

J Slavich - Hope

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We decided to talk on hope as we heard some of our younger brethren may be facing different struggles in this turbulent world, and we wanted to give them a reminder, a hopeful reminder of the promises from our Heavenly Father. You know, I remember and we gave this at the General Convention, and I remember being in the audience at the General Convention, listening to the platform and we were blessed by so many of the lessons of the brethren. Sometimes, though, it was a little hard because it was talking about the things that were to come.

And I remember as a young, as a teenager, before I consecrated, I said, that's great. I'm going to have to live through that and you brethren are going to be gone. At least that was my impression as a teenager, my viewpoints changed a little bit on that. So maybe in some ways I am saying to a young Jay Slavich out there, there is hope.

All right, this is our agenda for today. We're going to talk about faith and hope. What I find in studies is that you can't really talk about hope without talking about faith. So we're going to touch on it briefly. We're going to talk about hope for the unconsecrated, hope for the young consecrated.

We're going to give some unsolicited advice. We're going to talk about hope for the earth, hope for Israel and hope for a sinful world.

It is hard to talk about hope without talking about faith. Faith and hope have a relationship with each other, and our discussion about hope today assumes some things. It assumes faith in God, faith in His Word, faith in his promises, and faith in His Son.

Hebrews is a great book. To see where this interrelationship between faith and hope is spelled out to define faith and some of its requirements, let's look at Hebrews 11:1. Now, faith is a well grounded assurance that for which we hope and a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see. I like that well grounded assurance. It's not something superficial, there's something it's well grounded in.

We have a solid idea about it. How about Hebrews 11:6.

And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek Him. So we have some fundamentals about faith given to us here. In Hebrews, you know, you must believe in God. You must believe that he rewards those who seek Him.

And it means having a well grounded assurance in things we can't see. That's hope or that's faith. But hope relies on that, and when we talk more about hope. I really appreciated a discourse given by brother Bill Gill, and it's called the Basis for Hope.

And you can find it on Christian Resources, and it was coincidentally given at the Hope 2024 convention.

So he talked about what is the basis for our hope. He said, the resurrection of Jesus, and that made a lot of sense to me.

When we look at that, we're saying, why do we as Christians believe in Jesus and in God's plan and all these things? Because we have a basis for our hope, and that was that Christ was raised on

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the third day. If that hadn't happened, do you think there would have been followers after Christ after that? I don't think so.

So that made a loss. As I commend the discourse to you. Let's keep looking a little bit in Hebrews, because in Hebrews 6, and I'm going to read a little bit outside of what we have quoted here from 6, 1320, and this is really in the preface to this.

In 1317, at least we'll preface it. God's promise to Abraham is secured by two things. First, by an oath, and second, the fact that God does not lie, and so we'll pick up here in Hebrews 6, 18, 20, that by two mutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil, whither as a forerunner, Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

You know, when I think about this, I want to take like a side cut of the tabernacle and say, there's a new piece of furniture in the tabernacle. It's an anchor.

You know, here's Jesus, that forerunner for us. He's already put that path in front of us. So let's examine a little bit more the basis of our hope in Jesus. We have to have a faith or assurance that hope in Jesus and his resurrection. That means that we have faith or assurance in God who would have the capability to raise someone that has died back to life, and not only to life, but to a spiritual body.

Who else has that power? We have to have faith in God. That's what that hope in Jesus means. We have to have a faith or assurance in God's word. God's word provides a promise that he would be that Jesus would be raised after Three days, we have the sign of Jonah.

And from Jesus own words that he would die and be raised after three days, right, this temple is going to be torn down and rebuilt. We have faith or assurance in God's promises. God promised a seed that had crushed the serpent's head. Jesus is that seed, and we have faith or assurance in Jesus.

Faith that Jesus remained perfect and sinless until the end of his earthly life to pay the ransom price, and that his resurrection was proof of God's acceptance. You know, we look at all that and we have faith in it. We wouldn't have that record if it wasn't for God giving that ability to the apostles and the early disciples to see all this and record it for us, and they believed because they witnessed these things and had faith and hope in these various things we've just outlined, and they continued believing it, no matter the tribulations they faced.

Can you imagine the early church and what they faced? Here's a quote that Brother Brad Sweeney sent me back in the spring, and it's from a gentleman named Charles Colson. I wasn't familiar with Charles Colson. He was part of the Watergate scandal. He went to prison.

