

## THE GOSPEL OF HOPE

Sermon delivered before the Southern Baptist Convention at Memphis, Tennessee, May 9, 1929, by Dr. William L. Ball, First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Text: "Rejoicing in Hope" (Romans 12:12).

The author of these words was a Jew—"an Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees," a Roman citizen by birth, a man of great intelligence and scholarship. He rejoiced not in these things, however, but "in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:12).

The Apostle to the Gentiles was an apostle of hope, a Christian optimist. He was not free from the things that make most of us pessimistic. He was misunderstood and misinterpreted; he suffered physically from sickness, imprisonment and stoning; all manner of charges were lodged against him and he encountered every sort of difficulty in trying to advance the interests of Christ's kingdom; but despite these things, he pressed forward with marvelous success, helping and encouraging others with this Gospel of hope, saying: "We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulations worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope. And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Romans 5:3-5). Later, as a prisoner in Rome, the very city to which he was writing this letter, the hope "which maketh not ashamed" sustained and comforted him, as he wrote to the Philippians: "According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that ~~with~~ with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." (Phil. 1:20).

But, Paul was not the first or the last preacher of hope.

It is true that his epistles abound in expressions indicating his own "radiant hopefulness" and inspire hope in those who read them. It is just as true, nevertheless, that in all the generations of men and in the various groups, religious or otherwise, there have been advocates of hope. It might be said that Christianity is not the only religion that holds out hope to its adherents. "It may be doubted, indeed," as some one has said, "whether a heathen religion could even continue to exist, without embracing in it some element of hope." Hope is universal. We have long since come to believe that

"Hope springs eternal from the human breast;  
Man never is, but always to be blest."

And the power of hope is felt at every period of human life. In Dr. Frederick C. Spurr's radio talk at the beginning of the New Year, he declared: "Hope is the very life of man, his strength and stimulus stay, his star in the darkest night, the ~~stimulus~~ of all endeavor." It was a woman, Sarah F. Adams, who sang:

"Hope leads the child to plant the flower, the man to  
sow the seed,  
Nor leaves fulfillment to her hour, but prompts  
again to deed.  
And ere upon the old man's dust the grass is seen  
to wave,  
We look through falling tears to trust hope's sun-  
shine on the grave.  
O no! it is no flattering lure---no fancy weak or  
fond---  
When hope would bid us rest secure in better life  
beyond.  
Nor loss, nor shame, nor grief nor sin, her promises  
may gainsay;  
The voice divine hath spoken within, and God did  
ne'er betray."

The hope of Christian faith is unlike that of the heathen religions and many of the uncertain, fleeting hopes of vain, selfish and sinful humanity everywhere, in that it rests in God. "Christianity has transformed hope," said one of our greatest expositors, "and given

it a new importance, by opening to it a new world to move in, and supplying it new guarantees to rest on." We will consider, therefore, in the first place

#### I. THE ORIGIN OF OUR HOPE

The value of any hope is to be found in its source. In the fifteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul tells us that Christian hope has its beginning in the very heart of God—"The God of hope," said he "fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 15:13). In verse four of the same chapter, we are told that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). It is interesting and instructive to notice that in these two verses we have brought clearly not only the origin of our hope, but also the two methods of creating hope within us. It is through faith in God, in the first instance, that we are filled with joy and peace, resulting in abounding hope; then, the other method is through believing the Scriptures, the Word of God, by which we learn patience—or brave perseverance, and have comfort, rather encouragement, and these virtues produce hope. It will be seen, therefore, that the condition of Christian hope is simple faith—believing that, "God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6) and believing the records in his Word of heroes and saints—men and women of like passions with use—"who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens" (Heb. 11:23, 34).

Who is there among us that can really consider God, Maker of

heaven and earth, and meditate upon his goodness and mercy in dealing faithfully with the children of men and not cry with the Psalmist: "Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee" (Psa. 39:7); "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait in his word do I hope" (Psa. 130:5); or sing with Whittier:

"The night is the mother of the day,  
The winter of the spring;  
And ever upon the old decay  
The greenest mosses cling.  
Behind the cloud the starlight lurks,  
Through showers the sunbeams fall;  
For God, who loveth all his works,  
Has left his hope with all."

