

13 August 2023

Hope

Dear Sisters and Elders

In my study of Chapter 6 in Preach My Gospel II this past week, I learned something new that I want to share with you. It is about the Christlike attribute of Hope.

I have long held my own definition of hope as being the the desire or expectation for something good to happen. Hope is one of the most powerful forces in the universe. What is the opposite of hope? It seems to be despair and doubt for in Moroni 10:22 it says *“if ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair; and despair cometh because of iniquity.”*

In Preach My Gospel II, on page 126, it provides another definition of hope that is much more powerful than my own. *“[Hope] is an abiding confidence, grounded in your faith in Christ, that God will fulfill His promises to you.”*

When I first began to study hope, there was a concept about the topic that confused me. It was whether hope comes before or after faith. This was a result of two scriptures in Moroni Chapter 7. One talks about hope as necessary for faith and the other (2 verses later) talks about hope coming after faith. Here are the two scriptures. Moroni 7 verses 40 and 42. *“And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?”* (vs 40). And, *“Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope”* (vs 42). Confusing right? But as I pondered on these scriptures, the spirit began to reveal to me some truths about hope and its importance on both sides of faith. I have attached a picture as to how I would depict this. I have shared this previously in at least some of the zone conferences.

Let me explain with two personal examples. The first comes from when I began to investigate the Church as an 18 year-old. There came a point where I could see that the Church was good, very good in fact. I knew that it was making me a better person and at that moment, I began to hope that it was true. This hope drove me to come to know for myself and eventually led me to have enough faith to accept an invitation to be baptized. Now, more than 48 years later, the hope I have is much greater. I have come to know for myself with certainty that the Church is true, now my hope is that I can be faithful until the end, that I can keep all of the commandments, that I can hear and act upon the still small voice of the Spirit of the Lord and ultimately that I can receive exaltation along with our family in the Kingdom of God. This hope that I have keeps me moving forward. The hope that I can become like my Savior Jesus Christ is at the forefront of all that I think about and all that I do.

The second example is an experience I had as a missionary in Germany as a young man. We had recently met with the Zone leaders and they had taught us how to be more effective in our prayers by writing down our impressions while praying. I was trying to understand the scripture in vs. 40 that I mentioned earlier about hope preceding faith. While praying, I had an inspired thought about how this could apply to missionary work. I realized that if I could

begin to see people in terms of what they could be instead of what they were, it would change the way I would greet, speak and teach people. As we met with people we were teaching, I began to see them dressed in white clothing awaiting baptism. As we met people on the street I began to see Elders Quorum Presidents and Relief Society Presidents instead of just men and women trudging through life. This new found hope that I might help these people become the people that Heavenly Father knew they could become increased my faith to the point where I not only began to approach more people, but the very way that I spoke to them changed. It was an amazing revelation to me about the power of hope.

Once I began to get my mind around how hope exists on both sides of faith, I began to seek understanding about the relationship between FAITH and HOPE. In my study I came across a quote from Elder Maxwell that explains this interrelationship between FAITH and HOPE. It comes from the October 1994 General Conference. *"Faith and hope are constantly interactive, and may not always be precisely distinguished or sequenced. Though not perfect knowledge either, hope's enlivened expectations are "with surety" true (Ether 12:4; see also Rom. 8:24; Heb. 11:1; Alma 32:21). In the geometry of restored theology, hope has a greater circumference than faith. If faith increases, the perimeter of hope stretches correspondingly."* Elder Maxwell can be difficult to understand at times, so I will simplify his words. As the faith increases, the perimeter of hope stretches correspondingly. In other words, the greater our faith, the more hope we have about receiving more of a fullness of light and truth.

How do we create greater hope in our lives and eliminate doubt and despair? In Elder Uchtdorf's October 2008 General Conference address on the "Infinite Power of Hope", he teaches that hope is a gift of the spirit. In Moroni 8:26 we learn it is the Comforter which fills with hope and perfect love. Therefore, we need to create opportunities to have the Holy Ghost with us. Keeping the 17 points, having powerful scripture study, engaging in meaningful prayer, diligently finding and teaching the elect, keeping and renewing our covenants....all of these actions will create greater hope within us. The good news is that they will also cast out doubt and despair from our lives. Elder Uchtdorf further explained, *"Hope is not knowledge, but rather the abiding trust that the Lord will fulfill His promise to us. It is confidence that if we live according to God's laws and the words of His prophets now, we will receive desired blessings in the future. It is believing and expecting that our prayers will be answered. It is manifest in confidence, optimism, enthusiasm, and patient perseverance."* Sounds like this is the source of the new Preach My Gospel's definition of hope!

There is no doubt that the adversary would love to rob us of our hope. Elder Uchtdorf explained, *"despair can seem like a staircase that leads only and forever downward. Hope, on the other hand, is like the beam of sunlight rising up and above the horizon of our present circumstances."*

I want to share one of my favorite scriptures about hope. It is found in Ether 12:4: *"Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being*

led to glorify God.” I love the imagery of hope being an anchor to the souls of men. When we hope for eternal life with our Heavenly Father through the strengthening and enabling power of the atonement of Jesus Christ, we are firm, steadfast and immovable. We may not know everything, and our faith may still be developing, but our hope will keep us on the path to find a place at the right hand of God.

In conclusion, I want to share that which I learned from my study of Preach of Gospel II this past week. It is found in Alma 22:16 and are the words that Aaron taught to King Lamoni's father. *“But Aaron said unto him: If thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.”* Here is the quote from Preach My Gospel that I had completely missed in my previous study on this topic. ***“One way to increase hope is through repentance. Becoming cleansed and forgiven through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ engenders and revives hope.”*** It makes perfect sense and now seems so obvious to me that if we are to have greater hope, then we need to be clean before the Lord. Referencing back to Moroni 10:22, if despair comes because of iniquity, then hope will come because of a cleansing through repentance. This gives us the very confidence we need, grounded in our faith in Jesus Christ, that we are worthy so God can - and will - fulfill His promises to us.

May we all be filled with HOPE, through repentance, powerful scripture study, meaningful prayer, obeying the 17 points and keeping our covenants because of our faith in Jesus Christ.

All My Love,

President Kunz