My understanding is he had conversion in prison, and this is a quote that is attributed to him. I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testify they had seen Jesus raised from the dead.

Then they proclaimed the truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned, and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled

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12 of the most powerful men in the world, and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep alive for 40 years?

Absolutely impossible. End of quote. So that's our basis. We're talking about the basis for our hope. It's that resurrection of Jesus.

I think it's an instructive way that Charles Coulson sort of looked at that. So let's change gears, and we're going to start getting into our subject of. Of hope. Let's talk about hope for the unconsecrated. How can we give comfort and encouragement to our unconsecrated friends?

Let's start in Zephaniah 2, 3. Seek the Lord all you humble of the land who do his just commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord.

Nahum 1, 7. The Lord is good. A stronghold in the day of trouble. He knows those who take refuge in him. Psalm 34, 14, 15, 17.

Turn from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them. He delivers them from all their troubles, what not to rely on.

There's a verse in Ezekiel 7, 19, and it says, they shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed, and their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the the Lord. They shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels, because it is the stumbling block of their iniquity.

It's just a picture. There's more.

You've got to hope, and it's coming, brother, because what we're going to say is we're sort of looking at this, right? You see that, you see the fire or the sunset in the distance, and what is. I sort of think, what's this young.

When I pick this picture is what this young man might be thinking, and what are we supposed to do? Because we're contrasting what the Lord said to do to hide on the day of the Lord's wrath, and those that are trusting in material wealth, material goods to protect them. I think it's this simple, do the right thing and remain humble. It's material possessions versus character. God wants character.

You know, recently, when we were preparing for this talk, I had an opportunity to talk to somebody at work, and we discussed the end. You know, we're discussing the end times. We started talking about prophecy and what his viewpoint was on these things, and we'd never really talked about this before, and it was an interesting conversation, and we talk about investments every once in a while in the financial markets.

So eventually that came up, and I mentioned that scripture in Ezekiel about they're going to cast their gold and silver because we've been talking about investing. So that was sort of the genesis of this conversation, and I said, you know, that it says that we're not going to be able to rely on that. But I've read a scripture recently about, you know, during that time of trouble, about if you do the right thing and remain humble, that you might be hidden from God's wrath.

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He looked at me, and we're on teams, on a conference call, and he looks at me and he. He leans back in his chair and he sort of brings his shirt further up, and he says, look at what my shirt says. It says, life is good. I said, okay. He said, Well, I was having lunch with another colleague today, and that colleague had lost a dear person in their life.

He said, I wore this shirt in particular because I wanted to go there and build them up. I wanted to encourage him. I realized that just sharing the idea of do what's right, remain humble, brought about an immediate response. People respond to this message. People want to do what is right.

I really believe that people want to do what is right. It was just interesting just to share it out there. I wasn't intending for any, and here was. He told me a whole story of what he had done to try to build up this other individual.

Let's talk more about hope. Hope for the young, consecrated, and what we mean by this is those that are at the beginning of their walk, and sometimes we can feel overwhelmed. There might be some questions that come up. Is there enough time?

And the answer is found in Philippians 1:6. Being confident of this very thing, that, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.

God is faithful. He will give each of us the amount of time we need and the custom training we require to become more than conquerors. He would not have called you if it were not possible. The Scripture is telling us to have confidence in the Heavenly Father. If he started this work of transformation in your life, God is able to complete it.

Well, we might have questions about saying, I'm not good enough. I'm not ready. I don't have enough experience. I can't do it on my own. Good.

Those are good questions to have, because we can't do it on our own. Philippians 4:13 says, I can do everything through him who gives me strength. God wants us to rely on him. He wants us to rely on his Son to give us the strength to go through whatever experience or opportunities laid in our path.

Well, you might ask, what should I be doing?

Paul tells us in Philippians 3, 13, 14. One thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Paul is focused on one pressing toward the goal. What is this goal?

Love. I think it's that simple. The goal is perfect love. Another quick story. I remember my mother telling me as she was growing up, and she had just consecrated that she was overwhelmed.

She was overwhelmed with what she was supposed to do, and she thought, how am I ever going to reach this lofty goal of making my calling election sure, and she was at home and nobody was around, and she picked up a book, and it was one of Brother Russell's sermon books, and she flipped through it, and what she opened up to in the first paragraph was about putting on the perfect mark of love.

