

Colossians 3.¹⁻⁴

7. 'The best hope!'

Background

Integral to the whole perspective which the Scriptures articulate is the assurance that the best is always still to come: or putting it another way, wonderful as the present may be (and for believers, whatever may be their circumstances, it certainly is), there's something better coming!

The book of Proverbs ([Prov.4.18](#)) states that truth in a simple, graphic way, while John in his first letter ([1 Jn.3.1-3](#)) propounds the same in a more theologically nuanced way. For the believer, it just keeps getting better! We are an essentially *hopeful* people.

Not optimists (far less pessimists) – because that's more reflective of a personality-trait than a doctrinally-driven perspective – so much as inherently hopeful, filled, that is with an indomitable expectancy born of what we know of the Lord: His creative power, His covenant love, His care-laden grace towards us in Jesus His Son.

That note of hope runs through the whole of Scripture, from the opening verses of Genesis to the final verses of the book of Revelation. It's a perspective which is focussed on the future and sees us living always, with an eager anticipation, *towards* that future, assured as we are of a better day which will certainly some day dawn.

It's a perspective, of course, which has become, not least in the last decades, thoroughly counter-cultural. For contemporary culture is preoccupied with the present, on the basis that there are no certainties, that there may not be a future, that today may be all we have.

Such a here-and-now perspective issues in a self-indulgent lifestyle: and that, in some ways, is what connects these verses with the immediately previous passage ([2.23](#)): because a believer's perspective is so markedly different, so is the believer's capacity to restrain 'sensual indulgence'.

The upward look of faith ('things above' – vv.1 & 2) enables the forward look of hope. And the hope that we have, therefore, informs and defines the lives that we presently live. A future prospect, rather than any here-and-now experience, is what dominates our horizons: and that assured prospect, the knowledge that "*we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is ..*", generates a manner of living in the present which increasingly reflects our future destiny ([1 Jn.3.2-3](#)). This present life, for the believer, sees us rehearsing for the big day.

The passage in Colossians isn't a long one, and accordingly the daily Bible readings supplement those 4 verses with a couple of related Scripture passages, both of which, in different ways, cover similar ground and make the same essential point. C S Lewis was pointing to the same thing in his *'Mere Christianity'*:

"If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. .. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this."

Start then with '**days**' (1), (2) and (7), for which there are additional questions.

1) Monday 7th November – raised

Read [Colossians 3.1-2](#)

“.. you have been raised with Christ ..” (Col.3.1)

Relationship with Jesus means you’re a new person. Your identity is bound up with Him and you’re defined by all that He is. Because He’s raised from the dead, you’ve been raised to a new life. He’s at the right hand of God: so are you! Live in that light!

In what sense have you ‘been raised with Christ’ and what difference does that make to your experience?

The death and resurrection of Jesus are regularly preached and taught: are you clear enough in your mind about the ascension and exaltation of Jesus?

How does the knowledge that Jesus is ‘seated at the right hand of God’ affect your perspective, experience and living?

What will setting your heart (v.1) and your mind (v.2) ‘on things above’ involve for you?

What are the ‘earthly things’ on which you tend to set your mind?

Prayer: The ‘here-and-now’ can be very distracting, Lord! Help me to live towards the future You’ve secured for me; may that future inform how I speak and act today.

2) Tuesday 8th November – glory

Read [Colossians 3.1-4](#)

“.. then you also will appear with Him in glory ..” (Col.3.4)

In a world marked by great uncertainty, some things are guaranteed to happen. Jesus Christ will return: and when He does, because believers are one with Him, they will be seen to be like Him, radiating a Spirit-wrought glory. Start practising now!

What does Paul mean by saying so starkly ‘*you died*’?

How is what Paul says here in v.3 mirrored in [1 Jn.3.1-2](#)?

How prominently does the return of the Lord Jesus figure in your thinking – and in the preaching/teaching of your church?

