

THE HOPE LAID UP IN HEAVEN.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.”-Colossians 1:5.

THREE graces should be always conspicuous in Christians-faith, love, and hope. They are each mentioned by Paul in the opening verses of the epistle from which our text is taken. These lovely graces should be so conspicuous in every believer as to be spoken of, and consequently heard of even by those who have never seen us. These flowers should yield so sweet a perfume that their fragrance may be perceived by those who have never gazed upon them. So was it with the saints at Colosse. Paul says, “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.” May our characters be such as can be reported of without causing us to blush; but that can never be the case if these essential virtues are absent. If these things be in us and abound we shall not be barren or unfruitful, but if they be lacking we are as withered branches. We should, therefore, be rich in faith, which is the root of every grace; and to this end we should daily pray, “Lord, increase our faith.” We should strive to be fall even to overflowing with love, which is of God, and makes us like to God; and we should also abound in hope, even that heavenly hope which causeth a man to purify himself in readiness for the inheritance above. See ye to it that neither of these three divine sisters are strangers to your souls, but let faith, hope, and love take up their abode in your hearts.

Note, however, the special character of each of these graces as it exists in the Christian. It is not every faith and love and hope that will serve our turn, for of all precious things there are counterfeits. There is a kind of faith in all men, but ours is faith in Christ Jesus, faith in him whom the world rejects, whose cross is a stumblingblock, and whose doctrine is an offense. We have faith in the man of Nazareth, who is also the Son of God, faith in him who having made atonement by his own blood once for all, is now exalted to his Father's right hand. Our confidence is not placed in ourselves, nor in any human priest nor in the traditions of our fathers, nor in the teachings of human wisdom, but alone in Christ Jesus. This is the faith of God's elect.

The love of Christians, too, is also special, for while a Christian man is moved by universal benevolence and desires to do good unto all men, yet he has a special love unto all the saints, and these the world loves not, because it loves not their Lord. The true believer loves the persecuted, the misrepresented, and despised people of God for Christ's sake. He loves them all, even though he may think some of them to be mistaken in minor matters; he has love to the babes in grace as well as to the grown saints, and love even to those saints whose infirmities are more manifest than their virtues. He loves them not for their station, or for their natural amiability, but because Jesus loves them, and because they love Jesus. You see the faith is in Christ Jesus, but the love extends beyond Christ himself to all those who are in union with him: while hope takes a still wider sweep, and includes the eternal future in its circuit; thus do our graces increase in range as well as in number.

Our hope, too, upon which we are to speak this morning, is special, because it is a hope which is laid up for us in heaven; a hope, therefore, which the worldling cares not one whit about. He hopes that to-morrow may be as this day, and yet more abundant, but he cares nothing for the land where time has ceased to flow. He hopes for riches, or he hopes for fame; he hopes for long life and prosperity; he hopes for pleasure and domestic peace; the whole range of his hope is within the compass of his eye: but our hope has passed beyond the sphere of sight, according to the word of the apostle, "What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Ours is a hope which demands nothing of time, or earth, but seeks its all in the world to come. It is of this hope that we are about to speak. May the Holy Spirit lead us into a profitable meditation upon it.

