

Searching for Hope

In 1977, as a film hit the silver screen, we heard Princess Leia send out a desperate cry for help. The last Jedi along with young Skywalker heard her plea through a holographic message delivered by a common droid, “Help me Obi Wan Kenobi, you’re my only hope”. Everyone familiar with this scene knows the hope she referred to was his connection with the *force* – the sole power strong enough to help preserve freedom in the universe. Her appeal motivated Obi Wan to help Luke learn the ways of this force, which ultimately served as the catalyst that guaranteed victory for virtue during the ensuing “Star Wars”. Over the next thirty years, several sequels followed ending in similar triumphs over evil in addition to stressing the thought that hope-connected-to-good always prevails. Although this concept is desirable, everyone is aware these stories are simply utopian sagas which craftily play on ideals of the human heart. Temporarily caught up in fantasy, one leaves the theater only to face the real world once again.

Since men and women know their attraction to science-fiction is created by an optimism fueled by wishful thinking, in times of trouble they abandon their imaginary hopes and seek real solutions for tangible fears. So it is, during the Covid-19 pandemic, society is setting its sight on meaningful, positive goals. These include physical reunion with loved ones; a failsafe protection from this virus along with medical breakthroughs to eradicate it; and the return of financial security accompanied by good times of recent past. Based on realistic expectations, these things will come to pass for the majority of humanity. Yet, even when these events transpire, everyone knows they are still temporary. For in the end, time takes its toll, even on the most robust.

Grasping this certainty, human beings long for a hope which has no end. Sooner or later, this aspiration prods one to contemplate: Does such a hope exist? For those who trust the Bible, a genuine, unending hope is available. Within its pages, a hope is presented which centers on God-given promises and is offered to mankind through His Son, Jesus Christ. So how does Scripture define this hope and how can individuals obtain it?

To begin, the concept of “hope” is represented in the New Testament by the Greek noun “ἐλπις”, which refers to *an expectation of something*. When this expectation is a result of what God has done, His hand-crafted-hope becomes an absolute reality. Having this kind of hope not only provides assurance for a triumphant future, but its psychological benefits carry those who possess it through all sorts of difficulties during this life.

A great passage defining biblical “hope” is First Peter 1:3, which states, “Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”. In the following verse, this “living hope” is defined as “an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance having been kept in the heavens for you” (v. 4). In other words, it is *eternal*. The next verse further describes this “hope” as “salvation prepared to be revealed in the last time” (when Christ returns) for “those being guarded by the power of God through faith” (v. 5). Paul also speaks of this same “hope being reserved for you in the heavens which you previously heard in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col. 1:5). The word “gospel” (εὐαγγελίου) means *good news*, and this Gospel proclaims the best news – *the hope of eternal life for all who believe* (Titus 3:7).

Now let us consider when this “hope” originated. Paul’s introduction to Titus addresses this point: “the hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal”. This verse indicates God fashioned this “hope” before He created the universe (Titus 1:2; Eph. 1:4-7; 2 Tim. 1:8-11). So, we can trust our Divine Provider whose foresight facilitated our salvation from sin long before we or anything else came on the scene. This concept is difficult for finite-minded beings to grasp, nevertheless, the Father’s promise of “eternal life” for our benefit should rouse a response of gratitude.

This is why Christians are implored to “boast in the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2). The verb “boast” (καυχώμεθα) most basically means to *brag* or *have pride in*, which is confirmed by other occurrences (Rom. 2:17, 23; 1 Cor. 4:7; 2 Cor. 5:12; 9:2; James 4:16).¹ Additionally, in the following references, we are encouraged to “boast” in God because He is the only One who could and did provide eternal glory to fallen man through the mediation of His Son (1 Cor. 1:29, 31; Gal. 6:14; Eph. 2:9; Phil.3:3). So, based on the love God has bestowed on us, our hearts should proudly brag about the Person He is.

