Now when these things begin to happen (what does He say), look up and lift up your heads (take courage), because your redemption (deliverance) draws near." (NKJV)*

When Jesus Christ does return, our deliverance is there. It will be at that point.

So in the face of all this evil that he's talking about, our hope does rest on that return and that promise of redemption of being changed into spirit and being in the Kingdom of God. In short, our hope is in the future resurrection, in one method or the other. When you think about, that for those of us who are called now, can we really overstate the importance of this promise of the resurrection and this hope in us and the encouragement this can give us?

Paul gives us another example. He drew upon that hope himself. Turn to 2 Corinthians we have an example of that.

2 Corinthians 1:8. *For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia ... (NKJV)*

He's referring to himself and his companions.

8b) ... that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. (NKJV)

So they were in a situation where they didn't know if they would survive. It looked like death was imminent for them.

9) Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, (NKJV)

What got Paul through all of this and other situations was the knowledge that God raises the dead.

10) who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, (NKJV)

One way or another, either physically or in a future resurrection, he knows that God will deliver him whatever the situation may be. Also in the context of what we are talking about, this hope of the resurrection isn't just based on wishful thinking. We have absolute guarantees from God.

There are no false promises in what God gives us. We can look at a metaphor in Hebrews 6:18. Leading up to that we have the example of Abraham where it talks about salvation, promises and hope. Abraham is the example of being faithful to God's promises.

Hebrews 6:18. *that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

19) This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

20) where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. (NKJV)

The metaphor I'm talking about there is that anchor. An anchor does something. In the Navy when we drop an anchor, we could either do that at port or if we had to we could do that at sea. That would hold us steady if there is was current, which there usually is in the ocean. Even in the harbor there may be a current and the tide goes in and out. That holds you stable. The bow would be pointed into the force of the current and it keeps you stable. We can pick up on that analogy here. Are we adrift spiritually? Are our moorings slipping? We can ask this of ourselves this time of year. Are we stable or is something coming loose spiritually? I'd like to look at what I will call anchoring scriptures. We used to have that term in the past. These scriptures are ones we can depend on. These are scriptures that tell us exactly what I've been trying to say here.

The first anchor is the promise of God and the holy spirit He gives us as a result of that promise.

God called us and gave us His holy spirit, gives us promises and understanding of what those promises mean.

The second anchor is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

These two anchors should stabilize and support our hope in the resurrection and our hope in the future.

So let's start with anchor number one: the promise of God and the holy spirit He has given us which is a guarantee of that spirit state to come, what we can expect and what we are looking forward to in the future.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 5. Let's look at this in the context of what we're talking about.

2 Corinthians 5:1. For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (NKJV)

That is drawing a comparison between our physical existence and spiritual body we will receive at the resurrection.

- 2) For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,*
- 3) if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.*
- 4) For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed ... (NKJV)*

Nobody wants to die. God has given us this physical life and has given us instinct to preserve that.

4b) ... but further clothed ... (NKJV)

The analogy again is very plain. It's between the physical and the spiritual state.

4 continued) ... that mortality may be swallowed up by life. (NKJV)

This is talking about the resurrection, spiritual life, a change for us.

5) Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (NKJV)

The King James says, *the earnest of the spirit*. It means the same thing. The point is that because God gives us the spirit, a bit of a down payment, that earnest, He is determined to fulfill that promise. He will follow through. It's a down payment to eternity.

We wanted to move near our kids, and there was a new development and some of the lots were going fast. So we picked a lot and put a down payment on it. That was like a security deposit with the builder that, once we sold our house, we would buy that lot and build a house on it. It's the same thing here. God gives us that guarantee. He has given us that security deposit and it's in the form of His spirit that shows that He is absolutely serious and bound to follow through with that promise. In Romans 8 we can see more about this. It can't be any clearer than this. Here is Paul again.

Romans 8:11. *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwells in you. (NKJV)*

That's the only way it's going to happen. We read that this is God's guarantee of His determination to follow through on that. Just as He raised Jesus Christ from the dead, He is going to raise us from the dead. Let's go to verse 18, and the context is talking about being led by the holy spirit and not living according to the flesh.

Romans 8:18. *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time ... (NKJV)*

It seems that we all get our share of sufferings.