The connection of our text seems to be this: the apostle so much rejoiced when he saw the saints at Colosse possessing faith, love, and hope, that he thanked God and prayed about them. He saw these seals of God upon them, these three tokens that they were a really converted people, and his heart was glad. All the faithful ministers of Christ rejoice to see their people adorned with the jewels of faith, and love, and hope; for these are their ornament for the present, and their preparation for the future. This I believe to be the connection, but yet from the form of the language it is clear that the apostle intended to state that their love to the saints was very much produced in them by the hope which was laid up in heaven. You notice the word “for,” which stands there: “The love which ye have to all the saints for,” or on account of, or because of, “the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.” There can be no doubt that the hope of heaven tends greatly to foster love to all the saints of God. We have a common hope, let us have a common affection: we are on our way to God, let us march in loving company; we are to be one in heaven, let us be one on earth. One is our Master and one is our service; one is our way and one is our end; let us be knit together as one man. We all of us expect to see our Well-beloved face to face, and to be like him; why should we not even now love all those in whom there is anything of Christ? Brethren, we are to live together for ever in heaven: it is a pity we should quarrel. We are for ever to be with Jesus Christ, partakers of the same joy, of the same glory, and of the same love; why should we be scant in our love to each other? On the way to Canaan we have to fight the same enemy, to publish the same testimony, to bear the same trials, and to fly to the same helper: therefore let us love one another. It were not difficult to show that the hope which is laid up in heaven should be productive of love among the saints on earth. This connection of my text with the clause immediately before it does not at all prevent its being regarded in the sense which I first mentioned, namely, that it was a subject for joy with the apostle that the Colossians had faith and love and hope; for he would rejoice none the less because their faith was fostered by their hope. It commendeth these sweet graces, that they are so wonderfully intertwined with each other and dependent upon one another. There would be no love to the saints if there were not faith in Christ Jesus, and if there were not faith in Christ Jesus there would be no hope laid up in heaven. If we had no love it would be certain that we had no true faith, and if we had no hope, faith would be assuredly absent. If we entertain one of the graces we must receive her sisters, for they cannot be separated. Here are three brilliants set in the same golden setting, and none

must break the precious jewel. “Now abideth faith, hope and love, these three,” and blessed is he who hath them abiding in his own heart.

Now we will let faith and love stand by for a little while, and we will talk about hope, the hope mentioned in our text, the hope which is laid up for you in heaven. First, it is a very marvellous hope; secondly, it is a very secure hope; and thirdly, it is a very powerfully influential hope. May the Holy Ghost bless these three thoughts to us all.

I. First, then, we speak of our hope which is laid up for us in heaven as A VERY MARVELLOUS HOPE, and it is so, if we only consider that it is a great act of grace that sinners should have a hope at all. That when man had broken his Maker’s law there should remain a hope for him is a thought which should make our hearts leap with gratitude. Do you not recollect when you felt it to be so? When sin lay heavily upon your conscience Satan came and wrote over the lintel of your door, “No HOPE,” and the grim sentence would have stood there to this day had not a loving hand taken the hyssop, and by a sprinkling of precious blood removed the black inscription. “Wherefore remember that at that time ye were without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world.” That was our condition once; and it is a marvellous thing that it should be thoroughly changed, and that assurance should have taken the place of despair. In our carnal estate many false hopes, like will-o’-the-wisps, danced before us, deceived us, and led us into bogs of presumption and error, but we really had no hope. This is a dreadful condition for a man to be in: it is, indeed, the very worst of all; never is the storm so terrible as when in the howling of the winds the man distinctly hears the words “No hope.” Yet into the thick darkness of NO HOPE we once steered our course, and each time we tried to rely upon good works, outward ceremonies, and good resolutions, we were disappointed anew, and the words rung into our souls with dread monotony, “No hope, no hope,” until we were fain to lie down and die. Now, sinners though we be, we have a hope. Ever since by faith we looked to Jesus on the cross, a hope full of glory has taken possession of our hearts. Is not this a marvellous thing?

More marvellous still is it that our hope should venture to be associated with heaven. Can there be heaven for such as we are? It seems almost presumptuous for a sinner who so richly deserves hell even to lift up his eyes towards heaven. He might have some hope of purgatory, if there were such a region, but a hope of heaven, is not that too much? Yet, brethren,

we have no fear of hell or of purgatory now, but we expect to taste the joys laid up in heaven. There is no purgatory for anyone, and there is no hell for saints, heaven awaits all believers in Jesus. Our hope is full of glory, for it has to do with the glory of Christ, whom we hope to behold. Dost thou expect then, thou who wast black with lust, that thou shalt sit among the angels? "Ay, that I do," saith the believer, "and nearer to the throne than they." And thou who hast plunged into every form of uncleanness, dost thou expect to see God, for none but the pure in heart can behold him? "Aye, that I do," saith he, "and not only to see him, but to be like his Son, when I see him as he is." What a divine hope is this! Not that we shall sit down on heaven's doorstep, and hear stray notes of the songs within, but that we shall sing with the happy band; not that we shall have an occasional glance within the gates of pearl, and feel our hearts hankering after the unutterable joys within the sacred enclosure, but we shall actually and personally enter into the halls of the palace, and see the king in his beauty in the land which is very far off. This is a brave hope, is it not? Why, she aspireth to all that the best of saints have received, she looketh for the same vision of glory, the same ecstasy of delight; she even aspireth to sit upon the throne of Christ, according to the promise, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Hope reckons to be among the overcomers, and to partake in their enthronement. This is marvellous hope for a struggling believer to entertain; yet it is not presumption, but confidence warranted by the word of God. Is it not a miracle of love that such poor creatures as ourselves should be enabled thus to hope in God?