Building on this thought, let us consider the significance of the “glory” God has for His “called ones”, those whom He has titled “saints” (Rom. 1:6-7). The noun “glory” (δοξα) means *what is thought about something* or *a perception*. Therefore, the phrase “glory of God” describes *thinking associated with* (genitive case) *who God is* or *His perceived essence*. What relevance does this have to us? Well, in Colossians we learn that “the word of God”, which at one time was *hidden* as a “mystery”, is “now made manifest to His saints . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (1:25-27). This passage teaches that the Person of Christ, who is deity, actually resides in believers – the “saints” – and, as a result, makes us partakers in “the hope of glory”.

At present, in Christ, *God perceives us as completely holy*. At Christ's coming, we have the added expectation to be conformed to His perfect image (Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 15:49). Exact terminology describing what happens to us is, "the body of our humility", now riddled with sin, "will be conformed to the body of His glory" – sinless, eternal bodies (Phil. 3:20-21). And, "whenever Christ may be manifest, *who is your life*, then also you will be manifest with Him in glory" (Col. 3:3-4). With this assurance, we should be "waiting for the *blessed hope* and manifestation of the *glory* of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13 – emphasis mine, see also Gal. 5:5). Christians who track God's Word will enjoy this life-altering perspective which spawns mental stability and an exciting life.

All believers know when Christ returns, the issues and problems which cause us grief will be solved. But at this time, sufferings related to sin are a key factor God uses to redirect His children's attention so we will rely upon Him. Note what Paul says in Romans 8:18, "I do not consider that the sufferings of the present time are worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed to us". Developing this thought he explains, "the creation was subjected to futility, not being willing but because of the One who subjected *it* based upon hope" (v. 20). This verse alludes to the sin of Adam which forced a Just God to displace him and Eve from His Perfectly Created Garden. He did this so they and their children would be challenged by life in a now-corrupt world and, thus, feel it necessary to place their "hope" for restoration in Him (Gen. 3).

Paul now proceeds to explain this "hope" becomes complete when "the creation will be freed from the slavery of corruption (effects of sin) unto the freedom associated with the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). This "glory" is described as the "revelation of the sons of God" and "the adoption as sons *which is the redemption of our body*", *both of which take place when Christ reappears* (vv. 19, 23). Until the day we are clothed with this *glory*, "we while having the first fruits of the Spirit groan within ourselves" (v. 23). Our vulnerable state should prompt us to grab hold of our present reality: "We were saved in relation to hope, and hope being seen is not hope" and "if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it through endurance" (vv. 24-25). Christians need to recognize God's purpose centers on His desire that we "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Therefore, we should resolve to seek refuge in *trusting* His promised "hope" of "glory", for faith is the mechanism which activates *His escape plan* for dealing with the hardships of this fallen world.

This dialogue about "endurance" actually began in Romans 5:3, when after encouraging believers to boast in God's provision for salvation, Paul adds an appeal to "boast in our afflictions".¹ Why should we do this? Because, "affliction produces endurance, and endurance *produces* approved character, and

approved character *produces* hope; and hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom. 5:3-5). This passage articulates how trust in our future hope is reinforced when we experience Spirit-enabled character which aids our endurance to handle affliction. The word “affliction” (θλιψις) simply means *something which causes friction*, and quite a few passages offer instruction on how “hope” can assist during physical or mental suffering (Rom. 15:4; 1 Thess. 1:3; Heb. 6:11, 18). So, let us take pride in this provision and seize opportunities to tackle affliction with the confidence it will effect positive growth in our lives.