18b) ... are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19) For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. (NKJV)

That's only going to happen one way, when we are changed into spirit beings.

20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; (NKJV)

Man, apart from God's holy spirit, doesn't even recognize that there is hope. He cannot see it. He is blind to it as we were at one point.

21) because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption (everyone dies) into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (NKJV)

Again, God desires that liberty for everyone, to be changed from a human being into a spirit being.

22) For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

23) Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. (The resurrection)

24) *For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?*

25) *But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. (NKJV)*

What he is saying is that at some point our physical existence won't matter anymore. We will have forgotten about it. We will be spirit beings and we will continue from there and we won't need to look back. We won't need to go back for anything. I don't even know if we will have that many memories left of being physical; maybe only the good memories and the aches and pains are gone. The point is, the stronger our hope is and the clearer our understanding is of that promise and guarantee that God gives us, the better we will be able to persevere in difficult times. That's what he is telling us. There is a little more about this in Ephesians, chapter 1.

Ephesians 1:7. *In Him we have redemption through His blood ... (NKJV)*

We're going to be rehearsing that soon.

7b) *... the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*

8) *which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,*

9) *having made known to us the mystery of His will ... (NKJV)*

It's a mystery no longer to us. We've been called and given God's spirit, we've been given this understanding, and we know the promises and what the guarantee is.

9b) *... according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,*

10) *that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.*

11) *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance ... (NKJV)*

Paul is speaking about that as if it's already done. There's no equivocation there. The promises are going to come. They are going to happen.

11b) *... being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, (NKJV)*

God has a definite plan.

12) *that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. (NKJV)*

It speaks of those of us who are firstfruits, the Bride of Christ.

13) *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, (NKJV)*

It kind of reminds you of those sealed in Revelation 7, where it talks about those that are sealed.

14) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (NKJV)

It's the same language back in 1 Corinthians 5 that we just read. What we have are God's promises and His guarantee. We just need to remember that the ultimate outcome of that for us individually is still being determined. We're in the process of being judged ... 1 Peter 4:17. In other words, based on the scriptures we just looked at, we have God's promise, we have God's guarantee and we know God is one hundred percent faithful. We've seen that God cannot lie. He is going to follow through. It remains to be seen if we will.

Let's turn to Philippians 3. We can see where Paul understood that he could still fail, even knowing and preaching all these things. He said at one point that he was worried about the fact that he preached things and yet he himself could fall away. Looking at these scriptures that Paul preached and taught everyone, he had absolute confidence in the resurrection and in God's promises. He knew that he hadn't reached that point where it was impossible for him to fail. We can see that in Philippians 3:8.

Philippians 3:8. *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ
9) and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law,
(NKJV)*

You can't earn salvation.

*9b) ... but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;
10) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
11) if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.
12) Not that I have already attained ... (NKJV)*

A very unlikely idea that "once saved, always saved."

12b) ... or am already perfected; but I press on (he never lost sight of the goal), that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. (NKJV)

We know that Christ wants us to obtain salvation, but again a great deal depends on us.

13) *Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,*

14) *I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (NKJV)*

That is the priceless prize, the resurrection, the change for us. That is the prize. Let's go to verse 20.

20) *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (NKJV)*

Notice Paul's focus in verse 21.

21) *who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working (His power) by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (NKJV)*

This is very plain. Paul knew that he could fail. Now to chapter 4, verse 1.

Philippians 4:1. *Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. (NKJV)*

He is saying, "Don't let anything cause you to lose sight of that." Nothing compares to that hope and promise that God has given us.

We know that the Philippian church was a strong church and they were able to stand fast because of these things.

So to summarize that first anchor, we saw those anchoring scriptures where we are given the hope of the resurrection, the fact that God has given us promises and His holy spirit and the guarantee that He will follow through. It's very plain. It's all there in scripture.

This brings us to anchor number two and a second set of scriptures. That second anchor is the resurrection of Jesus Christ Himself. We saw that in verse 10 of Philippians 3, *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection.*

Let's go to 1 Corinthians 15. We call it the resurrection chapter.

1 Corinthians 15:3. *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,*
4) *and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, (NKJV)*

We're going to rehearse that soon. Let's drop down to verse 12. Paul presents some arguments here because of things that were going on in or around the church that was affecting the church. We talked about those things that will affect our minds and our thinking. It's the same thing that was happening in the Corinthian church.

12) Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? (NKJV)

How do you say that? Of course, that was in their thinking. We can look at a couple of scenarios where that could happen. We know some of the Pharisees and some of the Sadducees were converted. There was three thousand in one day. We can see Satan working too. He's trying to undermine that hope, to have people thinking that there's no resurrection of the dead. This probably crept into the Corinthian Church from the thinking of the Sadducees. We have that famous example where the Sadducees got into an argument with Christ and they said there were seven brothers, and one married a wife and he died, and then she married another brother and he died, and so on, and they wanted to know whose wife she would be in the resurrection. Christ told them that they didn't know the scriptures. That's in Mark 12.

These are things that surrounded the church back then just as we have today. We have conflicting ideas of how things are going to happen. They were in a Greek society and Greek philosophy is where the immortality of the soul came from. If you believe in the immortality of the soul, then the resurrection doesn't make any sense. Paul probably knew they were thinking this.

1 Corinthians 15:13. *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.*

14) And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. (NKJV)

There is no immortality apart from the resurrection.

15) Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise.

16) For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.

17) And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! (NKJV)

You're still a human being; you're going to die and stay dead. You're not going to be resurrected.

18) Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (NKJV)

They're dead. They're not going anywhere.

19) If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. (NKJV)

If our hope doesn't go beyond this life and if our hope doesn't include the hope of the resurrection, we have no hope at all.

20) But now Christ is risen from the dead (That is a fact), and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (NKJV)

Continuing the argument, let's drop down to verse 29.

29) Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead ... (NKJV)

Here's another false belief. Someone asked me when I gave this sermon earlier, "They were baptizing for the dead?" I said, "No. This was something that was going on and this thinking crept into the church." Who would baptize someone for the dead? The commentaries have several approaches to this. Paul is using this for an argument. He's trying to show them how foolish it is.

*29b) ... if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?
30) And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? (NKJV)*

We can also ask: Why do we do what we do if there's no resurrection from the dead, if we have no hope?

31) I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. (NKJV)

He's referring to the struggle of his physical carnal nature. The point he was making was that apart from God's promises, there is no future. It talks about this in verse 32.

32) If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" (NKJV)

That's the philosophical approach of the world. "There's nothing beyond this physical life, so let's just live it up."

What Paul is saying here is everything really hinges on the reality of the hope of the resurrection. Let's turn to Hebrews 11. That theme is evident in Hebrews 11. Here is a list of God's people. It talks about Abel, Enoch, Moses and others.

Hebrews 11:34. *quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong ... (NKJV)*

When I read this it reminds me of Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 12:10, where he said he had a thorn in the flesh. He said that when he was weak he was strong. I believe that he meant that even though he had physical problems, he was growing and maturing spiritually enough to focus on the future and see beyond the physical issues that he had. God wouldn't heal that. God left him with that. He probably died with that affliction. The point is that hope became his strength when he was weak. When he didn't see any hope in the physical, he still hoped in the future.

34b) ... became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. (NKJV)

In verse 35, this is called the "no names section" because you don't see any more names. There are no more listed. Notice what the source of their strength was, because these individuals were faithful too.

35) Women received their dead raised to life again. Others (we don't know how many) were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. (NKJV)

We can see that the hope of the resurrection was fundamental to their faithfulness. It was their anchor and their stability when horrible things came upon them. Again, Satan is in the mix, trying to undermine that faith and uproot their spiritual moorings and trying to get them adrift spiritually.

36) Still others (more unknowns) had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. (NKJV)

This sounds a lot like persecution to me. They were stoned, sawn in two, tempted, slain with the sword, they lived in caves and wore sheepskins or goatskins. They were tormented in every way. They were basically kicked out of society.

39) And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise (the ultimate promise of the resurrection)

40) God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. (NKJV)

God has a plan; God is going to work it out; God is going to follow through with His promises and His guarantee.

Let's continue in Hebrews, chapter 12.

Hebrews 12:1. *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (NKJV)*

That's what Paul said to the Philippians. That's why I believe Paul wrote Hebrews even though commentators and scholars will argue with that.