This hope is the more marvellous because it is so substantial. In our text the apostle scarcely seems to be speaking of the grace of hope, since that can hardly be said to be laid up in heaven, but dwells in our bosoms: he rather speaks of the object of hope, and yet it is clear that in his mind the grace of hope as well as the object must have been intended, because that which is laid up in heaven is not a hope except to those who hope for it; it is clear that no man has a hope laid up in heaven, unless he has hope within himself. The truth is that the two things—the grace of hope and its object—are here mentioned under one term, which may be intended to teach us that when hope is wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, it is the thing hoped for, even as faith is the thing believed, because it realizes and secures it. Just as faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things

not seen, so is hope the substance of the thing it expects, and the evidence of the thing it cannot see. Paul in this case, as in many others, uses language rather according to the theological sense which he would convey than according to the classical usage of the Greek tongue. The words of a heathen people must be somewhat strained from their former use if they are to express divine truth, and Paul does thus stretch them to their utmost length in this case. The hope of the true believer is so substantial that Paul even speaks of it as though it were the thing itself; and were laid up in heaven. Many a man hath a hope of wealth, but that hope is a different thing from being wealthy. There is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip. saith the old proverb, and how true it is! A man may have a hope of old age, yet he may never reach even middle life, and thus it is clear that the hope of long life is not in itself longevity; but he that hath the divine hope which grows out of faith and love hath a hope which shall I never be disappointed, so that the apostle speaks of it as being identical with the thing hoped for, and describes it as laid up in heaven. What a marvellous hope is this which long before its realization is treated as a matter of actual attainment, and spoken of as a treasure reserved in the coffers of heaven!

One marvellous point about our hope is this, that it is the subject of divine revelation. No one could ever have invented this hope, it is so glorious as to baffle imagination. The prince of dreamers could never have dreamed it, nor the master of the art of logic have inferred it by reason: imagination and understanding are both left upon the ground, while the Bible idea of heaven soars upward like a strong-winged angel. The eternal hope had to be revealed to us; we should never have known it else, for the apostle says, "Whereof ye heard before in the word of time truth of the gospel." That a sinful man should have a hope of enjoying the perfect bliss of Paradise is a thing not to be thought of, were it not that the Lord hath promised it. I say again, imagination's utmost stretch had never reached to this, neither could we have had the presumption to suppose that such a bliss could be in store for men so unworthy and undeserving, had we not been assured thereof by the word of God. But now the word of God hath opened a window in heaven and hidden us look therein and hope for the time when we shall drink of its living fountains of waters, and go no more out for ever.

This is marvellous, and it is even more marvellous to think that this hope came to us simply by hearing. "Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." "Faith cometh by hearing," and hope comes by faith; and so the divine hope of being in heaven came to us by hearing,-not by

working, not by deserving, not by penance and sacrifice, but simply by hearkening diligently unto the divine word, and believing unto life. We heard that the pierced hand of Jesus had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and we believed, and saw a way of entrance into the holiest by his blood. We heard that God had prepared for them that love him joys indescribable, and we believed the message, trusting in his Son. Our confidence is in the word which we have heard, for it is written, "Hear and your soul shall live"; and we find that by hearing our confidence is strengthened, and our heart filled with inward assurance and joyful expectation, therefore do we love the word more and more. Will we not prize to the uttermost that sacred word which has brought us such a hope? Yes, that we will; till we exchange hearing for seeing, and the message of Jesus for Jesus himself, we will always lend a willing ear to the testimony of Jesus.

