

Faith, Hope & Love_Part32

Psalm 131:3: “O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.”

1 Timothy 4:10: “For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.”

We are studying **hope** and its connection to waiting on the Lord, *endurance*, and the fear of the Lord. We have learned that the Lord is our help and our shield; therefore, we can boldly pray: “Let Your lovingkindness, O Lord, be upon us, according as we have hoped in You.” With this prayer, we invite the fire which cleanses our soul and the knife which circumcises us away from all our attachments to this world. And it is through the implements of the fire and the knife that God accomplishes His main purpose in our lives: that we might be conformed into the image of Christ. It is how He makes us like God.

I know there are some of you right now who feel stuck. You have paid attention to all these teachings, you know the truth, you understand that being conformed into the image of Christ is something you would like, but something in you is still holding you back from praying this prayer in earnest and making the choice to press into the fire and the knife. And herein lies the problem. God will not force you to do these things. With God, you always have a choice; you always have your part to play. Not surprisingly, however, it is a very small part. God does not ask for much. He wants you to simply have the willingness to purify yourself as He is pure, and He does the rest.

Now when I say “simply have the willingness” I know that many of you think: what are you crazy, it is not simple. You are talking about pain; you are talking about life disruption; you are talking about everything I have known and loved in terms of protecting myself, providing for myself, and keeping myself safe, being melted in the fire. You are talking about the possibility of an extended time of emotional instability. That is not simple. When I think of what I will have to endure and what I see what others are going through I am not sure I have the strength to move forward. Honestly, I am scared to death. I understand what God wants, but I am not sure I trust Him enough to be so “simply” willing.

This is where you must go back to the building block of *faith*; it is always the first stone of spiritual maturity and one that needs to be revisited over and over again. Is God who He says He is? Do the pages of scripture prove out every word He has ever uttered? Has His name ever actually failed? I know you might feel like it has failed, but has it really? In ***Psalm 33:18-22***, we studied that Jesus is our help and our shield. Both of these words are nouns; hence, they are a part of His character and nature. These words don't just describe Him (as an adjective would), they are Him. He is our help and our shield; however, you won't come to know Him as your help and your shield unless you choose to trust in His holy name. Only then will you see and only then will you be convinced that He always is who He says He is and He always does what He says He is going to do, it is just a matter of time.

You might be asking yourself, “Why would I do this?” “Why is it necessary?” If you truly are a son of God, then the Lord has made you a very specific promise: **you will be like Him**. Like Father like son. This is our hope: we will be like God—fashioned into the image of His only Begotten Son. What a fantastic hope! The Lord

will transform your body into conformity with the body of His glory. He will exert the power over you that He has to subject all things to Himself, and you will be changed (***Philippians 3:20-21***). However, the fulfillment of this promise is not just a hope for the afterlife, this transformation starts in your now. That is why you are instructed, by the mercies of God, to present your body to Him as a living sacrifice. If you do, He will transform you from one degree of glory to another, by renewing your mind each and every day (***Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 3:18***). The Spirit of God will teach you why you can trust the Lord, and He will show you what that practically looks like in your day-in-and-day-out life. Present yourself to Him and you will become convinced that He is worthy of your complete trust. The fire and the knife are about removing all that ties you to this world and to your *flesh*, both of which are enemies of God. These places of weakness and death must be removed because they distort the image of Christ in you. And it is only through this pathway (the fire and the knife) that you will experience all of His goodness and blessing.

I have to ask you a personal question, not a metaphysical question. I want you to think about your answer very carefully; and please don't respond with the typical predictable religious "right" answer. Here goes; is being like God a good thing? Be careful, if you say yes, then you know I am going to follow up with a question like: "Why then are you so afraid to press into the fire and the knife?" Is being like God a good thing? If you are a true child of God, then I believe that you will have no other answer than: absolutely yes. And if you are a true child of God, I believe that your "yes" stands firm and resolute regardless of the journey and the mileage. However, with that "yes" comes the inevitable wince and a tad bit of concern.

Personally, I have come to believe that not only is it good, it is great. It is freedom and it has become my desire and my hope; but, honestly, I still wince. The journey is difficult; yet, at the same time, I do not retreat and I do not hesitate. I want to be like Him. He knows this about me; and my hope is being realized year after year. He always lives up to his name and fulfills His promise.