It might be stated, furthermore, that the Gospel of hope which Paul preached, and we preach, found its highest expression and its finest exemplification in Christ, thus confirming the fact that the hope we cherish not only had its origin with God, but becomes our personal possession, in fullest measure, through faith in his Son, our Saviour. In fact, Christ and hope were so related in the mind and experience of Paul, that for him to have Christ was to have hope and to be without Christ was to be without hope.

## II. THE OBJECT OF OUR HOPE

But hope, if it is to live, must have a reasonable and worthy object. In his autobiography, John Stuart Mill, tells of that tragic period in his life when he was the subject of frequent attacks of great depression and discouragement and that during one of these attacks he was encouraged and comforted by the frequent recurrence to his mind of two lines from Coleridge:

"Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve,  
And hope without an object cannot live."

O, my brethren, let us rejoice that our hope in Christ has for its object all that earth and heaven hold for a redeemed soul.

It is impossible in this brief hour of worship to enumerate its many objectives. I mention only a few of them.

1. The hope of salvation.—It seems fitting that I should remind you first of the hope of salvation—The Christian's helmet. "Let us who are of the day," said Paul, "be sober," putting on the breast-plate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8). It is not carrying this inspiring military figure too far, I'm sure, to say that salvation is not only a thing of the heart, having in life's warfare the protection of the "Breast-plate of faith and love;" but a thing of the mind, the intellect, having in the battle with doubt and infidelity the protection of the helmet—"the hope of salvation."

We are agreed, I know, that without the regenerating, transforming power of Christ in our hearts, we are prone to sin along the line of our affections and desires. Is it not highly probable, though we may not agree about it, that those who go so far astray in their thinking about Christ and all our human relationships, do so as a result of having had no experiential knowledge of Christ? We need salvation to the "uttermost" in all the realms of life and to the farthest reaches of life. Such salvation is to be found only in our blessed Saviour. "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

We may have widely differing views and heated discussions of many of the perplexing problems of the day, whether they be social, political or religious, but on one thing there is almost universal agreement, viz: this old world has lost its way; it is far from God who made it; it needs salvation. And deep down in every human heart, however bruised and broken by sin, there is that something, call it by whatever name you will, that tells each one of us a need

no earthly power or agency can satisfy. It became more pronounced during the world war and, during the decade following that catastrophe we have been hearing from pulpit and press, from ministers and laymen, one pathetic heart cry; the world is lost; big business cannot save it; international leagues cannot save it—only God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself can work the miracle of salvation for the individual, the state, the nation and the world. If this is the consensus of opinion the world over, among right thinking people, should we not lift up our hearts in thanksgiving to God for the gift of his Son in whom we have this hope—even the hope of salvation. O, my brethren, let us rejoice in this hope!

2. The hope of the resurrection.—The experience of salvation finds complete confirmation in the resurrection of Jesus. If the seal on Joseph's tomb had never been broken, if the power of Jesus had not been greater than that of the armed guard of a Roman Governor, if the testimony of the disciples who were eye-witnesses of the risen Saviour had not been more trustworthy than that of the enemy, our faith would be changed to doubt and our hope to fear, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19).

In the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, Paul states his unanswerable argument for the resurrection both negatively and positively. "If Christ ~~be~~ not risen," said he, "preaching is vain," "faith is vain," "we are found false witnesses," "ye are yet in your sins," and "they that are fallen asleep in Christ <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ perished." The implication is that it is more difficult to explain the problems created by a denial of the resurrection than

it is to explain the resurrection. In a very helpful sermon on "If the Dead are Not Raised," Dr. Villers, of Oregon, discusses these five dire conclusions following a denial of the resurrection," and closes his discourse with this striking statement: "Since, therefore, a denial of the resurrection is contrary to evidence, and contrary to history ~~REASON~~, and contrary to experience, and contrary to reason, and contrary to instinct, we unite with Paul in his triumphant outburst: 'Now is Christ risen from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep'." Such, my brethren, is the inevitable conclusion, when one approached a study of the doctrine with unshaken faith in God and in his Son, Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Now, for a moment, let us look at the positive statement of the case. In our study from time to time of the findings of unbelieving scholars in regard to the deity, death and resurrection of Jesus, it is well to remember that Paul, the proud Pharisee and scholar, was not always a believer in the Son of God. But a saving experience of grace and then a scientific study of all the data relative to the resurrection, as well as every other phase of the Master's life, wrought a marvelous change in his thinking and made him the chief advocate in his day of this glorious doctrine. Before the Council in Jerusalem he declared: "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope of the resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (Acts 23:6); before Felix, the Governor, he confessed: "that after <sup>the</sup> way which they call heresy, so worship I ~~the~~ God of my fathers, believing all things written in the law and in the Prophets; and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:14,15): and in the presence of Agrippa,

the king, he said: "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our Fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:6-8).