More benefits await Christians in the here and now. By utilizing the power of the Spirit, we can have true “joy” and “peace” (Rom. 15:13; Gal. 5:22). Also, we have “access” (προσαγωγήν) to God which allows us to *directly approach* Him in prayer and for needs without having to go through a mediator such as a priest, which was the case for believers under the Mosaic Law (Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12; Heb. 4:14-16). Moreover, we can rely on God in prayer as “the One who loved us and has given eternal encouragement and good hope in grace, to encourage and establish your hearts in every good work and word” (2 Thess. 2:16-17). And, John chimes in with an uplifting truth, “Beloved, now we are the children of God, and what we shall be is not yet manifest, because we know if He may be manifest, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone having this hope on the basis of Him, purifies himself just as that One is pure” (1 John 3:2-3). This text teaches we should be heartened by even the partial understanding we have of the “hope” of being conformed to Christ’s likeness, because this view of our future state is directly linked to our temporal cleansing from sin.

So, how does this heavenly procedure work? John’s use of the verb “purifies” (αγνίζει) represents *continuous action* (present tense) in our lives and is built on the same stem as the nouns translated “sanctification” or “holiness” (Rom. 6:19, 22; 1 Thess. 4:3-4, 7; Heb. 12:10, 14). God’s current purpose for His people is *to live holy lives*, to develop qualities *separated from sin*. To assure this happens, He lovingly trains us using methods which impart His “holiness” and, in turn, produces “the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:4-11). May each of us internalize this piece of our hope-puzzle, for it acts as spiritual fertilizer which stimulates wide-ranging change in our lives!

Since believers have these advantages at our disposal, God calls us to action. First, we are urged to display “diligence toward the full assurance of the hope until the end” and become “imitators of those inheriting the promises through faith and longsuffering” (Heb. 6:11-12). This includes “holding fast the confession of the unwavering hope” and “not being moved from the hope of the gospel” (Col.

1:23; Heb. 10:23). Then, to prepare for imminent battle, “we should be sober, after having put on the breastplate of faith and love and the hope-helmet of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8). Being implemented with spiritual armor fortifies every believer, enabling us to stand firm in the midst of trials (Eph. 4:17-32; 6:10-20). Finally, each man or woman who owns up knowing the Word and submitting to the Spirit will gain the capability to “encourage one another and each one build up the other, just as you are doing” (1 Thess. 5:11). May we all ask ourselves, ‘Am I putting these empowering truths into practice?’

Another application of “hope” which requires spiritual maturity is found in First Peter 3:15, “purify the Lord Christ in your hearts, always being prepared to give an answer to the one asking you for a word about the hope that is in you”. On this same topic, Paul affirms, “Your word *is* to always be in grace, having been seasoned with salt, for you to know how it is necessary to answer each one” (Col. 4:6). Both of these texts converge on one point: When Christians live in a way that exhibits the Lord’s character, *unbelievers will observe our lifestyle and naturally ask us* about the “hope” that is in us. These organic opportunities allow us to share our faith by simply answering their questions. May “we walk in wisdom toward those outside while redeeming the time” so that our behavior will be seen as different, but also desirable, non-condescending, and non-condemning (Col. 4:5).

Having this resolute attitude as vessels-saved-by-grace, we can effectively share His message of “hope” with the world (Rom. 1:14-17; 2 Cor. 2:14-17; 4:1-6). Those who participate in the Gospel can potentially experience the same kind of “joy” and “hope” which comforted Paul during his first imprisonment in Rome. During that two year house-arrest, his laser focus was “that . . . Christ shall even now, as always, be magnified in my body whether by life or by death”. And, he looked forward to serving the Philippian believers upon his release: “I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith” (Acts 28:30-31; Phil. 1:18-26). This same life-purpose including happiness can be ours too, if we “imitate” Paul’s example (Phil. 3:17). In addition, his perseverance while being captive should teach us confinement need not hamper our ministry.