The finish line, the race, the end result of our lives is to obtain salvation, eternal life. It even mentions it in Hebrews 12:2. What was the major source of strength for Christ?

2) looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him ... (NKJV)

What joy was that? It was the same joy set before us. He knew that He was going to be resurrected. He said at one point when He was being tried and tortured and crucified, He could have called down legions of angels to save Him physically. We don't know. Maybe the Father would have done that. We don't know that, but He looked forward to that joy because He knew there was something after that. He had complete and total confidence in the Father to resurrect Him.

2b) ... endured the cross, despising the shame (as a result, He was resurrected), and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (NKJV)

Let's go back to 1 Corinthians 15. We left off in verse 39. The context here going up to verse 40 is talking about showing the difference between the physical and spiritual and talking about celestial, terrestrial bodies, heavenly, earthy and all of that.

1 Corinthians 15: 42. *So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.*

43) It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness (human frailty), it is raised in power.

44) It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. (NKJV)

Then it goes on to talk about the first man, Adam, and the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Again, it is making comparisons here between the physical and spiritual. Let's drop down to verse 50.

50) Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

51) Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—

52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (NKJV)

There's not one ounce of equivocation there, no ambiguity at all, no maybe, no false hope or any of that. This is an absolute promise.

53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (NKJV)

We just saw that in verse 50.

54) So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

55) "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (NKJV)

Paul is quoting Isaiah 25 and Hosea 13.

56) The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

57) But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (doing what God expects us to do), knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (NKJV)

We know that. We know it's not in vain and we do have this hope of the resurrection. Again, we know we are being judged. We have this tremendous hope of being resurrected and being spirit beings in God's own family. Peter talks about this. Let's go to 1 Peter. Peter had the same hope of the resurrection. His epistle has been called the epistle of hope.

1 Peter 1:3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (NKJV)*

Here's our second anchor.

4) to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, (NKJV)

This is an absolute rock-solid promise. You don't reserve something that you're not going to follow through on at some point.

5) who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (NKJV)

So Peter echoes the same sentiment, the same importance of the hope of the resurrection. In this case, he is talking specifically about the resurrection of Jesus as the Pioneer of that salvation.

So in summary, God has given us a clear, absolute promise and he has given us His spirit as a guarantee. If that spirit is in us, we will be resurrected and given eternal life. We will be in God's family. He demonstrated that promise by raising His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the forerunner of our salvation. We've seen that God has given us that hope. He has given us that helmet to protect our thinking so we can focus on those

things whenever we do get distracted or discouraged. We can be encouraged by these things. In effect, we can never take off that helmet. We must keep that helmet on or we risk losing that hope.

Here are a couple more passages, in closing, to reinforce this whole message.

Romans 15:13. *Now may the God of hope (that's where real hope comes from) fill you with all joy and peace (qualities of God's holy spirit – Gal. 5:22) in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (NKJV)*

Turn to 1 Peter 1:6. In verse 5 we read that we are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation.

1 Peter 1:6. *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, (NKJV)*

The point here is that there is hope beyond the trials, beyond the persecution, beyond anything this life can throw at us. There is hope.

7) *that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,*

8) *whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,*

9) *receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. (NKJV)*

In verses 10 and 12 it says the prophets desired to look into this and the angels have wanted to look into this. They didn't have it, but we do at this point in history.

13) *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; (NKJV)*

Drop down to verse 21.

21) *who through Him (Christ) believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (NKJV)*

Again, keeping centered on that and not getting off to one side or the other...

22) *Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, (NKJV)*

That's all part and parcel of having this hope amongst ourselves.

23) having been born again (or begotten), not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, (NKJV)

Verses 24 and 25 are important because it points out something.

24) because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass ... (NKJV)

All those millions of heartbeats are eventually going to cease; they're going to stop.

*24b) ... The grass withers, And its flower falls away,
25) But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. (NKJV)*

Brethren, as God's people we have the greatest hope of all. We have God's promise, we know that we need to be faithful, and if we are, we will be changed. It will either be in a twinkling of an eye or it will be at the resurrection. We will gain that tremendous prize that Paul talked about and that he looked forward to. We have that absolute promise. We will be changed; we will have eternal life; we will be in God's kingdom.