



Chronicles of Diversity

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Contact

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Hope in the middle

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1 NIV

Hope is central to all of human existence. Hope is the operational mode for the transition of time between the current and the future.

“I hope !“ We all have a personal way for filling out the sentence.

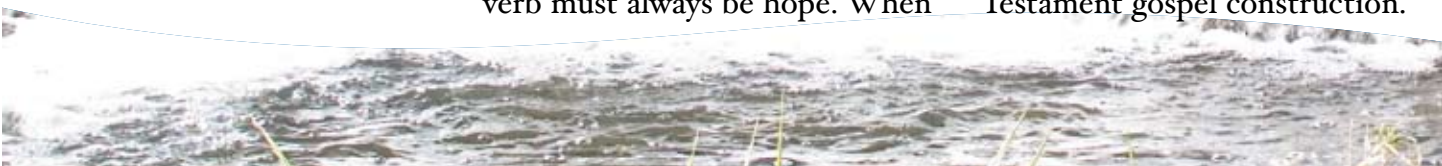
We may believe that Jesus is the only way to find eternal rest, or we may believe that only the evolutionary swamp will one day drown our sorrows, but we all hope for that day. Hope is part and parcel of the human condition. Hope always fits between the present what is, and what is to come. Hope sets humanity apart from the rest of God's creation.

In the English language hope can be and noun and also a verb, faith is always a noun. Therefore, whenever faith is present the verb must always be hope. When

hope stands alone as a noun, it stands for the promise of what is to come.

In the Bible in the New Testament Book of Hebrews Chapter 11, we find what is known to all who read its pages what is generally referred to as the faith chapter. However, this is also the hope chapter. Hope is the process of exercised faith. This is again evidenced in the King James versions: Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Faith is the substance of hope.

Hope is mentioned 142 times in the Bible and is almost equally divided between the Old and New Testaments. Faith is mentioned 242 times, but 240 of these are in the New Testament. Of course many of these New Testament uses of faith, such as those in Hebrews 11, refer to the faith of Old Testament believers in God, but at the same time, we see that the desire to express hope in terms of faith is a New Testament gospel construction.



The gospel itself is a faithful assurance that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the hope for man's sin to be removed, not just covered with the blood of animals.

From the Garden of Eden episode in Genesis, believers in God have hoped that Messiah would come and restore the lost communion with God. In the New Testament, we find that Jesus claimed to be that Messiah and that hope became fulfilled in His humanity. However, until He returns again the Christian must still, this time in faith of what has been revealed within the gospel, hope for His earthly return. In that regard all Christians look forward for that "Blessed Hope."

We can see from this analysis a definite relationship between faith and hope, but to fully get an understanding of the role of hope in the lives of all people we need to look at the relationship of hope and God's grace. All these characteristics have their roots, and their substance in God alone.

Paul's hope in 2 Corinthians 12:9 is suggestive of the mysterious role that hope plays in all of our personal undertakings: And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Paul exercised his faith through prayer, hoping that his personal affliction would be removed by the grace of God. However, God responded that His strength is made perfect in weakness, providing Paul with the hope to boast in his infirmities, that Christ's power may be manifest in Paul's hope for a satisfactory outcome, which he knew would come from God alone.

In Revisiting Richard Bonds last week I learned a few things. Just as Richard forecast, my writing skills have not improved all that much, but sitting behind the computer screen I could see that my editing expertise has improved with practice. That probably shows somewhat the difference between gifts and acquired knowledge. However, what I really found interesting is that my hope in what I would like to accomplish has not changed in the least little bit. Richard Bonds

are probably the best synopsis of what I am trying to do with ministry.

Let me see if I can restate Richard's contention that hope is always in the middle of all our actions. As we began this article we find that faith requires action and commitment of resources. Rain may fall from the sky, but in any enterprise that rain must be converted into some type of capital or liquidity and the seed of faith must be watered.

Contrary to what is taught in much of evangelicalism, that does not mean sending off the car payment to some ministry with the hope of replacing the Chevy with a Rolls. However, it might be purchasing the Chevy on time because you need dependable transportation, when you hope to one day be able to pay it off early.

So faith requires you to put your money and your time where you think God wants you to be, or in the direction you are supposed to be heading. Then somewhere down the path the spring runs dry, the way is blocked by obstacles, or you just plain run out of gas. Then what?

Again the TV preacher will say, "Devil get out of my way! In the name of Jesus?"

Hopefully your congregational pastor will be more inclined to bring you some teaching related to 2 Corinthians 12:9, but that still doesn't change the reality of the circumstance. You are up the creek, and the paddle just went floating around the river bend. What are we to do?