It is evident, I think, from Paul's positive statement of his convictions and belief ~~he~~ had come to realize that the great battle ground on which would have to be fought out every principle and practice of his new found faith was the resurrection of Jesus. His views as a Pharisee in regard to the resurrection of the body led him, no doubt, into a more rigid and painstaking investigation of the resurrection of Jesus, whom he had seen "as one born out of due time." He conferred with Peter, John and other eye-witnesses, most of whom he said were living at the time he wrote the epistle, and his conclusions, briefly stated are as follows: Christ died and rose again, according to the Scriptures; the eye-witnesses to his resurrection are many and well known; if he arose from the dead, then we shall arise from the dead; flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, but this mortal shall put on immortality and this corruptible shall put on incorruption; thanks be unto God, which giveth/the <sup>us</sup> victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. And we join with him in his song of triumph when we sing:

"Up from the grave he arose,  
With a mighty triumph o'er his foes;  
He arose a victor from the dark doman,  
And he lives forever with his saints to reign,  
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah Christ arose."

3. The hope of Christ's return.—Dr. Luke, Paul's personal friend and beloved physician, one of the most scientifically trained men of his times, after conference with eye-witnesses and "having

traced the course of all things accurately from the first" (Luke 1:3, RV), undertook in the Gospel that bears his name to set forth in order a declaration concerning the things that had been fulfilled. There is not a note of uncertainty in either of the great books he wrote. In the second treatise, The Acts, he began with the ascension where he had left off in writing his Gospel, declaring that Jesus "shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3) and, after forty days of fellowship with his disciples, commanding them concerning their program after his departure, "he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight, and while ~~the~~ they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).

This testimony of the heavenly messengers is in keeping with Christ's promise to his disciples that he would "come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30); and also with Paul's very positive note concerning the coming of Christ and the resurrection of believers: "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; ~~then~~ <sup>so</sup> ~~we~~ shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). It would seem that the certain, definite word of Christ, Luke and Paul is sufficient foundation for our "blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," (Titus 2:13). If

more evidence is wanted, it is to be found in the Gospels and other portions of the Word of God.

It is hoped that the extreme views of some concerning the Second Coming will not divert the attention of the great body of Christian people, as it seems to have done in some places, entirely away from the fact of our Lord's return. One of our great teachers said recently that whenever he looked into the arguments of the pre-millennialists he felt that he was a pre-millenarian and when he examined the arguments of the post-millennialists he felt that he was post-millenarian, but of one thing he was sure, viz; that all times and under all conditions he was a pro-millenarian, that is he was for the Coming of Christ. What I am thinking about and am pre-eminently concerned with now is that we shall forget any differences of opinion we may have as to the time and manner of Christ's return and rejoice in the fact of his return, which is our Blessed Hope. Instead of making our difference of opinion, as to some details of the Coming, a test of fellowship, let's make our common faith in the certainty of the Coming a bond of union. O, that the prayers of every heart might be "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

4. The hope of heaven.—When we stand above the open graves of our loved ones and friends, we find great consolation in the words of Jesus to Mary and Martha in the hour of their bereavement: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25); and also in that wonderful message to his own sorrowing disciples as he talked to them about his own departure: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I ~~would~~ <sup>would</sup> have told you. I go to prepare a place ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2,3). The coming of Christ has meant the bringing of life and immortality to light. Mankind however has always had some hope of a life beyond the grave. We have a poetical statement of a fairly representative type of that primitive hope of heaven in Pope's

Essay on Man:

"Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutored mind  
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;  
His soul, proud science never taught to stray  
Far as the solar walk, or milky way:  
Yet simple nature to his hope has given,  
Some safer world in depth of wood embrac'd,  
Some happier island in the wat'ry waste,  
Where slaves once more their native land behold,  
No fiend torment, no Christian thirst for God.  
To Be, contents his nature desire,  
He asks no angel's wing, no seraph's fire;  
But thinks admitted to that equal sky,  
His faithful dog shall bear him company."