Another incentive for Christians is featured in First Thessalonians 2:19-20, “For who is our hope or joy or crown of boasting; or are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy”. The noun “boasting” (καυχησεως) here shares the same root as its verb in Romans 5:2, so it also means *a brag* or *pride*. Yet, many Translations render it ‘rejoicing’, ‘exultation’ or ‘glory’. The reason for this difference can be traced back to the earliest English Versions by Wycliffe and Tyndale. Both of them translated this noun differently in lifestyle passages when compared with how they rendered it in

passages describing salvation. Thereafter, most Translations have followed their lead, most notably the ones commonly used today except for the English Standard Version.²

Thankfully, “καυχῆσις” is rendered according to its literal sense in a multitude of Versions: **‘boast/boasting’** – JND, MLV, BLB, ECB, ACV, LEB, CAB, BIB, BSB, Rotherham, Diaglott, Julia Smith, Worsley, Moffat, Twentieth Century, Williams, Goodspeed, Riverside, WNT and ESV; **‘pride’** – Moffatt; **‘honor’** – AUV.³ Based on this data, believers should enthusiastically ponder how their works/fruits will be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ – an important aspect of our “hope” (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:24 – 4:1; Titus 2:11-14). Since we have part in choosing to walk by the Spirit in order to produce these works, we can look forward to earned rewards such as “joy”, “a crown”, and “our hope”; all three items *associated with* (genitive case) “boasting” or *pride* (Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 5:15-20). This truth ought to serve as powerful motivation to live for the Lord in the midst of persecutions dealt our way!

You may have noticed, the four Gospels and the Book of Revelation have not been referenced. The reason for this is simple, the noun “hope” does not occur in them. However, Paul does use this term in the Book of Acts to describe the Old-Testament-affirmed “hope” he taught while evangelizing in Jewish synagogues (Acts 23:6; 26:6-7; 28:20; see also Jer. 14:8; 31:17 [note vv. 31-34]; Ezek. 37:11 [note vv. 21-28]; Hosea 2:15 [note vv. 2:16 – 3:5]; Joel 3:16 [note vv. 17-21]; Eph. 1:12). When he spoke on their turf, he zeroed in on their *expectations* which centered on their coming Messiah. After using their Scripture to connect, he proclaimed that *Jesus is your “Christ”*, the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew term “Messiah” (Acts 17:3; 18:5; John 1:41; 4:25).

Throughout history, faithful Jews have steadfastly held to their “hope” of a Messiah who would save them from their sin and their enemies, then restore everlasting peace to those God returns to the Promise Land. However, in the early chapters of Acts, the Jewish Nation as a whole rejected their Christ (Acts 3:12-26; 7:1-60). Based on their rejection, God began a new, un-prophesied program in which He now saves individual Jews and Gentiles by His mercy and places them into a spiritual Body, thus guaranteeing them a present and future “hope” (Rom. 11:25-36; Eph. 2:14-3:12). Still to come, when Christ returns to earth, God will fulfill all of the promises of “hope” He pledged to the Nation of Israel (Acts 1:6-7; Rom. 11:28-29; Rev. 21 – 22:5).

Most likely, you are not aware the Greeks used “ἐλπις” (hope) for both positive and negative *expectations*.⁴ Its negative use is represented by the familiar axiom, ‘Nothing is certain but death and taxes’. However, this saying is not quite

accurate since all will die, but some people are not taxed since their culture does not require it, certain governments operate by revenue from natural resources, some citizens fall below tax assessment lines, and others shrewdly evade taxes altogether.

The Bible also contains a *philosophical expectation* similar to this axiom proposing its own *negative dual reality*: “It is appointed for men to die once, and after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). The remedy for this sure *death* and *judgment* can be found in the context surrounding this statement which says how Christ “has been manifested once at the consummation of the ages for the setting aside of sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26). Then, verse 28 looks forward to the day when He “shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to those who eagerly await Him for salvation”. This passage presents Jesus Christ as the only existing “hope” who can exonerate a person from their otherwise inevitable death penalty. For, Jesus’ work on the cross alleviates the “fear of death” – a never-ending “slavery” which oppresses every human being – as well as the dread of future judgment (“the lake of fire”) for anyone who believes (Heb. 2:15; Rev. 20:10-15).