This hope is marvellous, once more, because the substance of it is most extraordinary. Brethren, what is the hope which is laid up for us in heaven? It would need many a sermon to bring out all the phases of delight which belong to that hope. It is the hope of victory, for we shall overcome every foe, and Satan shall be trodden under our feet. A palm of victory is prepared for our hands, and a crown for our heads. Our life struggle shall not end in defeat, but in complete and eternal triumph, for we shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb. Nor do we hope for victory only: but in our own persons we shall possess perfection. We shall one day cast off the slough of sin, and shall be seen in the beauty of our new-born life. Truly, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," but when we think of the matchless character of our Lord Jesus, we are overjoyed by the assurance that "we shall be like him." What an honor and a bliss for the younger brethren to be like the firstborn! To what higher honor could God himself exalt us? I know not of aught which could surpass this. Oh, matchless joy to be as holy, harmless, and undefiled as our own beloved Lord! How delightful to have no propensity to sin remaining in us nor trace of its ever having been there; how blissful to perceive that our holy desires and aspirations have no weakness or defect remaining in them. Our nature will be perfect and fully developed, in all its sinless excellence. We shall love God, as we do now, but oh how much more intensely! We shall rejoice in God, as we do now, but oh what depth there will be in that joy! We shall delight to serve him, as we do now, but there will then be no coldness of heart, no languor of spirit, no temptation to turn aside. Our

service will be as perfect as that of angels. Then shall we say to ourselves without fear of any inward failure, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." There will be no recreant affection then; no erring judgment, no straying passion, no rebellious lust: there will remain nothing which can defile, or weaken, or distract. We shall be perfect, altogether perfect. This is our hope- victory over evil and perfection in all that is good. If this were all our hope it would be marvellous, but there is more to be unfolded.

We expect to enjoy security also from every danger. As there will be no evil, in us, so there will be none around us or about us to cause us alarm. No temporal evil, such as pain, bereavement, sorrow, labor, or reproach shall come near us: all will be security, peace, rest, and enjoyment. No mental evil will intrude upon us in heaven; no doubts, no staggering difficulties, no fears, no bewilderments will cause us distress. Here we see through a glass darkly, and we know in part, but there shall we see face to face, and know even as we are known. Oh, to be free from mental trouble! What a relief will this be to many a doubting Thomas! This is a marvellous hope. And then no spiritual enemy will assail us, no world, no flesh, no devil will mar our rest above. What will you make out of it, ye tried ones? Your Sabbaths are very sweet now on earth, but when they are over you have to return to yon cold world again; but there your Sabbath shall never end, and your separation from the wicked will be complete. It will be a strange sensation for you to find no Monday morning, no care to be renewed, no toil to be encountered, no harness to be buckled on afresh; above all, no sin to be dreaded, no temptation to be escaped. Heaven is so peaceful that the storms of earth are there unknown, the stirrings of the flesh are never felt, and the howlings of the dog of hell are never heard. There all is peace and purity, perfection and security for ever.

With this security will come perfect rest: "Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors." Heavenly rest is quite consistent with continual service, for, like the angels, we shall rest on the wing, and find it rest to serve God day and night. But there you shall not toil till the sweat bedews your face, neither shall the sun smite you, nor any heat. No weary limb nor fevered brain shall follow upon the blessed service of the glory-land. It is a paradise of pleasure, and a palace of glory; it is a garden of supreme delights, and a mansion of abiding love; it is an everlasting sabbatismos, a rest which never can be broken, which evermore remaineth for the people of God; it is a kingdom where all are kings, an inheritance where all are

heirs. My soul panteth for it. Is not this a charming hope? Did I not say well when I declared it to be marvellous?

Nor is this all, brethren, for we expect to enjoy in heaven a happiness beyond compare. Eye hath not seen it, nor ear heard it, nor hath the heart conceived it; it surpasses all carnal joy. We know a little of it, for the Lord hath revealed it unto us by the Spirit, who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God; yet what we know is but a mere taste of the marriage feast: enough to make us long for more, but by no means sufficient to give us a complete idea of the whole banquet. If it be so sweet to preach about Christ, what must it be to see him and be with him? If it be so delightful to be ravished by the music of his name, what must it be to lie in his bosom? Why, if these few clusters of Eshcol which are now and then brought to us are so sweet, what will it be to abide in the vineyard, where all the clusters grow? If that one bucketful from the well of Bethlehem tasted so sweetly that we scarce dared to drink it, but poured it out before the Lord as a thankoffering, what a joy will it be to drink at the well-head without stint for ever? O to be eternally at the right hand of God, where there are pleasures for evermore!

