

Preacher's Pen points

False Hopes?



People throughout the country were focused this week on the attempted rescue of thirteen coal miners trapped deep underground in West Virginia. Late Tuesday night word came to a group gathered at a local Baptist church that all of them had survived the mine explosion. There was of course unbelievable jubilation and praise to God for thirteen “miracles”. Both newscasters and newspapers quickly published the good news. However, just hours later word came that the initial report had, regrettably, been incorrect. Only one of the miners had survived; the other twelve perished. One can hardly imagine the pain that those families must have suffered in going from despair to unbelievable joy to even deeper despair. Our hearts go out to them and I would not seek to capitalize upon their pain; but this story reminds us quite powerfully of the reality and danger of false hope not only in physical life but also in our spiritual lives.

The Gospel is a Message of Hope

The gospel offers great hope to the believer. It promises that all those who put their faith in Jesus’ sacrifice and obey His gospel need not despair over their transgressions against God. Instead we may have hope that since our *“sins and iniquities are remembered no more”* (Heb. 8:12) we may at last be acceptable to God at the judgment and enter into eternal life with Him. Such a hope the Hebrew writer called *“an anchor for the soul”* to steady us during times of testing and difficulty (Heb. 6:19). This hope has been a source of encouragement to those who have lost believing loved ones. They *“sorrow not as the rest who have no hope”* (1 Thes. 4:12).

Could This Hope Be Misplaced?

Many unbelievers insist that Christians merely project their own wishes upon the future and hope for that which will not occur. Such a charge is serious; and we ought to think about it carefully. When the apostle Paul reflected upon this possibility he honestly admitted the consequences of faith built on bad information: *“For if we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied”* (1 Cor. 15:19).

A Hope Assured!!

However, the Scriptures assist us by the greatest assurance that we do not believe in vain. Peter affirms that we have been *“born again unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”* (1 Pet. 1:3). That hope is grounded in the established fact of Jesus’ resurrection which Peter personally witnessed. He affirms, *“For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”* (1 Pet. 1:20-21). So well attested and sure is this truth of the gospel that Paul could say our hope is one *“that does not disappoint”* (Rom. 5:5). It is *“both sure and steadfast”* (Heb. 6:19).

It comforting to have these assurances. Because Jesus is alive, we need not fear that we will at last discover that we have been misled and that there is nothing awaiting us beyond death. The joy we have now will never turn to despair. Our hope is real! The God who cannot lie has promised it! —
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