

Hope

By Rt. Rev. Brian Keith

June 30, 2019

“For in You, O Lord, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God.” Psalm 38:15

Vital to the human condition is hope. The desire, or expectation, that things will improve, or turn out for the best is constantly with us. Who would tolerate the frustrations and failures that are inevitable in life were it not for the hope that there is a happier state ahead - a heaven from the human race? Without hope, there is no purpose to life, no reason to do anything.

Consider those facing death in the not too distant future. When we are with them, do we speak of the failures or frustrations of life, or do we speak of the positive things, in the past, present, and future? As the Writings make note in speaking to someone in this state, who does not comfort him “by the assurance that he will shortly come into the other life?” (AC 5078:5; cf AC 699) As one New Church man said, “With what I’ve got to look forward to, what have I got to be afraid of?”

Unfortunately, we have all experienced times when we did not have hope. Whenever we sense there is no hope, either naturally or spiritually, do we not feel a deadness? Do we not feel that there is no point in continuing? Take away our hopes and dreams and what is left is but an empty shell, a void of blackness (see AC 5551). And it is to this that the hellish influences in our lives would lead us. For when we are without hope we lose our strength, our will to strive and improve.

But the Lord never wants this to happen. He always leads us to have hope, for hope has power to restore, strengthen, and give life.

It is curious that as much as hope is a looking forward, the Lord warned against worrying about the future. We are to have no thought for the morrow, but let the morrow take care of itself. We’re also told that the angels have no memory of the past nor concern for the future, because they are so engaged in the present. And we do have to concentrate our attentions to what is happening in the here and now. But part of the joy of hope is the anticipation of what lies ahead.

Yet our hopes should be based on reality. If our hopes bear no relation to how the Lord operates in His infinite providence, we are likely to be disappointed. We may hope for the Lord to end all unhappiness, but if we expect Him to force people against their wills to achieve this end, we will not see it. Genuine hope, as the doctrines note, “is of the understanding by means of truth.” (AC 6578). We need to align our hopes with what the Lord teaches in His Word.

There is always cause for hope. It does not matter how bleak things look, or how many evils and tragedies one has experienced in life. The Lord is always there, incessantly leading our thoughts and feelings. Incessantly lifting our spirits and encouraging them with hope. Yes, bad things can happen. We can act selfishly. Others can harm us. But that does not stop the Lord from leading us, giving us hope.

Lessons: Genesis 37:29-36; Exodus 6:1-8; Divine Providence 178