The hope of the poor Indian, however, was not as bright<sup>as</sup> that given to Jehovah in the unfolding of his revelation and purpose to his ancient people. The patriarch Job could say with an unusual degree of confidence; "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; "whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:25-27).

It was not until Christ came, however, that these primitive longings of the <sup>human</sup> ~~huam~~ heart, as well as the more solid hope of the Hebrew faith, found adequate and satisfying expression. The Indian's Happy Hunting Ground is not comparable to the Christian's House of Many Mansions; or Job's fine statement with Paul's exclamation: "I am

now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Tim. 4:6-8); or the vague speculations of ancient philosophers with Peter's living hope of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Peter 1:4); or the so called scientific deductions of the twentieth century modernist with John's beatific vision: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away<sup>1</sup> and there was no more sea. And I <sup>did</sup> see the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:1-4),

O, my brethren in Christ, this was the hope that gladdened the heart of the first disciples; it was the hope of the martyrs who went to the stake for their faith, with songs of praise and glorious hallelujahs on their lips; it was the hope of the Pilgrim fathers who for conscience sake sought in this free land the unfettered privilege of serving and worshipping God; it was the hope of our fathers who constituted the first churches of our faith in the Southland, organized our Conventions, established our great missionary agencies and laid the foundations for world evangelization; and, thank God, such is our hope.

### III. THE OBLIGATION OF OUR HOPE

It is imperative, however, that in the midst of our exultation we should

remind ourselves that hope, like every grace or virtue, imposes upon its possessor certain obligations. We have come in some small measure at least to realize the value of hope. We would not part with it for the world. All our tasks would become irksome and frequently impossible, if hope did not lighten the burden and brighten the way for us. But we <sup>who</sup> have learned to hope face two perils; one is that we may fix our hope only on things visible, tangible, material and worldly; the other is that we may fail to cultivate our hope; having it, we neglect it. We fail to ~~realize~~ <sup>realize</sup> the possibilities of Christian hope and the corresponding responsibility resting upon us of meeting its obligations.

Briefly, then, let us face some of these duties.

1. Knowing our hope.---In the first chapter of the letter to the Ephesians we have one of the most remarkable prayers any Christian man ever offered for his fellow disciples: Having heard of "their faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints" (Eph. 1:15), Paul prayed not for the deliverance from persecution, or for their prosperity in material things, or for their health; but he prayed thus: "That the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling" (Eph. 1:17-18). He acknowledged graciously and with thanksgiving the faith and love of the Ephesian saints, but the petition indicates his earnest desire that they shall come to know more perfectly their hope in Christ. It is his first and most important plea on their behalf. Faith and love will find their richest reward in the fulfillment of hope's fondest expectation. It would appear that the "riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints," and "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe," the remaining two requests

in this prayer, will be realized fully only by those who have had the eyes of their understanding enlightened to the point of seeing, recognizing, or knowing thoroughly their hope in his calling. Know your hope, therefore, in such a way as to "be ready always," as Peter said, "to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

2. Laying hold upon hope.—If we have come to know and appreciate hope, then we should lay hold upon it. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews declared he was "persuaded better things" of the Christians to whom he wrote than apostacy. He saw ~~where~~<sup>it</sup> in their faith and labor of love evidences of the change that had been wrought in their lives. His argument, however, against their apostacy was based on the fact that a righteous God had sealed his promise to the heirs of promise by an oath with himself, since he could swear by no greater, that they might have strong consolation or encouragement to "lay hold upon the hope set before them" (Heb. 6:17-20).

Instead of teaching "falling from grace," there is in the epistle a strong appeal to "grow in grace:"—to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on unto perfection (Heb. 6:1); and, as they had been faithful in their ministry to the saints so should they "Show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope" (Heb. 6:10-11). Again, they were urged to "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of hope unto the end" (Heb. 3:6). If we lay hold upon our hope, it becomes "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:19). Then we can join with Charles Wesley in singing:

"Let the winds blow, and the billows roll,

Hope is the anchor of the soul.

But can I by so slight a tie,

An unseen hope, on God rely?

Steadfast and sure, it cannot fail,

It enters deep within the veil,

It fastens on a land unknown,

And moors me to my Father's throne."