In thinking about this question (is being like God good?), I want you to remember that in reality there is no middle ground—do not be fooled. You are either a true child of God—you share His blood and His Spirit and are being transformed into His image—or you are not. **1 John 5:19-20** makes this more than clear

1 John 5:19-20

We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

The contrast is shocking. We know we are of God, and all else—the whole world—lies in the power of the evil one. Despite what you might think, there simply is no in between. The statement, “we are of God” is in the *present active indicative*; and “we know” is in the *perfect active indicative*.” Thus, the Spirit is saying that for the true children of God, there is no question as to this reality; and they should be absolutely convinced of it even now. But when it says, “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one,” the *present middle indicative* is used. The *present indicative*

means that it is a statement of fact in terms of their now (which means it could still change if they wanted it to change); but even more shocking is that they have chosen it to be so. That is why the *middle* voice is used. In effect, they have dug down deep in their soul and decided (at some level of consciousness) that they do not want to be like God, but would rather be like the king of this world. They have made the choice. God did not make the choice for them, otherwise it would be in the *passive* voice. However, since it is in the *present* tense and not the *perfect* tense, they still have time to repent of this decision and choose instead to give themselves to God; it is not too late. As I have said many times, God will not force anyone to follow Him; likewise, He does not force anyone to refuse Him. He is not unfair; in fact, all His ways are just and true (***Psalm 111:7***).

Let's get back to our question. Is being like God a good thing? Well, since there is no middle ground, the alternative is being like the king of this world—the evil one. As we learned in our second study in this Kingdom series, the evil one is an adversary to the true children of God. He is a liar; a deceiver; a poser; and he accuses people to God, God to people, and people to other people in order to bring condemnation and reproach in to their lives. He is a tempter—tempting people to rely on themselves instead of God; a schemer—always planning how he can devour the true children of God; a stumbling block—inducing people to set their mind not on God's interests but on man's, thereby hindering their walk with God. He is a thief—stealing away the Word of God from the hearts of people; a murderer; and a betrayer of friends. He is fraudulent, full of deceit, and an enemy of righteousness. He is lord over the domain of darkness and the servants of darkness. He holds people captive to do his will through the snares of fear and personal goodness. He

is wrathful and deals treacherously with people; he defiles all that is good; he is a hater who brings hate into the souls of man; and he is a hunter that seeks true believers to devour. He is the one who physically afflicts people with disease and abnormalities; he torments, oppresses, and terrorizes them.

With all of this in mind, is being like God a good thing? Does it sound like something we should ignore, fight, resist, run from, and put off as long as possible? Remember, there is no middle ground. You are either with Jesus or you are against Him. You are either gathering with Him or scattering what He gathers. That is why He told us: *“If you are with me, then be with me; and if you are for me, then be for me.”* I hope you understand how great and marvelous it is to be found in the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Lord our God Almighty; it is a far better thing than being found in the image of the evil one—the prince of this world. Pray: *“Let Your lovingkindness, O Lord, be upon us, according as we have hoped in You”* and be one who can say: *“We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”*

Hope in His lovingkindness and He will make you like Him; and all God is asking of you is to stand on the building block of faith, believe in His name, and in invite in the fire and the knife and let Him do His thing. That is it. Do not fear! Be willing—let Him purify you and circumcise you by choosing to press into the transformation process and from glory to glory, one step at a time, you will find that you will be more and more like God; and that is a good thing and absolutely nothing to fear. *“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are” (1 John 3:1).*

There is one final passage on hope that I want us to examine before we move on

to study love—the next building block in the Kingdom of God. For me, this passage answers the question, “Is it good to be like God?” It is also intricately tied to the passage in **1 John 3:1-3** that we studied last week.

Hebrews 6:11-20

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of **hope** until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For example, there was God's promise to Abraham. Since there was no one greater to swear by, God took an oath in his own name, saying: "I will certainly bless you, and I will multiply your descendants beyond number." Then Abraham waited patiently, and he received what God had promised. Now when people take an oath, they call on someone greater than themselves to hold them to it. And without any question that oath is binding.

God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the **hope** that lies before us. This **hope** is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.

This passage starts with an exhortation for us to show the same speed and earnestness to inherit the promises of God just like those who before us, through faith and patience (or *endurance*), learned how to live in them. Being in the *middle* voice, the Spirit wants us to dig down deep into our soul and make the choice to not just engage with the Lord but to, in effect, fully embrace the transformation process, i.e. to **realize** the full assurance of hope until the end. Remember, we are to hope in His lovingkindness, or His promise that He will deliver our soul from death leaving us with only His life to be lived in and through ours. The Spirit is therefore telling us that this needs to be **realized** day-in-and-day-out until the end when it will be fully completed. Thus, He does not want us to be sluggish (in the Greek: lazy or figuratively stupid), but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. He wants us to really go for it and experience this in our now. The phrase “inherit the promises” is in the *present active participle*. The promise that we will be like God is to be realized in our now and it is to be a continuing experience every single day.