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As she read that, she said, I can work on loving people. I can do that. That's what God is asking of us. First, we start with and how do we attain that perfect mark of love? It is a progression.

First, we start with a duty. Love to God, His Son, and our fellow man. This is the love we ought to give God because He created us, and to his son because he loved us first, and to our fellow man, because this is God's will. Second, not just because it is our duty, but we begin to love God because of his character and all the righteous principles for which he stands. Third, we love our brother.

Finally, we reach a mark of perfect love, agape love, a selfless love, and for me, I always have to define that for myself. So it means something. What it means to me that selfless love means a love that expects nothing in return. This perfect love is not only reserved for God, His Son and our brethren, but we must also love all of mankind, even our enemies.

Unsolicited advice. This is dangerous territory to go into. But when we thought about what maybe some of our young people are going through or seeing in the world, we try to categorize it a little bit about maybe where some of the challenges that, at least from our observations, they are, and I invite them to come up and say, brother Jay, you got it wrong. This is really what we have the challenges with.

And that's going to be good. Because then we can say, okay, well, let's see how else we can help. But, you know, one of the things early in life might be work or looking for work or a career path. That can be challenging. It's challenging in today's world.

What's the right path to take? What opportunity should I gear myself toward? Why don't I have an opportunity? Why is God maybe not allowing this to happen? What about relationships and families, the challenges that can be there?

How about with girlfriends, with boyfriends, with husband, with wife, starting a new family, raising children?

Trial of comparisons, and this is the one I almost called social media, but I think it's an old problem, and you know, I had some dear brethren, they're sitting right here, come and talk to me about it afterwards, and they said, you know what? It's not only a trial comparison where you're just comparing with your neighbor down the street, right?

It was keeping up with the Joneses is what it was called. But now on your phone, you're competing worldwide with millions, billions of people. You know, hey, wow, that person's really smart. That person's really good looking. That person can lift so much weight.

This person can do that. They make millions of dollars, all those things, and guess what? We're carrying it around. Many of our young people are carrying it around in their pockets.

That's a trial.

Next three, battling sin and temptation, addictions, compulsions, bad habits, depression and anxiety. Many of these things, the last three that are listed here on here, those are ones we might need to ask for help. Those are hard things to overcome, and it's okay to ask for help. If you have to ask for help, it doesn't mean that you're weak, that you're not good enough, that you're not strong enough.

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Ask for help.

I'll just dive into one of these. I'm just going to use it as an example. I'm going to use work. When we. When we graduated college, we were engaged and I left school and I said, okay, or graduated school.

And we were going to head down to Florida eventually to get married that spring, and I moved down to Florida. I said, okay, I'm moving to Florida, and I had no hope of a job, no prospects of a job, and I remained unemployed for six months.

And when I say unemployed, like I couldn't get a job selling the candy for Christmas time in the mall job. Right? Okay. So that's the level of like, no, Like I was just not. People were saying no.

That was just. Nope, nope, nope. Eventually he had a job packaging up Internet orders for maybe a quarter, 25 cents over minimum wage. Thankful to have it, gave me employment. That was hard because when I came out of school, I said, they'd be lucky to have me, obviously.

Right? That's. Come on. The Lord knew that I needed to be taken down maybe a few notches on that ladder that I thought I was climbing. Right?

And we needed that experience, and even after that, we're still having challenges, and, you know, I think brother Bob Goodman, my father in law, saying this is the guy that my daughter is going to marry, said, why don't you apply for this position? And he gave it to me. It was about being a computer operator.

I said, I don't know anything about that. He said, why don't you just apply? I said, okay, and I did, and I always joked that I was the most qualified of the unqualified candidates.

And we got the job and we were excited about that. That was a great opportunity, and, you know, okay, here's another step, and then I proceeded to stay for the next year and a half in a server room, a data center room that was 60 degrees all the time and sounded like this. Like that was a year and a half.

And about a year in, I said, I'm ready. Like, I really want to get out of here, and this is all before I consecrated and all these things, and, you know, eventually got to a point where there became an opportunity. Opportunity became available, and I had my resume ready.

Before I hit send, I prayed. I said, you know, lord, let your will be done. Because it had been hard. I'd moved down there. I couldn't.

