

THE OBSTACLE OF UNMET EXPECTATIONS

I. SINGULAR HOPE

A. Simple, Yet Not-so-simple Gospel

1. Most would define the term “gospel” as “good news”. However, not everyone agrees on the details of what the “good news” actually is. Good news brings an obvious expectation that you put a lot of faith in. And life choices are made on that expectation. But what if the good news that is expected, doesn’t deliver? What does that do to the heart? And what do those heart realities do to your daily life? How can that currently affect the way you live?
2. Clarity of the Biblical gospel defines the expectation and then steers your faith. And out of that you make decisions and live your life. With that clear, you actually become equipped to run the race successfully in this age of death. The default is to sojourn instead of put down roots in this age. The vision becomes clear and keeps you on the track, with your eyes set on the finish line.

B. Hope/Expectation of the Messiah (cf. Rom. 2:5; 8:18; 1 Cor. 1:7; 15:23; 2 Cor. 4:17; Eph. 1:18; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 1:10; 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:7; 2:1; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:8; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:18; 1 Pe. 1:13; 1 Jn. 2:28)

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 1:13–14 NIV)

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:13 NIV)

C. The Fruit of Biblical Faith in the Biblical Hope - Patient Endurance (cf. Ps. 39:7; 71:14; 119:114, 166; Prov. 10:28;)

And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you. (Ps. 13:12)

Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; I wait for You all day long.

My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word. (Ps. 119:81)

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; (Ps. 130:5)

1. The gospel is trying to establish one singular hope in the heart of the believer. A hope that, if anchored deep enough, can bring joy in whatever situation you find yourself in. Even joy until death because the hope believer’s have is realized beyond this age of death. There is no situation too overwhelming if our faith is anchored to the Biblical hope.

D. The Expectation - Fullness of Salvation at the End of the Age (cf. Rom. 1:16; 1 Pet. 2:2)

so also the Messiah, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him. (Heb. 9:28 ^{HCSB})

You are being protected by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet. 1:5 ^{HCSB})

1. Salvation is a weighty topic in many circles because it involves your eternal standing. Who doesn't want to know they are good-to-go when it comes to their salvation? But salvation did not change from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The hope remains the same; the promise of One who would come and sit on the throne in Jerusalem and restore all Creation. That promise has not yet been realized, thus we continue to hope. And it is faith in that which should drive our lives. Hebrews 11 testifies to it.

These all died in faith without having received the promises, but they saw them from a distance, greeted them, and confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth. (Heb. 11:13 ^{HCSB})

"the fact that Jesus Christ died is more important than the fact that I shall die, and the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead is the sole ground of my hope that I, too, shall be raised on the last day." ~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer ~

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, by whom we have been conceived anew—because of his great mercy—into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah from the dead, ⁴for an inheritance undecaying and undefiled and unfading, stored safely in the heavens for you, ⁵who through faith are being protected by the very power of God for a salvation set to be revealed at the end of the age; ⁶on account of which you rejoice, even though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief and heartache amidst trials of various kinds, ⁷so that the authenticity of your faith—far more precious than perishable gold, though even with gold, it is through fire that its purity is determined—may be discovered, resulting in praise and glory and honor when Jesus the Messiah is revealed; ⁸the Messiah you love, even though you haven't seen him, in whom you are placing your faith, even though you don't see him now, and so rejoice with a joy inexpressible and full of glory. ⁹receiving in return the goal of your faith—your salvation. (1 Peter 1:3-9 ^{BHT})

2. Our response to trials quickly reveal where our expectation is. Words are easily spoken but faith's genuineness is revealed in the trials. Is our joy anchored in this present evil age and what it can give us? Especially us in the Western comforts. Or is it in what was promised long ago that has yet to be realized? Are we patient as we eagerly await the realization of a hope that will not disappoint? Or do we gaze at what gives me pleasure now and set our hope on that?
 - a) Some may ask, "What is so bad about setting our hope and faith on safety, comfort and good things in the present?" Potentially everything!
 - b) You don't have to convince the depraved human heart to be self-preserving. It is searching for excuses to justify that type of behavior. But when the Spirit seeks to lead you in a way that does not lean toward self-preservation, will your heart be ready to listen and obey with simple devotion and faith? The good news of the Bible is not self-

preservation in this present age! That expectation will leave many in terror at the Day of the Lord.

II. SINGULAR PURPOSE

A. Holy Spirit - Giving Grace To Endure/Sojourn Until The Expectation Is Realized

²²“For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:22-25 ^{ESV})

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13 ^{HCSB})

1. The Holy Spirit was given as a gift to get us to the end of the age full of faith in the Messiah's coming. He strengthens us to live according to His coming. It is the Spirit who gives the grace needed to help us endure well.

B. Follow the Spirit or Follow the Flesh

1. If we follow the flesh, we will boast in the flesh. Our expectation will be glory and comfort now with our hope anchored in the now. Our faith will be in us and steer us to temporary rewards/pleasure with eternal suffering.
2. If we follow the Spirit, He will lead us to the cross just like He did the Messiah. There is no avoiding it if we follow the Spirit. It is what keeps our flesh at bay and allows humility to set the stage for an enduring hope and solid faith which will stand to the end and bring salvation.