The Spirit then gives us this story of Abraham; but the focus of the story is God and the manner in which He binds himself with a promise and an oath. God made a promise to Abraham and He bound that promise with an oath in His own name. In other words, He backed the promise to bless Abraham with the assurance that His character and nature would demand a fulfillment of that promise. There was no one greater to swear by, so God swore in His own name. Abraham believed God and waited and waited and waited (with faith and *endurance*) for the promise. In fact, when there was no hope at all of the promise being fulfilled through any natural means, he chose to continue to hope in God trusting God would always

fulfill His word, it was just a matter of time.

Likewise, in **John 1:12**, Jesus promised with an oath, that those who would receive Him and believe in His name, would be called children of God. **Hebrews 2:10-11** tells us that He has called many sons to glory; hence, He is not ashamed to call us His brethren. We now share the same blood, the same Spirit, and eventually we will share the same form of light. Accordingly, He promised that He would deliver our soul from death (from the control of our *flesh*) in order to enact this promise real-time in our life. The *flesh* keeps us from **realizing** the full assurance of this promise; hence, it must be eliminated and killed.

The translation “perfectly sure” means “more than abundantly sure.” Without question, He will never change His mind about this promise. If you are a true child of God, **YOU WILL BE LIKE HIM!** In fact, you will see Him face to face; it is only a matter of time. And, as we know, those who have this hope fixed on Him—fixed on Jesus—purifies himself as He is pure (**1 John 3:1-3**). In other words, they press into the fire and the knife and they come to realize the full assurance of this hope until the end. They actually become more and more like God in their now and they experience the divine and all the wonderful magnificent promises of God. Those who have not fixed their hope of being like God on Jesus, do not have the same experience. Instead they trudge through life having fixed their hope on their *flesh*, somehow believing it will help them and save them. It is utter foolishness.

God’s promise and His oath are unchangeable, because it is impossible for God to lie. This is why John, through the Spirit, confidently said, “Beloved, now we are children of God” (**1 John 3:2**). It is what we are; and being rendered in the *indicative* we know it is a statement of fact. This reality should bring you peace and rest and

even motivate you to press into the fire and the knife. This truth is a powerful platform upon which you can build your life: You are a child of God, I am a child of God. This is why we can have great confidence—or in the Greek, great comfort—as we hold to the hope that lies before us. We may not be like Him today, but glory-by-glory, day-by-day, He will transform us into His image.

Let's stop for a moment on that phrase "as we hold to the hope that lies before us." The Greek word translated "hold" entails a clear use of strength to seize or to retain. It is also in the *aorist active infinitive*." We are to always be holding on to our hope with our strength—hence the *active voice* and it is to be how we live from beginning to end (the *aorist tense*). In effect, it is to describe us. I am one who holds on to hope. You are one who holds on to hope. But when it says, "the hope that **lies** before us," "lies" is rendered in the *present middle participle* and it is *singular* and not plural—so technically, it is "the hope that lies before you." The fact, however, that the *middle voice* is used should surprise you. As we know, the *middle voice* would assert that the person holding on to hope is the one who dug down deep in his or her soul and set that hope in front of his or her face and since it is a *participle*, they keep doing it over and over again. So let's think about it.

God has made an unchangeable promise that you will be like Him. He has backed this promise with an oath—with the full reputation of His name. So it is certain and will be, it is just a matter of time (even if you are one who sadly chooses to wait to the end to realize this promise). The Lord starts this process in our now and he wants us to understand what He is doing and embrace it. This transformation into His image will be completed at the time of the rapture; but if you are a true child of God, then this is your hope—your guarantee—even in your now. But you are the

one who has to dig down deep in your soul and choose to fix your hope on Him (**1 John 3:3**)—on the character and reputation of His name. You see, if you are absolutely convinced that the troubles and trials that you encounter are only God fulfilling His word, then you can be comforted no matter what you are going through. With every little thing He brings into your life, He is giving you the opportunity to become more and more like Him. Take His promise, take His oath, and put it before you and then hold on to it and don't let go. As Paul said in our opening verse in **1 Timothy 4:10**, “For it is for this we labor and strive, because we **have fixed** our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.” Since this is rendered in the (*perfect active indicative*) we know that Paul did it, and it was a done deal, never to be questioned, never to be moved. His hope was on the living God who would save Him from his *flesh* such that he would be like God. Like Paul, put this hope before you again and again and hold on.

This hope, this promise to be like God, is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. The Greek word translated as “strong” is “*asphales*.” The “a” is used to negate what follows. The word “*sphales*” means to fail. So this hope will never fail. Strength can fail, but this hope will never fail; it is trustworthy. And this hope is to be an anchor for your soul. The imagery of an anchor is used because the idea is that this hope—that you will be like God—will stabilize you and will never fail no matter how bad the storm is that rises against you. In the midst of it all, if you set hope in front of your face, you will remember that He is just faithfully fulfilling His promise and His oath. He is just proving out how much He loves you. He has to bring this storm; and it must be as terrifying as it “seems” in order to unearth those things deep in your soul that would come up no other way. But if you know His

purpose, if you agree with Him that it is all necessary, you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit; and through believing you will have joy and peace (**Romans 15:11**). You will be steadfast and immovable: a naturally supernatural wonder of the world.