This is our hope, and yet there is more, for we have the hope of everlasting fellowship with Christ. I would give ten thousand worlds, if I had them, to have one glimpse of that dear face, which was marred with sorrow for my sake; but to sit at my Lord's feet and look up into his countenance, and hear his voice, and never, never grieve him, but to participate in all his triumphs and glories for ever and for ever,-what a heaven will this be? Then shall we have fellowship with all his saints, in whom he is glorified, and by whom his image is reflected; and thus shall we behold fresh displays of his power and beamings of his love. Is not this surpassing bliss? Said I not well when I declared that ours is a marvellous hope? Had I eloquence and could pile on goodly words, and could a poet assist me with his sweetest song, to tell of the bliss and joy of the eternal world, yet must preacher and poet both confess their inability to describe the glory to be revealed in us. The noblest intellect and the sweetest speech could not convey to you so much as a thousandth part of the bliss of heaven.

There I leave the first head. It is a very marvellous hope.

II. Secondly, let us remark that IT IS A MOST SECURE HOPE. It is so according to the text, because it is laid up or secured. The recent calamities which have occurred in connection with the Glasgow City Bank will make

business men very careful where they lay up their treasures; but no one can entertain any fear of the safety of that which God himself takes under his charge. If your hope is laid up with him it becomes sinful to doubt its security. It is “laid up,” the text says, and this means that it is hidden in a safe place like a treasure which is well secured. We find it hard to lay up our valuables safely in this world because thieves break through and steal; the iron safe, the strong room, and all sorts of inventions are employed to preserve them from felonious grip; but when God becomes the guardian of our treasure he lays it up where none can touch it, and neither man nor devil can steal it. Our hope is laid up just as crowns and wreaths were laid up at the Grecian games for those who gained them: no one could snatch them away from their rightful owners, but the rewards were safely retained for the winners, to be distributed when the contest was over. You see not as yet your hope, beloved, but it is laid up: it is hidden with Christ in God, and made as safe as the throne of God himself.

Notice the next word, it is laid up “for you.” It is something to have your hope laid up, but it is much better to have it laid up for yourself. “Laid up for you”; that is, for you whose faith is in Christ Jesus, and who have love to all the saints. There is a crown in heaven which will never be worn by any head but yours; there is a harp in glory that never will be touched by any finger but yours. Make no mistake about it; it is laid up in heaven for you, “reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.” “For you”;- “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Lay the stress there, and get honey out of it. “Laid up for you.”

Where is it laid up? The next word tells us. “Laid up for you in heaven,” “where,” says the Savior as though he were expounding the text, “neither moth nor rust doth corrupt.” This means that no process of decay will cause your treasure to become stale and worn out; no secret moth will eat the garments of heaven’s courtiers, and no rust will tarnish the brightness of their crowns. Our Lord adds, “Nor do thieves break through nor steal.” We cannot imagine a burglar’s breaking through the walls of heaven. We could not imagine Satan himself undermining the bastions of the New Jerusalem, or leaping over the bulwarks which guard the city of the Great King. If your hope is laid up in heaven it must be perfectly safe. If your hope lies in the bank, it may break: if it lies in an empire, it may melt away; if it lies in an estate, the title-deeds may be questioned; if it lies in any human creature, death may bereave you; if it lies in yourself, it is deceitful

altogether: but if your hope is laid up in heaven, how secure it is. Be glad, and bless the Lord.

To show how secure is our hope, the apostle tells us that we have an indisputable certificate and guarantee for it. He says, "We heard of it in the word of the truth of the gospel." Notice these three emphatic words- "In the word of the truth of the gospel." First, "In the word." What word is that? Man's word? Man's words are so much wind. But this is God's word, the same word that made heaven and earth, a word of power which cannot fail and of truth which cannot lie. You first hear of this blessed hope through the word of God, and that word is the best of evidence. You know how a person will say, "My word for it"-here you have God's word for it. We take a good man's word freely; and will we not take God's word much more readily? You have the word of God for the sure hope that believers in Christ Jesus shall be blessed for ever: is not this security enough?