Well, you could commit suicide. I bring that up only because that is the option that many people turn to when they believe that all hope is gone.

You could go running madly after the paddle, trip over a boulder, break your leg and drown in the stream. That of course is a societal acceptable way of committing suicide, but you are dead none the less.

You could fashion a make do paddle out of a driftwood board that you happen to find on the river bank and continue down the stream slowly but surely.

You could call for help on your cell phone, but the phone got doused when the canoe overturned and the paddle went it's way, and besides way up the creek, where you are, there is no cell phone service.

You could pray, “Dear Jesus, Please send another boat by to rescue me, I need a miracle right this second. I’ve been here twenty minutes and I am beginning to get scared and I will not be able to keep my dinner reservations in town tonight, and then what would people think.

Now in this illustration none of these will work successfully, or any others you might personally concoct, because the god in all of these is really You. That includes the prayer, because you are dictating to God the method you have chosen to be rescued. In other words, you are still exercising your faith in your own deity to pull you through the circumstances.

After you cry yourself to sleep, you wake to remember that there is a road just up the bank and two miles down that road is the main highway. Hopeful in that assurance, you struggle through the night and in the morning you safely make it up the hill and down to the highway. Just as you get to the highway, a pickup with canoe racks is heading down stream. They stop and help you pick up your canoe as you wonder why you were so afraid of your circumstances.

God’s grace is always sufficient for the situation, but it is manifest in hope and is understood through our concept of hope, because hope is required to get us to the highway, where our hope is fulfilled at the end of the sentence or the end of the trip.

I also forgot to mention on purpose, you could also take out the spare paddle you packed in your canoe at the beginning of the trip, in case you should find yourself in a precarious un paddled situation. This is to point out that even if our planning is perfect, many times the events of the situation are beyond our control.

One of the questions that I am sometimes ask is why I just don’t join some agency and travel around doing for them what I hope to do. One of the sub points in the Metis Phylogenesis model is to “Know your niche.” Every plant or animal in God’s creation has a specific niche to fill and even others of the same species occupy a different specific niche in time and space.

Having been around a number of these type of developmental organizations, as well as

enterprises of a more general business niche, I want to be able to limit the relationship between money and politics within the organization. You can’t do that, because we do it this way around here is not a valid answer to a specific request. This is especially true when that negative is spun around a religious paradigm that says that is the way Jesus would do it, or the Pope would do it, if he had the time.

The fact of the matter is that Jesus created you to do it, and the Pope has his job to do, and you have yours. Time really doesn’t enter into the picture as long as you do what you are called to do and others respond in accordance with God’s community building calling. My hope is to be able to do this without using people as sponsors, but as investors and from their invested commitment to develop a profitable self sustaining ministry. For I hope to be able to sustain this ministry even if all our current economic models break down. Such as when Osama Bin Laden sets off his arsenal of nuclear devices within the United States.

Now if this Al Qadea Hiroshima plot, or any other catastrophe never occurs, to keep with our canoeing analogy, is it all that wrong to purchase an extra paddle and take it on the trip. In that way we see another way of being confident in God’s grace. We hope we never need it. But even, especially in that disastrous situation God’s grace brings hope to the middle of the circumstance, because without hope, well we already mentioned that outcome.

For those who know some of the details of where we are currently in the move to Montana situation, Christians think it will take a miracle, other people think that it is completely impossible. To me that says, hopefully God now has me where I need to be, to show His glory, so that with Paul I shall be able to say, Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

In summary, we live in a hopeless world because we are content to get our canoeing adventures by watching the Outdoor Life Network on our big screen plasma television in our home theater setup. Thank God, we have opted for In Demand so we can watch it again, and again, and again, deluding ourselves to think this is the good life and true reality. We can sort of get a thrill and take no risk. The fulfillment of the American dream in its worst

anathema. All this when we don't even have a back up generator to power our lifestyle should the power go off.

Hope is always in the middle of our life's experiences, however its power only comes when we venture into the adventure beyond the horizons of our security. Hebrews Chapter 11 is an example of fulfilled hope in the Bible.

Believe it if you dare however, chances are still pretty good that those pictures of the canoeing trip on our TV screen were lived by real people, with the guts to get beyond their insecurity into the real adventure with its risks and its rewards. One of those rewards is being able to relive that canoe trip, not by watching it on the screen, but by adding it to the list of your fondest memories. The only thing that can take away that experience in this life is when you take your last breath, but even then it will not be burned up when we cross death's frontier.

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