We were working. We were thankful for it, but it was. I worked on Sundays, so I couldn't meet with the brethren. Ann and I only had one day off a week together. You know, there's all these little challenges along the way, and you're thinking, what am I supposed to do?

And I sent out the resume and I said, here's the opportunity. Door shut. No, it wasn't. My boss said, hey, actually, you haven't been here long enough to apply for another internal job. So no.

Door shut. Okay. Well, the Lord said, not yet or not now, and so then eventually, a number of months later, another opportunity came up, and they said, we're going to train you. I said, great, I'm excited.

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Let's do this. Let's go, and so we went and we trained a little bit, and we showed up to the first day, and they said, we only have one position. There's three of you. It's a senior position, and none of you are qualified.

Okay, so quite an opportunity, and after that two weeks of training and subsequent interviews, I remember leaving, and we were going to actually, the general convention. Anna picked me up from work, and I said, I don't know if I really want to do this. This sounds really tough, and I don't, you know, I'm not sure.

And we went away. That went to general convention, and then I got a call at General convention, and there was another opportunity all of a sudden opened up, and now it's like, well, now what door do I go through? Two doors look like they might be open. Which path do I select?

I could keep going on and on, and I don't want to go on about myself. I use it as an illustration that there's some key things that we want to offer advice on and key things that we think that can be used. One is prayer.

Pray to God to ask his will be done in your life, your decision or what direction to take. This scripture, Acts 17:27 says, God has done all this so that we will look for him and reach out and find Him. He isn't far from any one of us. This scripture is taken from Paul's discourse to pagan Athenians on Mars Hill. God wants us to reach out to him, to search after him, to seek his will in our lives.

Here's another piece of advice. Search the Scriptures Everything in the Scripture is God's word. All of it is useful for teaching and helping people and for correcting them and showing them how to live.

The Bible is the best instruction book you will ever receive on how to live your life. I challenge you the next time you have a decision you are making or you are not sure how you should respond, Search the Scriptures. Study it out. Did you know? Inside the whole instruction book there is a quick advice section.

It is called Proverbs. Try reading one chapter a day, you'll complete it in a month to become familiar with scriptural advice. Finally Ask for Help As I had said before, it is okay to ask for help and this may seem like an odd scripture to put on a pull in for this topic, but to me it shows an example and this is what it says in 2 Timothy 4:9, 11 it says he's writing to Timothy. Paul's writing to Timothy says, do your best to come to me quickly get Mark and bring him with you because he is helpful to me. The great apostle Paul at the end of his ministry needed help and he wasn't afraid to ask.

So ask God for help. Ask the brethren for help. If you need some type of professional help, ask End of Advice let's talk some more about hope. How about hope for the earth, the land, the water and the air? I think this is a topic that we see a lot.

I know that's something that Anna and I have been asked as young parents from other brothers, dear brothers, saying, how do you think about raising your children in these environments? And I think it's something that we rely on looking back to the Scriptures Acts 3:21 whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. This is a familiar scripture to us. The key part is it's a restitution of all things and that includes the earth. Psalm 67:5 6 Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee.

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Then shall the earth yield her Increase and God, even our own God shall bless us, gives us a little bit of a hint of when that increase will occur. All the people praising him. It's going to take some time. There's going to be work that's involved.

Isaiah 35:1 7. It's familiar to us. Thirsty deserts will be glad. Barren lands will celebrate and blossom with flowers. Deserts will bloom everywhere and sing joyful songs.

They will be as majestic as Mount Lebanon, as glorious as Mount Carmel or the Sharon Valley. Water will rush through the desert, scorching sand will turn into a lake, and thirsty ground will flow with fountains. Grass will grow in wetlands where packs of wild dogs once made their home. God promises that the earth will be restored.

Hope for Israel. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, and that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received a Jehovah's hand double for all her sins. Isaiah 40, verse 2. I think it's very important for us now to make sure that we are talking about this hope for Israel.

In preparation for this, we saw a video. I say in preparation. We don't usually turn the news on at night. Every once in a while we turn on the world news, and the news that came on this one day that I'm remembering was a video of a subway car in New York City where it said protesters were chanting, all the Zionists, get out.

You know, it's hard watching the news now, and there's times when I have to turn to my boys, like that time, and I said, this isn't normal and this is not good.

We have to understand what the Scriptures have promised for Israel.