What do you envisage that ‘appearing in glory’ being like for believers?

Prayer: So much in this present world is better described as ‘gory’ more than ‘glory’, Lord, and like a weary traveller I hail the glory dawning in Immanuel’s land.

3) Wednesday 9th November – future

Read [1 Peter 1.3-5](#)

“.. He has given us new birth into a living hope ..” (1 Pet.1.3)

The might of God is seen in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead: the mercy of God is shown in bringing His people to newness of life in and through His Son. God’s plans for His people are to do them good not harm, to give them hope and a future.

In ways have you been conscious of the Lord ‘shielding’ you in His power?

In what does this ‘inheritance’ which is being kept for you consist?

Prayer: *Keep me focussed on the future, Lord: assured myself of the future You have planned for me, help me encourage others today that there’s hope for their future too.*

4) Thursday 10th November – joy

Read [1 Peter 1.6-9](#)

“.. you .. are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy ..” (1 Pet.1.8)

What’s still to come for the believer so completely dwarfs the very real trials a believer may have that the joy of anticipation exceeds by far the grief and pain of the present. Jesus is the focus of believers: we trust and love Him now and will finally see Him then.

In what sense have the trials you have experienced proven ‘the genuineness of your faith’, resulting in praise, glory and honour for Jesus?

What helps stir that love for Jesus in your heart?

Prayer: *Thank You, Lord, for Your ‘keeping’ power: thank You that You carry me through the hardest times, sustain me through adversity, and rescue from all evil.*

5) Friday 11th November – peace

Read [1 Peter 1.10-12](#)

“.. they were not serving themselves but you ..” (1 Pet.1.12)

Remembrance. Today we remember the debt we owe to those whose costly toils secured for others a benefit they didn’t know themselves. In God’s providence, the prophets of old fulfilled a similar role, pointing us to the one in whom is true peace.

The prophets spoke of days beyond their own: in what sense does the preaching of the gospel today have a similar function?

Present trials, future glory: is the message of the cross too often ‘downplayed’ in the preaching of the church?

Prayer: Make me mindful today, my Lord, that I have entered into the labours of others who have gone before me: help me in my day to serve You faithfully and fruitfully.

6) Saturday 12th November – therefore

Read [1 Peter 1.13-2.2](#)

“.. therefore .. set your hope on the grace to be brought to you ..” (1 Pet.1.13)

Always ask what the ‘therefore’ (1.13 & 2.1) is there for! Learn to live the future now. If you’re a believer, you’re a new person; you’ve been given a new life, a new freedom, and a new future. Live that life: enjoy that freedom: anticipate that future now!

In what ways are you conscious, as a believer, of being a ‘foreigner’ in the society of which you’re a part?

What are the characteristics of that ‘holy’ living to which you are called in Christ, and how are they evidenced in your life?

Prayer: Guard my lips, Lord: may what I say be ‘helpful for building others up according to their needs’: may what I do display to others the goodness I have tasted in You.

7) Sunday 13th November – glorious

Read [1 John 3.1-3](#)

“.. what we will be has not yet been made known ..” (1 Jn.3.2)

What you presently *are* as a believer is wonderful! But something even better is coming. What you *will be* is so altogether glorious you simply cannot comprehend it yet: but, in essence, it’ll mean you get to be like Him. Live towards that destiny!

What is it about our seeing Jesus as He is that means we shall be like Him?

Our being ‘conformed to the image of His Son’ lies at the heart of God’s purpose for us in Christ ([Rom.8.29-30](#)): what’s meant by our being ‘glorified’?

If the *sight* of Jesus is so inherently purifying, what steps can you take to ensure you keep your eyes fixed on Him (see [Heb.12.1-2](#))?

‘All who have this hope purify themselves:’ what has that looked like in your life?

Prayer: O God of hope, fill us Your people with all joy and peace as we trust in You, that we may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit ([Rom.15.13](#))