Our text goes on to say, "the word of the truth": so, then, it is not a word of guess, conjecture, or of probable inference, but of infallible truth. My brethren of the modern school, my wise brethren, have a word of excogitation, and outcome, and development; but the word the apostle preached was "the word of the truth"-something positive, dogmatic, and certain. Ugly as the word may sound, the Lord grant that we may never be ashamed of the thing called dogmatism nowadays, which is none other than faith in God's truth. We believe the word of God not only to be true, but to be "the word of the truth." "Let God be true and every man a liar." There may be other true things in the world, but God's word is the essence of truth, the truth beyond all things else that may be true, for he hath said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall never pass away." The apostle saith in another place, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Note the next word, "The word of the truth of the gospel," or of the good news. That is to say, the sum and substance of the good news is to be found in this glorious hope. If you extract the essence of the gospel, and get the truth, which is the central germ of the glad tidings, you come at that blessed hope most sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the veil.

Now, then, before your God-created hope can fail the word of God will have to be broken, but the word of God cannot be broken: the truth will have to fail, but the truth abideth for ever, and is by force of its own nature eternal; and the gospel will have to be disproved, but that cannot be, since the glory of God is made to hang upon it. Ye have heard it, then, “in the word of the truth of the gospel,” what better assurance do you need? Hold to it and rejoice in it, and you shall never be ashamed of your hope.

III. I close by saying that IT IS A MOST POWERFULLY INFLUENTIAL HOPE. Brethren, I have already said to you that this hope is the parent and nurse of love, because the text says, “The love which ye have to all the saints for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.” Now, that is no trifling fountain of action which leads believing hearts to love, since love is always a working grace. Oh, for more love in this distracted world. Whatsoever in this world promotes Christian love is to be admired, and since the hope that we shall be for ever together before the throne of God lifts us above the little disagreements of society, and makes us affectionate to each other, it is a thing to cultivate with care.

Love is one part of the powerful operation of hope upon ourselves, but hopefulness affects others also. Where the hopefulness of saints is conspicuous, it leads ministers and gracious people to give thanks to God. Paul says, “We give thanks to God and the Father, praying always for you since we heard of your hope.” I do not know a greater delight that a minister can have than the thought of all his people entering the bliss of heaven, and of his meeting them all there. We hardly have time to know each other here below; we have loved each other in the Lord, and we have striven together in the service of God, and some of us are old fellow-soldiers now, after many years of Christian warfare, how pleasant it will be to dwell together above world without end! Some have gone home whom we dearly loved, and would almost have detained if we could; and there are others among us who in the order of nature will soon be translated; happy are we because we cannot long be separated. The age of some among us prophesies their speedy departure, and foreshadows that they will soon go over to the majority: but it is a most blessed reflection that all of us who are in Christ shall meet together above. We shall have ample room and verge enough for fellowship when we have reached eternity, and what will our joy be then! Perhaps some of you will say to me when we converse in heavenly language.- “You remember talking to us concerning the blessed hope on that fine Lord’s-day morning, but you did not know much about

it. We said then, ‘The half has not been told us’; but now we perceive you did not tell us the one-hundredth part. Still we were glad to share in the joy of what little we did know, and in the blessed hope of knowing so much more.” Oh yes, dear friends, because the hope of heaven in us helps to make other people thank God on our account, it is a sweet grace and mightily influential, and the more we have of it the better.

