

# *Hope and the Meaning of Life*

Thomas Robinson, *Living in Hope 3*, May 15, 2011

## *Ephesians 1:11-23*

<sup>11</sup> In him (Jesus) we were also **chosen** (allotted a share), having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the **purpose of his will**, <sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the **first to put our hope in the Messiah**, might be (live) for the **praise of his glory**. <sup>13</sup> And you also were **included in Him** when you heard the word of **truth**, the gospel of your salvation. When you **believed**, you were **marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit**, <sup>14</sup> **who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption** of those who are God's possession – to the **praise of his glory**.

<sup>15</sup> For this reason, ever since I heard about **your faith in the Lord Jesus** and your **love for all his people**, <sup>16</sup> I have not stopped giving **thanks** for you, remembering you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Messiah, the glorious Father, may give you the **Spirit of wisdom and revelation**, so that you may **know him better**.

<sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your **heart** may be **enlightened** in order that you may **know the hope to which he has called you**, the riches of his **glorious inheritance in his people**, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably **great power for us who believe**. That power is the same as the mighty strength <sup>20</sup> he exerted when **he raised the Messiah from the dead** and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that can be invoked, not only **in the present age but also in the one to come**. <sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be **head over everything for the church**, <sup>23</sup> **which is his body**, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

## *Genesis 1:27-28; 2:7*

<sup>1:27</sup> So **God created the human in his own image**, in the image of God he created him; **male and female** he created them. <sup>28</sup> And God blessed them.

<sup>2:7</sup> Then the LORD God formed the human of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a living creature.

## *Ecclesiastes 1:2-3, 8-9*

<sup>2</sup> *"Meaningless! Meaningless!"* says the Teacher. *"Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."* <sup>3</sup> What does anyone gain from all their labors at which **they toil under the sun?**

<sup>8</sup> All things are **wearisome**, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. <sup>9</sup> What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is **nothing new under the sun**.

## *1 Corinthians 13:8, 12-13*

<sup>8</sup> **Love** never ends. As for **prophecies**, they will pass away; as for **tongues**, they will cease; as for **knowledge**, it will pass away.... <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then **I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known**. <sup>13</sup> So now **faith, hope, and love** abide, these three; but the **greatest of these is love**.

## 2 Corinthians 3:12-13, 16-18

<sup>12</sup> Since **we have such a hope**, we are very **bold**, <sup>13</sup> not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face .... <sup>16</sup> But when one **turns to the Lord**, the veil is removed. <sup>17</sup> Now the **Lord is the Spirit**, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is **freedom**. <sup>18</sup> And we all, with unveiled face, **beholding the glory of the Lord**, are being **transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.**

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## Resurrection and the Affirmation of Meaning

The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus are one event that brought to a climax all the past history of God and humanity and brought the future climax of all things into that present. In Jesus, God took on himself the sin and pain of humanity and opened the future of Resurrection life. This personal and cosmic hope marks out the trajectory of human existence and gives the environment in which our lives have eternal meaning.

Hope does not mean uncertainty but a yet-to-be-fulfilled future touching the present so that the fog of everyday existence clears and we see where we are going and why. That is the Good News of Jesus' Resurrection: the power, beauty, concreteness, renewal of life that God gives now in the Holy Spirit and fulfills ultimately in our resurrection.

## Humanity's Struggle for Meaning

A deep and troubling question in human history: Does our short life have any meaning?

The muddle of experience says no. We die. We're forgotten. Fog! "under the Sun." (Eccl.)

We strive to create meaning: Plato: contemplate the Good. Aristotle: Happiness; Stoics: living in accord with nature; the Buddha: break the cycle of suffering, realize impermanence.

Recent philosophy: Life is absurd, meaningless, suspicion of all meaning as power play.

The Gospel says an unexpected event, an explosion of power, has broken into human life.

## Importance of the Light of Knowledge

In Ephesians and elsewhere the NT shows how this event brought new experiences that illuminated life in a new way. Both Jews and Gentiles have "put our hope in the Messiah," have "faith in the Lord Jesus" (1:12, 15). That means being "in him," being a part of him in a way only possible because he is both God and human. His life is my life. This comes into powerful realization when we receive the Good News of what God has done and open ourselves to the life of the Holy Spirit, the seal, the first experience, the beginning realization of the full eternal life that is Jesus' resurrection and is our future in him.

There is a dynamic interaction between that Spirit and ourselves. We are tempted to slip back into the fog, doubt, pain of life. Paul prays for believers for wisdom, revelation, light (clearing the fog) to see and know what they already, actually have.

1. To know with clarity "the hope" (presence of the future) to which God calls us.

2. To realize how God considers his people as "the riches of this glorious inheritance."

3. To know the "incomparably great power" God uses on our behalf – the power shown in the resurrection of Jesus, conquering death, and in his Lordship over all creation.

## Love and Focus – Everyday Life Matters

All this gets lived out in the "church," the assembly of ordinary people which he constitutes by his Spirit as "his body." We ordinary people, counted by God as "the fullness of him who fills everything in every way!" The image of God is renewed, his breath/Spirit breathes.

We participate in a process of life-giving transformation, living toward that future. The heart of it is his Love: learning it, living it. Love with faith and hope is that future now.

We are transformed by focusing on Jesus with bold hope, freedom, & desire for his love.