

## What Is Our Hope as Christians?

Vaclav Havel: “Hope is not prognostication. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons. Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for early success, but rather, an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed.”

Karl Barth: Hope is more than good courage. Perhaps traditional Christianity suffers above all from the fact that we understand Christ at best as a comforter and his gift at best as good courage, as the gift of patience and confidence and decisiveness. That is nothing small, but there is another horizon. As the church of Jesus Christ, we would not only owe ourselves, but also God and mankind a decisive debt if we did not want to realize that Christianity not only has a Good Friday side, but also an Easter side. Rightly understood, the cross is not a sign of paradox and dark mystery, but a sign of *victory*. He has risen from the dead, and all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. And so his gift is not only consolation, but also an overcoming, that is, a hope that already participates in his victory over death and all powers and authorities and is therefore alive. . . . Living in this hope, we Christians will not be “optimists” from afar, but we will always stand up for the cause of *hope*

Psalm 130: I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the LORD more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

1 Cor. 13:13: “So faith, hope love abide, these three, but greatest of these is love.

Hebrews 11ff: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. . . . And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets--who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. . . .

And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Rom. 4:18ff: In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, "So shall your descendants be." He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

Rom. 8:24ff: For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. . . . We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. . . . What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.