

Living Hope of Heaven

Why do you believe? Sometimes simple questions are deep and meaningful. It has always brought me a special joy to ask this question of young Sunday school kids. It seems to be their favorite question, too. With happy faces they answer simply, “To make it to heaven.” They are right; that is the reason for our faith in God. That is our common goal.

The Gospel Gives Hope

There is another simple sounding, but deep question: “As a believer, what do you believe?” Is believing this that we regard the stories of the Bible as truth? Or is it something more? After all, James writes in his epistle: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19). With faith based on human reason, we are still together with the enemy of the souls. It is not good company for anyone! As believers, we believe our sins forgiven when the freeing gospel of the forgiveness of our sins is preached to us.

Along with believing comes hope. Sometimes it is called a living hope of heaven. Paul writes to the Romans: “And hope maketh not ashamed” (Rom. 5:5). It means that the hope, which is instilled by faith, will be fulfilled. God will make our hope of reaching heaven become a reality. Our faith is directed toward what we hope. Thus faith is hope. Faith reaches what is ahead of us, and what we otherwise would not be able to experience. With faith, the future is present immediately. In faith, the object of hope affects here and now, even though the matter in question is in the future, not yet experienced. But faith believes that it will happen, lives in accord with it, and receives strength for life from it.

Our Strength Comes from God

The hopeful person is willing to try “one more time.” “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:28–31).

A Goal Worth Battling For

Let’s not forget that we have a goal—heaven! May the hope of reaching that goal give us strength to battle against our threefold enemy—the devil, this world, and our own flesh. The letter to the Hebrews says of the believers of former times, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb. 11:13–16).

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Questions for discussion:

- Read Hebrews 11. The entire chapter speaks about Old Testament believers. Compare your feelings and experiences in life with them. What can we learn from their lives?
- Read Psalm 78:4. Why do you think it is important to speak about God’s strength to one another?

- Read Revelations 21:1–7, that speaks of the reward of faith. If you have children, tell them about the coming glory of God in heaven.

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