There's a promised permanent regathering to their land. Amos 9:14, 15 and I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof. As we go down. They shall no more be plucked up out of their land.

Well, Brother Jay, are you just taking that as like one verse in the whole Old Testament? No. Do we need some more verses? Here's just a few.

A hope for Israel, their promise, God's protection. Ezekiel 34:28, and they shall no more be a prey to the nations. Neither shall the beasts of the earth devour them, but they shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. Zechariah 14:3.

Then shall Jehovah go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. Are those the only verses? No, there's more verses.

Hope For Israel, a promised new covenant. Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. But this is a covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, saith Jehovah, I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

You know, when we look at that and we talked about learning the law about love, we're learning the law of love now, right? The whole point is to help the rest of mankind be able to learn that law as well. They're all going to have to write it in their hearts. Need more verses. They're here.

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Hope for Israel. A promise that the nations will seek out Israel to learn of God.

Zechariah 8:22, 23. I can think of a particular sister that said this before. Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of Jehovah. Thus, saith Jehovah of hosts, in those days it shall come to pass that 10 men shall take hold out of all nations of the languages of the nations. They shall take hold of the skirt of him.

That is a Jew saying, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.

Finally, we're going to talk about the hope for a sinful world.

We want to share some scriptures to remind you of the hope that the Bible teaches for everyone that has ever lived, and we're going to preface it with a question, and this was a question asked by one of our young people, Orlando. Why does God allow Satan to have influence during the period of the present evil world?

And with that question being asked, we know that there's hope that we have it in 1 Timothy 2, 4, that Jesus served as a ransom for all, and it'll be testified in due time.

John 5:28, 29. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out. 2 Corinthians 5, 18, 19. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not continuing men's sins against them.

And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. So we have these wonderful promises in the Scriptures. So why does God allow Satan to have influence during this period? God allows Satan influence now so that we all can learn how Much sin hurts.

What is the best way to learn? We can learn through observation, seeing what others do. We can learn through instruction, listening to instructions on how we should do something, or we can learn through experience. I think God shows us that experience is the best teacher. Here are two examples.

We have the example of playing an instrument. So if we were playing the trombone or the piano, you learn best about it by reading a book about it, watching someone else do it, or listening to someone play it, or actually sitting down and playing the instrument. I think almost everyone would say you have to actually practice with the instrument to be able to play it. Experience is the best teacher. Do you have a memory in your mind how you know what the word hot means?

So I do. I asked this at camp too. It was interesting to get the answers right. Do you have a memory of what hot means? Mine was touching a curling iron when I was a kid while I was trying to dry my hands from my mom's curling iron.

And I got this oval mark on my wrist that stayed there for a couple of years. I remember what hot means. I think God is providing the lesson of right and wrong to all people now by allowing Satan to have influence during this present evil world. In Romans 7, the apostle Paul tells us how the law was used to instruct what was right and wrong, and through each individual's experience, they learned how difficult it was to keep the law.

Through his experience, Paul is able to say now, or through this experience, Paul is able to say, now we can see how terrible and evil sin really is. Adam and Eve would provide us another clear

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biblical example. They were told in Genesis, you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you will surely die. We know the story. Adam and Eve were tempted.

They ate from the tree. They eventually died, and all mankind since then has inherited their sinful condition. Why did God allow Satan to tempt them? Because God knew the instructions alone were not enough. We needed the experience to go along with it, so we would never want to repeat that experience again.

Just like touching the hot iron or stovetop, we'd never desire to feel burned like that again. Mankind will have a chance to learn how much sin hurts. Sin hurts us, it hurts others. It's committed against. It is costly.

It clearly says in the Bible that the price of sin is death. That's why people die. If this were the end of the story, this would be a sad place to end. But it is not. God has a plan.

He has given us hope. God plans for all things to be restored on the earth. He plans for the resurrection of the dead to bring every mankind back into harmony with Him. When I think of all the pain and suffering that has been brought about by sin I think of this promise of the kingdom. God's home is now with his people.

He will live with them and they will be his own. Yes, God will make his home among his people. He will wipe all tears from their eyes and there will be no more death, suffering, crying or pain. These things of the past are gone forever. We have a message of hope.

A better day is coming. We need to share that message since we're at time. We won't review each point as we go through. Will leave you with this final scripture. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in Hope.

Romans 15:13.