



HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

This issue of *One Body* is devoted to the biblical theme of hope. I like the old Russian proverb, “In the kingdom of hope there is no winter.” This year marks the 140th anniversary of the birth of the great Russian reformer Ivan S. Prokhanov. I have read his thrilling autobiography *In the Cauldron of Russia* three or four times. We (Peace on Earth Ministries) have published it in both Russian and English, and many people in both countries and around the world have been blessed by reading his spellbinding story. For here was a remarkable man who led 4.5 million people out of the cold, dead Russian Orthodox Church to a “living hope” of simple, New Testament Christianity. I also like the sub-title of his autobiography: *The Life of an Optimist in a Land of Pessimism*.

We probably hear more about hope in the political arena than we do in the auditoriums and sanctuaries of America’s churches. Politicians have blithely promised hope for years to those who vote for them. Christians have been strangely silent on the subject for too many years. What a contrast with the early church to whom the Second Coming of Christ was known as “the blessed hope” (Titus 3:5). The early Christians prayed regularly for Christ to return. When was the last time you heard that prayer in church?

Paul gave high praise to the Christians in Colosse for their “faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven” (Col 1:5). You cannot understand the doctrine of hope unless you connect it with epochal events like the resurrection (both Christ’s and our own), the return of Christ, and the eternal home that God has prepared for the faithful in Heaven.

My thoughts of Heaven have increased one hundred-fold since my father departed to be with Christ on April 25, 2009. I was by his side when he took his last breath and was “carried by the angels” into the presence of God. I cannot wait to see him again, and I know that I shall in Heaven. I have written more than 40 brief studies on Heaven that appear on my daily blog: <http://honeyfromtherock.poeministries.org>. I hope you will take time to read some of them.

The Colossians were praised for their “faith in Jesus Christ



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—Russian Proverb

and the love you have for all the saints” (Col 1:4). William Barclay calls these “the essence of the Christian life.” But notice how faith and love depend upon hope. They both “spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven” (Col 1:5). Erwin Lutzer said, “Though we live on earth we have already established legal residence in Heaven.” That’s because our citizenship is in Heaven (Phil 3:20). Our hope is stored up in Heaven just like our treasures are (Matt 6:19). You can bank on it.

Paul knew something about the magnetic pull of earth and so he admonished those in Colosse: “Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Col 3:1, 2). We are strange creatures. Heaven is our eternal destination yet it is seldom the focus of our daily contemplation! A young preacher recently confessed, “I wanted to go to Heaven someday, but I just wasn’t excited about it.” Not excited about Heaven?

America is a great country. So is Canada. But Heaven is “a better country – a heavenly one” (Heb 11:13). It is better because of who is there – and not there. Heaven is the eternal dwelling place of God, Christ, and “the spirits of just men made perfect.” It is where all our loved ones who have died in Christ are waiting for us. Sin is barred at the border.

New York City is a great city. So are Chicago and Toronto. But Heaven – “the heavenly Jerusalem...the Holy City...the new Jerusalem” is a better city. It is better because of what is there – and not there. In Heaven there are will be everlasting joy and eternal pleasures, constant praise and worship, unceasing service and activity. In Heaven there will be no hospitals, asylums, prisons, police headquarters, cancer centers, funeral homes, or cemeteries “for the old order of things has passed away.”

May your faith and love spring from the hope that is stored up for you in Heaven!

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