Positively speaking, in the next chapter, the author of Hebrews summarizes his thoughts by listing essential truths which secure our “hope”: “Therefore, brethren, while having confidence for an entrance into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus which is a new and living way He inaugurated for us . . . let us draw near with a true heart in the full assurance of faith, having had our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience . . . let us hold fast the confession of our unwavering hope” (10:19-23). This “hope” is certain. This “hope” is eternal. This “hope” is backed by the God who created all things. This “hope” is anchored in the shed blood of our Lord Jesus, by which He pardons sinners.

In closing, please ponder one final facet of “hope”. In First Timothy 6:17-19, Paul exhorts his disciple to “encourage” the fiscally “rich in this age not to be high minded nor to have hoped on the basis of uncertain riches, but on God who presents all things richly for enjoyment”. Then, as they keep this perspective and use their wealth to help others, they will be “storing up for themselves a good foundation for the future, in order that they might take hold of true life”. The adverb “true” (ὁντως) is a form of the verb of being, so it means *in a real sense* or *an actual manner*. So, may each of us gravitate away from setting our “hope” on the “uncertain riches” of this world but, instead, cling on to our benevolent Father. For, He has provided “all things richly for” our “enjoyment” plus the opportunity to experience *the essence of supernatural “life”* through His Son. Equally, may we elevate the Lord Jesus to His worthy and “preeminent” position as our “Head” so He will be able to help us navigate the struggles of this life (Eph. 4:15-16; Col.

1:18). As our Savior, He represents our entire “hope”. Consequently, He merits our full commitment.

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Quotes from Old Testament Scripture are from the KJV.

New Testament renderings are original translations by the author from the Greek text.

- 1 The Greek verb “καυχῶμαι” does not simply mean ‘to rejoice’ or ‘glory’ as it is translated in most commonly used Versions. A more accurate rendering is, ‘to boast’ or ‘to have pride’. In the following Translations it is rendered: **‘boast’** – YLT, DBY, ECB, Rotherham, Julia Smith, Diaglott, MLV, JMNT, ISV, LEB, BIB, BLB, Worsley, and Thompson. And, in a couple of others it is rendered: **‘proud/pride’** – ACV and Lamsa. All of these Versions are easily accessible on the internet.
 - 2 More detail related to how theological issues may have affected the translation of “καυχῆσιν” in lifestyle passages can be found in Appendix I.
 - 3 These Translations are easily viewed by an internet search using the abbreviations provided.
 - 4 The meaning of “ἐλπις” is: “*expectation* either of good or evil, *hope*, or *fear*” – page 217, The Abridgment of *Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, 1871.
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APPENDIX I

Prevailing theological understanding can always be a factor which influences both biblical translation and commentary. It is well known that up through the 1600s, the vast majority of Bible teachers believed all Scripture teaches the same thing throughout its pages and, thus, should be directly applied to believers today. The application of this view could have been the reason “καυχῆσιν” was rendered by phraseology inconsistent with its basic meaning of “boasting” in lifestyle passages.

The first point which may support this notion is: Lifestyle contexts directed to and intended for the Nation Israel were commonly applied to the Church. And, these New Covenant promises teach believers in the earthly Kingdom will have absolutely no part in generating their works since *the Holy Spirit will cause their righteous actions* (Ezek. 36:22-38). God’s action of redeeming His chosen people and returning them to the Promise Land, along with the Holy Spirit causing them to walk in His “statutes” and cease “iniquities”, solidify the point these believers will have no part in generating their works (vv. 27, 31). For, in Ezekiel’s words, God says, “I will (v. 24) . . . Then will I (v. 25) . . . A new heart also will I give you (v. 26) . . . And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes (v. 27) . . . I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities (v. 33) . . . then the heathen that are left round

about you shall know . . . I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it (v. 36) . . . and they shall know that I am the Lord (v. 38)” (See also Isa. 59:20-21; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 11:17-20; 37:11-14, 21-28). Since this will be the reality, *these Kingdom believers could not possibly have anything to boast about.*

