

A Theology of Hope

1. Patience and hope, past and future, are essential ingredients in the life of faith. Our faith finds much strength, guidance, and hope by looking to the past. But just as crucial to a true life of faith is *learning to look to the future*. A theology of hope is central to a life of faith.

Rom 8:18-25 *That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. 19 The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. 20 Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in 21 until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens. 22 All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. 23 These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. 24 That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. 25 But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.* (MSG)

2. We, on earth, exist in a state of contradiction between the cross and the resurrection. Surrounded by decay, we nonetheless hope for perfection, for a restoration of the cosmos.
3. We have no proof that it can ever be attained, only a sign in the raising of Christ from the dead. Our theology of hope rests firmly on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
4. Yet, if we sustain faith in that glorious future, it can transform the present. Our faith introduces the energies of heaven into the surrounding circumstances. Such energies include:
 - a. Hope
 - b. Truth
 - c. Wisdom
 - d. Mercy
 - e. Forgiveness
 - f. Peace
 - g. Patience
 - h. and supremely, Love

Future Faith

1. A future faith introduces hope to all circumstances.
2. A future faith allows for patience in the face of difficult trials.
3. A future faith allows us to suspend judgment of God.
4. Future faith allows me to believe that God is not satisfied with this world either and that God plans to restore it to its original design.
5. Future faith allows one to embrace the promises of God in face of the problems of today.

Isa 9:6-7 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*

6. Future faith allows me to believe in a future of righteousness, justice, and peace, despite all the contradictions on this groaning planet.

Rev 11:15 *The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."*

7. Future faith allows me to believe in God's power to remove all death, aging, and pain from human existence and to believe that God will actually make his home among us.

Rev 21:3-5 *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." 5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." NIV*

8. Future faith holds out hope for resurrection. The “foreglow” of the resurrection does not fully dispel the “shadows of death” that darken this world, but it does bathe them in the new light of hope.

John 11:25-26 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" NIV*

Rev 1:17-18 *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. NIV*

1 Cor 15:54-55 *When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." 55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. NIV*

Faith Is

1. **Taking action on the basis of what God has said.**

- a. Notice the repeated formula through chapter 11, “By faith” ... so and so did this and such.

2. **Faith is assurance of the unseen realities.**

Heb 11:1 *To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see. GNT*

3. **Faith is the backbone of hope.**

- a. Faith gives hope its assurance. Faith turns hope’s optimism into assured conviction.

4. **Faith is the badge that marks us out as members of God’s covenant family.**

- a. Faith *hears and believes the promise of God.* It is one of the necessary things for us to be pleasing to God and to receive his promised rewards (Heb 11:6).

5. *In the place of delayed promises, it is faith that fills the gap.*

Heb 11:13 *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.* NIV

6. *Faith fills the eyes of the heart with God's promised future.*

- a. Faith is connecting God's consummating promises to his current purposes in and through our lives.

7. *Faith produces a sense of healthy detachment from the values and things of this present world system.*

Heb 11:9 *By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.* NIV

- a. *Living in tents* demonstrated their attitude toward this current worldly reality.
- b. They knew, by faith, that the consummating promises of God went far beyond anything this world had to offer.

Heb 11:10 *For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.* NIV

8. *Faith trumps death.*

Heb 11:13 *It was in faith that all these persons died.* GNT

Heb 11:16 *But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a heavenly city for them.* NLT

Conclusion

1. The life of true faith cannot be isolated or self-centered. It is not merely about our little lives. The faith we are called to has history, family, vocation, and eschatological purpose.
2. Hebrews 11 is our family album. It is meant to encourage us. We are made of good stock. We are heirs of great promises.
3. The glorious God of such profound, *consummating promises* deserves our greatest desires, our deepest surrender, and our total devotion.

Heb 12:1-2 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,*

Heb 12:23-29 *You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, 25 See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks.....26 now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken — that is, created things — so that what cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire." NIV*