Moreover, hearing of their hope, led the apostle to pray, and if you will follow me in reading the words which succeed the text, you will see what he desired for his friends at Colosse. In the ninth verse you will see what he prayed for. He says, “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Having believed in Jesus, and loving his people, you are going to heaven; and so Paul says “I desire that you be filled with the knowledge of his will,” and well may he so desire, since to do that will is the joy and business of heaven. Is not our prayer, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”? Brethren, let us learn the will of the Lord now, and so be educated for the skies. Here we are to go through our apprenticeship, that we may be able to take up our freedom as citizens of the New Jerusalem. Here we are at school, preparing to take our degree above among the instructed saints of God. Are we to enter heaven ignorant of what the will of the Lord is? Surely we ought to know something of the ways of the place, something of the rules of the court. This part of our life below is intended to be a prelude to our life above, a preparation for perfection. Here below we undergo the tuning of the instruments. It is not meet that there should be discordant scrapings and screwings of strings in heaven. No, let us do all that here. Let us have our harps tuned below, so that when we reach the orchestra of the skies we may take our right place, and drop into the right note directly. A good hope should make you eager to know the will of the Lord. It should purify you even as Christ is pure, and make you anxious to begin the perfect service of heaven while yet you linger below.

Then the apostle prays “that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” Is it not fit that you who are to rise to Enoch’s heaven should walk as he did, and have this testimony that you please God? You are going to dwell at God’s right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore, would not you wish to do all you can to please your Lord before you see him? You are a son of a king: you have not put on your glittering array as yet; your crown is not yet on your head; but surely you wish to

behave yourself as becometh one who is fore-ordained for so much honor and glory. If a son is in a distant country and is coming home, he begins to think “What can I take home? What can I do to please the beloved father whom I am soon to see?” Begin, beloved, to see what you can do to please God, because you are so soon to enter into his pleasure, and dwell with those that wear white robes, “for they are worthy.”

Next he says, “Being fruitful in every good work.” Why, if there is to be such a rich reward of grace, let us bear all the gracious fruit we can, and if the time of working is so soon to be over, let us be instant in every holy labor while yet the season is with us. Who wants to go into heaven empty-handed? Who wishes to spend the time of his sojourning here in idleness? Oh no; let us seek to be fruitful to the glory of God that so we may have an abundant entrance into the kingdom.

The apostle further adds, “Increasing in the knowledge of God.” If I am going to dwell with God, let me know somewhat of him; let me search his word and see how he has revealed himself; let me endeavor to have fellowship with him and his Son Jesus that I may know him. How can I enter heaven as a total stranger to him who is the king of it? Is not the knowledge of God as needful as it is desirable? Those who have a good hope of heaven will not rest without knowing the Lord, from the least even to the greatest of them. If anyone were to make you a present of a great estate, no matter in what country it might be situated, you would feel an interest in the land and its neighborhood, and before nightfall you would be found enquiring about the place. No matter how rustic the neighborhood or remote the locality, you would set your thoughts towards it if you knew the estate to be yours. As a usual thing, one of the driest documents in all the world is a rich man’s will. If you have ever heard one read you will know how it prosed on and on in that rigmorole fashion dear to lawyers: but if you are present when it is read to the family, please notice how “my son John’s” eyes clear up when it comes to the clause which concerns himself, and how even the aged countenance of “my faithful servant Jane” brightens when her small legacy is mentioned. Everyone is on the alert when his own interests are affected. Even so he that hath a hope in heaven and an interest in Christ’s great testament, will at once take an interest in divine things, and will desire to increase in the knowledge of God.

Once again, the apostle says, “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” A

hope of heaven is a mighty strengthener for bearing the ills of life and the persecutions of the adversary. "It will soon be over," says a man who looks for heaven, and therefore he is not over-weighted with grief. "It is an ill lodging," said the traveler, "but I shall be away in the morning." Well may we be strengthened with all might by the hope of heaven: it is but reason that the exceeding weight of glory should cast into the shade this light affliction, which is but for a moment.

You will say, "But have you not wrought this part of the chapter into your subject without any warrant?" No, Here is my warrant in the next verse: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." I have been following the evident track of the apostle's thoughts, The Lord gives us a hope of glory, and then he gives us a meetness for it, and that meetness is largely wrought in us by the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of our hope. Cultivate, then, your hope, dear brethren. Make it to shine so plainly in you that your minister may hear of your hopefulness and joy; cause observers to take note of it, because you speak of heaven, and act as though you really expected to go there. Make the world know that you have a hope of heaven: make worldlings feel that you are a believer in eternal glory, and that you hope to be where Jesus is. Often surprise them as they see what they call your simplicity, but what is in truth only your sincerity, while you treat as matter of fact the hope laid up for you in heaven. The Lord grant it for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.