This hope also leads you through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek. And now we also get to enter into the presence of our Father and meet personally with Him. We get to go where Jesus goes. Is it good to be like God? Yes, it is great! Since we share His blood and His Spirit, we get to come before the Father. And keep in mind the imagery. This “inner sanctuary” refers to the holy of holies where only the High Priest could enter in once a year. He would bring blood and make atonement for himself and for the sins of the people (**Hebrews 9:7**). But Jesus has already completed this annual requirement for us. He entered in to the inner sanctuary of the Father (not a copy of things in heaven, like the High Priest; but the actual inner sanctuary—**Hebrews 9:24-25**) through the veil and brought His own blood; and since He is a priest in the order of Melchizedek, He does not have to come year after year. But with His perfect blood, having obtained eternal redemption, He cleared the pathway to this inner sanctuary once and for all (**Hebrews 9:11-14**). And this is why we can follow in His trail of blood and confidently enter in this special place where the Father waits for us.

Now, I have read this passage for years and I always viewed it somewhat metaphorically, but it is real and this is something we are just now learning about. For example, we have learned what it is like to come before His holy Assembly, the Council of God, and there deal with the enemies of God's people. This has been an

amazing experience as God has asked us to bring certain people in this body before Him so they can repent and recant of the demonic entanglements that have hindered their spiritual growth. Some of these entanglements have been generational, some have come by way of invitation, and still others have come through more nefarious means. But either way, God reveals it and we have been able to address each demonic relationship, recant of the ties, and dispatch each demonic spirit as the Lord leads. It has definitely been a time for judging angels as it says in **1 Corinthians 6:3**. This has been a beautiful and freeing experience for those who have come before the Assembly. This experience in-and-of-itself, however, does not transform anyone into the image of God. But it frees them from the demonic restraints that have hindered this process.

However, we have also been invited now two times into God's inner sanctuary where it was just Him and us—no demons allowed. These were very private and personal meetings. The first time is when I came before Him and He wanted me to voluntarily "take off my head" in terms of the responsibility for this body and instead have all of you take up responsibility. It was part of Him wanting me to own this idea that I am His Signet Ring and that you are a shield of protection. It was a powerful and beautiful time of repentance and glory as each person chose to take up responsibility and leadership in this body. We were so safe in His presence, it was amazing.

The second time came Thursday night. As we came before Him, He made it clear that no demonic presence would be allowed in our midst. We were told that one wanted to come and argue its rights, but the Lord did not allow it to come. We had a new type of work to do with Him. We came before Him because of the opposition

we were receiving at the hands of a woman who was being unjust and very unethical in her dealings with us. This burned in me (and in Alek) all sorts of justice issues (she was the “bait” to tempt me to go outside of our circle of protection and act out on my own justice issues). But instead of charging into this situation with a blazing sword of truth on a flaming chariot of justice, “I” / “we” took the path of humility and mercy. We decided to ask the Father to free this woman from whatever demonic beings were clearly oppressing her and dominating her. The result was another big loss for the enemy. We got to free the oppressed; and she did not even ask for it. She came against us and instead of returning an eye for an eye, we prayed blessing over her. The Lord heard our prayer and acted on our behalf. He had mercy on this poor woman. What an amazing experience.

Is it good to be like God? Yes. Because then we get to be vessels of His great mercy and love, even to our enemies. We have fled to Him for refuge and He keeps us safe; and from this place of safety, we get to hold on to the hope which leads us through the curtain into God’s inner sanctuary and perform the function of a priest (just like our High Priest Jesus); and, in this instance, intercede on behalf of the sins of this woman. What a privilege. I also love the way He keeps us safe and always gives us the counter plan to the enemies plan to destroy our shield of protection. The enemy set the bait, and this poor woman was a willing victim loaded down with fear and bitterness. But God showed us the way out of this specific temptation (just as He promises in **1 Corinthians 10:13**) and it resulted in freedom and life for this woman.

It is so good to be like God. I pray that you will fix your hope on Him and bring that hope in front of your face over and over again and understand that with

everything He allows and directs in your life, it is part of His fulfilling His promise and His oath to you. He is making you like Him. And just like the One who entered in through this veil before us and paved the way in blood for us to follow, we get to learn more and more what our Father is truly like. He invites us to come before Him and in His presence we get to be like our faithful High Priest.

This **hope**—that we will be like God—is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. ***Psalm 131:3***: “O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.”

Let's Pray