3. Being purified by hope.--The apostle to the Gentiles went so far as to say: "Who are saved by hope" (Rom. 8:4). A great expositor said: "That we may be served by hope, we must be purified by hope." It was John, the disciples whom Jesus loved, who declared: "every man that hath this hope in him," that is in Christ, "purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). But we will not conclude from these great and true statements, I'm sure, that any man has within himself the power of salvation or purification. If such a thing were possible, then the Son of God died in vain. The crucifixion was a tragedy indeed. Only too well do we know that alone fallen man is absolutely helpless. He was lost, and Christ came to seek him; he was in bondage, and Christ came to set the captive free; yea, he was dead, and Christ came that he might have life. Apart from Christ, therefore, we cannot hope to become pure. He is the "fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." (Zech. 13:1); "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2); and, "if we walk in the light, as He is in the Light, we have <sup>fellowship</sup> ~~fellowship~~ one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

"There is a fountain filled with blood,  
 Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
 And sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
 Lose all their guilty stain."

It was Dr. MacLaren, who said: "Soap cleanses our hands: but in order that it may do so, we must make the application." So Christ purifies us, but we must come to the fountain. He is the source and standard of our purity. It remains for us to will to be clean and meet the conditions of holy living. The outstanding need of our churches and our country today is personal purity on the part of those who profess to be Christian. There are conditions that require legislation and the

enforcement of laws. The recent utterance of President Hoover concerning respect for and observance of law should alarm and awaken every loyal citizen to a new sense of personal responsibility in regard to our national situation. It was encouraging to note the universal approval given to his appeal. Any movement looking toward the accomplishment of the things he suggested, should meet with hearty cooperation. But, it will not meet with complete success, unless the Christian people of the country shall realize the obligation of their hope in Christ and endeavor to bring themselves up to His standard of purity in all their relationships. John's challenging statement in regard to "purifying ourselves, even as He is pure," is based on the fact that we shall be like Christ when He appears. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). If that is our hope, then let us seek to be pure.

4. Rejoicing in hope.—In conclusion, let us return to the text. We have gone, afield in our study of hope, its origin, its object, and its obligation. We have found that the hope of the Christian faith, beginning with God, becomes a personal grace or virtue through faith in Him and his word, by the power of the Holy Spirit; it reaches out into every realm of human life and experience, enabling us to realize the highest and noblest expectations of redeemed immortal, spirits, both in this world and in the world to come; then like an "anchor, both sure and steadfast" it is cast "within the veil," mooring us to the very throne of God. Without doubt, my brethren, Christian hope furnishes the ground and the occasions for great and continuous rejoicing. "Rejoice in the Lord always," said Paul, and to emphasize the exhortation he added: "And again I say

rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). "Rejoice evermore" (1 Thess. 5:16);

"Rejoice in the hope of salvation, for your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20); rejoice in the hope of resurrection for our "vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21); rejoice in the second coming of Christ, for "when he shall appear we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:4); rejoice in the hope of heaven, "for there shall be with Christ and behold His glory" (John 14:2, 2; 17:24); "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:20), for we are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4); rejoice, said Peter, "inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:13).

"When by the gift of his infinite Grace,  
I am accorded in heaven a place,  
Just to be there and to look on His face  
Will thro' the ages be glory for me."

O, my brethren in Christ, representative of more than three million Baptists, here in Convention assembled, let us review the glorious achievements of our churches in a co-operative effort to extend the Kingdom of God throughout the world; face our ever present and challenging opportunities for enlarged service; solve the problems and overcome the difficulties that may have hindered us, and set ourselves more resolutely than ever before to the task of evangelizing the world, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hands of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

A cloud of witnessess encompass us; the Apostles who rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:21); the martyrs who went to prison and to the stake, like Huss, Hubmeyer, and Bunyan; the leaders of our Southern Baptist Zion, like Broadus and Boyce, like Carroll and Gambrell, like Tichenor and love, like McDaniel and Mullins; and the fathers and mothers of us all, who in tears and great self-denial

laid the foundations of our churches and kingdom enterprises; the redeemed of all the ages past, as well as those now living; the unsaved millions crying to us for the "bread of life; these, all these, witness before heaven and earth today as to our faith, our love, and our hope. "Wherefore, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1), remembering that "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed" (Romans 5:3-5). Oh, that the six-winged seraphim may come from the throne of the Eternal and touch our lips with live coals from the altar, that we may "take our harps from the willows" and sing as our fathers were wont to sing:

"My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus blood and righteousness

(quoted all of the song)

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