When contexts such as these are applied to the Body of Christ, a lot of contradictions emerge. This dilemma is solved by identifying the Epistles of Paul, Peter and John as the standard of newly-revealed-theology God has given to govern the Church. In contrast with these Old Testament truths intended for Israel’s future Kingdom, these Epistles contain the Scripture which defines how God’s people today are now spiritually alive and, in this state, have an integral part in choosing to live for God by submitting to the power of His Spirit (Rom 6:1-16; Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 2:1-10). These portions from Romans and Ephesians also show this dynamic can only occur in those who have first been regenerated/saved. Since theologians of the past usually did not differentiate between how believers generate works in the Kingdom and Church programs, it is understandable how some Bible translators would have had an incentive to render the noun “καυχησις” in ways other than “boasting” in passages related to lifestyle with the motive of trying to make all biblical truth teach the same thing.

The second reason “καυχησις” may have been rendered inconsistently is because virtually all Translations have correctly rendered this noun with its basic meaning of “boasting” in New Testament passages which describe salvation. This rendering of “καυχησις” is clearly supported by contexts which set God forth as the only operative while, at the same time, teach that mankind plays no part in redemption (Rom. 3:27; 4:2; 1 Cor. 1:26-31; Eph. 2:8-9; Col. 2:12). However, again, the fact that the theology of past centuries regularly applied contexts from the Old Testament, Gospels, and other Scripture to the Church, this practice caused great confusion. For, many passages in these Books offer salvation based on human works, and they also serve as the foundation for Roman Catholic theology, both then and now (Deut. 30:1-20; Matt. 19:16-22; James 2:8-26). Even today, much Christian theology is heavily influenced by Scripture intended for Israel, and as a result works tend to enter into doctrines defining how salvation is obtained or retained.

Of course, God has always known no common man could be righteous enough for salvation by keeping the works of the Law (Rom. 3:19-26). However, His offer of salvation by works is actually foundational to redemption. For, Jesus Christ, the God-man, was born “under the Law”, fully kept it, and did not sin (Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 4:15; 7:26). Based on God’s prerequisite of a perfect sacrifice to be appeased, Jesus’ untainted blood uniquely qualified Him to pay for the sin of the world and guarantee “that the righteous standard of the Law might be fulfilled” in believers today (Rom. 5:1-2; 8:3-4). This “one righteous act” of the “one man”, Jesus, is totally responsible for every person’s acceptability before the Father (Rom. 5:15-18). So, based on how some theologies have introduced the entrance of works into the salvation process and, thus distorted the truth, it is easy to conceive why some translators may have felt pressure to mitigate the effect of believers’ works by straying from the literal meaning of “καυχησις” in texts addressing the deeds of Christians. Furthermore, the theology of both Catholics as well as many Christian Denominations does not recognize believers are presently righteous before God. So, instead of addressing the difference between works in the saving process and those following salvation, they teach believers are in constant pursuit of becoming acceptable to God by their works.

In conclusion, the Versions referenced in this article, which faithfully translate “καυχησις”, have bucked centuries of religious tradition. However, even today, all too often Bible teachers and translators *succumb to pressures and conform their renderings with prevailing theology or prior Translations* rather than hold to the true meaning of word(s) and/or grammar, even when they personally know what is right. Some translators, who are most often simply revising a prior Translation, have done their work with a clear conscience not realizing the problems which exist. However, this does not exonerate them

since each is responsible to know the Word and not just follow tradition, for all will have to give an account to their Lord. Christians should appreciate the scholastic courage taken by the above-cited Translations to veer off from the norm because their efforts have provided access to the full significance taught in First Thessalonians 2:19-20 and other lifestyle contexts where “καυχῆσιν” is found (2 Cor. 1:12; 7:4, 14; 8:24; Phil. 1:26; 2:16).

The lesson we should draw from the discussion in this Appendix is to habitually consult other English Translations and Greek Interlinears in order to develop the best possible understanding, especially of texts which greatly affect belief and action. Those who know Greek have additional resources available to aid their studies.