For those who live according to the flesh think about the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, about the things of the Spirit...for if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (Romans 8:5,13 ^{HCSB})

Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now going to be made complete by the flesh (human effort)? (Gal. 3:3 ^{HCSB})

I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (Gal. 5:16 ^{HCSB})

III. BARRIERS TO BIBLICAL HOPE

A. Obstacles Keep Our Eyes From Looking To The Finish Line

1. Obstacles to the gospel will always seek to set our sights on this age.

2. Treating the Bible as a buffet to pick and choose what we like and don't like, quickly leads to an unbiblical, near-sighted hope. We then shift our faith to that hope and lean into it's expectation. And ultimately it steers our life and it's decisions. Eventually it leads to unmet expectations. The hope does not get realized and the person is left offended, hurt, disillusioned, disjointed in what they believe, etc.
 - a) That disappointment can be a dangerous obstacle to the gospel continuing to go forth in that person's life. It hinders faith and lack of faith does not end well at the Day of the Lord.

B. False Gospel = Not So "Good News"

1. A stumbling block to the gospel is actually a skewed gospel which drastically changes the Biblical expectation and hope. It can easily cause someone to stumble in their "race" toward the "finish line" with the potential of being disqualified in the end.

² For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, because I have promised you in marriage to one husband -- to present a pure virgin to Christ. ³ But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be seduced from a complete and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴ For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly! (2 Cor. 11:2-4 HCSB)

2. When the hope shifts away from Jesus as the coming Messiah and creates a "different Jesus" that causes us to put faith in ourselves, making us our own messiah bringing the Kingdom, we are in big trouble! It muddies the waters that simple devotion seeks to keep clear.

C. Biblical Illiteracy

1. When we don't study the Scriptures diligently and depend strictly on others to teach us the Word, we can be led astray.
 - a) The cross and the Messiah's coming is NOT a popular message to focus on because it doesn't center itself on man or immediate gratification. In fact, it centers itself on a coming Judge and calls believers to embrace suffering and carry their cross daily.

¹ Dear friends, this is now the second letter I have written to you; in both letters, I want to develop a genuine understanding with a reminder, ² so that you can remember the words previously spoken by the holy prophets and the command of our Lord and Savior given through your apostles. ³ First, be aware of this: Scoffers will come in the last days to scoff, living according to their own desires, ⁴ saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? Ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:1-4 HCSB)

2. Many are being lulled to sleep by the false gospels that are anchored in this age. They can please the flesh temporarily but will not endure the test of time. And for some trials have already tested them and left them wanting. Many unmet expectations from those gospels have already turned some away, leaving them without faith, hope or love.

¹⁴ If anyone's work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, it will be lost, but he will be saved; yet it will be like an escape through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:14-15 ^{HCSB})

D. Gospel Graduation

1. The ongoing fads and trends of Western Christianity keep us on Satan's merry-go-round of disjointed Christianity and distant from the simple devotion of the gospel. Simple listening and obeying is replaced with busyness in the "good" things of God. Ministry visions replace the time that used to be given to a gospel-centered lifestyle.

E. The Past And Pre-Conceived Ideas

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. ¹² For he regularly ate with the Gentiles before certain men came from James. However, when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, because he feared those from the circumcision party. ¹³ Then the rest of the Jews joined his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were deviating from the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas in front of everyone, "If you, who are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel Gentiles to live like Jews?" (Gal. 2:11-14 ^{HCSB})

1. All of us have pasts. Our pasts can carry some serious wounds. I felt this was a necessary point because I have seen it again and again in sincere believers who continue to stumble because of it.
2. Past wounds that never formed into a scar and were never healed, will remain a constant irritation under the surface. The tendency is to view everything through those those hurts. And eventually it leads to massive inflammation and a pain-filled outward cry. That cry usually comes forth and dramatically hinders the gospel witness through fear, anger, offense, retaliation, etc.

IV. HURDLE THE BARRIERS

A. Study And Know The Gospel

1. Never graduate from the gospel! It is what continues to cast the vision we desperately need in this present age. Preach the gospel to yourself, your families and to each other in your communities. Let it encourage and strengthen you through the many trials this age will throw at you.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. (Rom. 1:16 ^{HCSB})

B. Cry Out For Grace From The Spirit, Often

C. Give Thanks To God

1. Thanksgiving will eventually and inevitably shift your eyes to the cross and then on to the coming King and His throne in Jerusalem. Thanksgiving can quickly reset the hope if it has become out of focus.

¹⁴ We know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and present us with you. ¹⁵ Indeed, everything is for your benefit, so that grace, extended through more and more people, may cause thanksgiving to increase to God's glory. ¹⁶ Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. (2 Corinthians 4:14-17 ^{HCSB})

D. Sing The Scriptures

Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Proclaim His salvation from day to day. (1 Chr. 16:23 ^{HCSB})