

Theme: Christian hope ultimately rests not in circumstances, human abilities or righteousness, power, technology, wealth, or leaders, but in Christ Himself.

I. Heidelberg Q1/BRCC Q98 and Admiral Stockdale

A. The Stockdale Paradox and the Heidelberg Catechism

1. Jim Stockdale - POW; led resistance; Medal of Honor
2. Stockdale Paradox (Good To Great) - "you must maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, and at the same time, have the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."
3. Those who lost hope they would make it home, or who had false hopes, usually died.
4. Most of us won't be POWs (thank God!), but we all need hope in life.

B. Famous catechism question - Heidelberg 1

What is your only comfort in life and death?
That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, that all things must work together for my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, from this day forth, to live unto him.

C. This question has been a source of many songs and teachings through the years

1. We made it the final question of our catechism
2. I Am Not My Own; Christ Our Hope In Life & Death

D. It has a focus on how Christ is our comfort and hope in all of life and death!

E. Our series: Christ Our Hope In Life and Death

II. Our Hope: Jesus Christ

A. Paul tells us that God is the God of hope

May **the God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that **you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit**. Romans 15:13

1. God is the God of hope - our hope comes from Him!
2. Because God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-present, His good purposes and will are going to be accomplished!
3. The power of the Holy Spirit is at work so that we can receive hope from God and overflow with hope!
4. Hope is not something extraneous to God and His work - He is the God of hope, and His Spirit works to fill His people with hope.

B. Our hope rests in Christ and His work in our behalf

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of **Christ Jesus our hope**, 1 Timothy 1:1

1. Jesus Himself is our hope!
2. This is because He is God, but also because of the work He has done in our behalf - we know He is for us and will work everything to our good as we trust in Him.

3. The catechism question focuses on His work as the foundation for our comfort and hope.

C. Our Trinitarian hope

1. Catechism mentions Father, Jesus, Spirit (Trinity)
2. Paul also gives us a Trinitarian hope!
Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of **Christ Jesus our hope**, 1 Timothy 1:1

May **the God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of **the Holy Spirit**. Romans 15:13

3. Our hope is founded in the character and purposes of the Father, guaranteed by the work of Jesus in our behalf, and overflows in our lives through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
4. But we speak of Christ as our hope because He is united with us in His incarnation, and it is His work that provides all of the benefits of salvation to us - including hope!
5. This is a firm basis for real hope and comfort in every circumstance and season of life and even in death!

III. Our Need For Hope

- A. We need hope to anchor and encourage us in life
God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.** ¹⁹ **We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.** Hebrews 6:18-19

1. Life is often discouraging, but the hope we find in God encourages us in the face of these difficulties.
2. Life is often a storm-tossed sea, and we can be blown off course unless we have the anchor of hope!
3. Without hope, we can become discouraged and blown far off the course God has laid out for us.

B. Hope helps us endure

We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 1:3

1. The famous trio of faith, hope, and love!
2. Each of these “roots” produces fruit (works, labor)
3. The fruit of hope in my life is endurance!
4. Without hope, I will not be able to endure the inevitable storms, troubles, and difficulties.
5. But with hope in Jesus Christ, I can endure until the day I see Him face to face!

C. Modern science is verifying this as well

Hope is crucial for human well-being and survival, acting as a powerful motivator and buffer against adversity. (AI overview of Google search “Why do humans need hope?”)

1. This sounds like the Scriptures we just read!
2. It is the same thing that Adm. Stockdale saw!
3. Research has linked hope to motivation and goal achievement, emotional well-being, coping with adversity, fostering creativity and problem solving, building healthy relationships, preventing despair, and finding purpose and meaning.

IV. Sources of False Hope

A. Current circumstances

1. It is easy to have because things are going well!
2. But the Psalms of lament remind life often does not go well!
3. If my hope is based on circumstances, it will fail!

B. My own skills, actions, and righteousness

Should not **your piety be your confidence** and your **blameless ways your hope**? Job 4:6

1. This was the advice of Job's friends! And we have an entire self-help industry that teaches this today!
2. The whole book of Job is written to show that this is a false place to put our hope! The righteous can suffer while the wicked prosper!
3. The Gospel teaches me the futility of my own works, skills, and righteousness!

C. Power

When a wicked man dies, **his hope perishes**; all he expected from **his power comes to nothing**. Proverbs 11:7

1. Many are tempted to trust in power, to have hope that it will give them what they desire
2. But if not before, at death our power fails and our hope dies along with it.
3. For most of us, power will fail us long before death!

D. Military or technological might

A **horse is a vain hope for deliverance**; despite all its great strength it cannot save. ¹⁸ **But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love...** Psalm 33:17-18

1. Horses were powerful technology - for farming, personal protection, or military might for the nation.
2. This easily becomes a false source of hope, thinking technology or military might can save.
3. But our eyes and hope are to be on God, not our technology, nor the might of our nation!
4. History is replete with great nations that fell quickly, shattering the false hope of the people.
5. We easily do this with technology in medicine and other areas today, but our eyes and hope are to be on Christ, not the technology!

E. Wealth

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant **nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God**, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹ Timothy 6:17

1. Wealth seems to allow us to buy peace and security, but it is so uncertain!
2. This is why many killed themselves on Black Friday - their fortunes vanished in a moment!
3. Jesus warned us that we can not serve God and wealth - we must choose!
4. Paul contrasts hope in wealth with hope in God!

F. Leaders

“But do not think I will accuse you before the Father.
Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set.
John 5:45

1. Moses is one of the greatest human leaders to have ever existed!
2. Moses was called, anointed, and used by God!
3. But Jesus critiques the Pharisees for having their hope in Moses rather than in Him!
4. If hope in Moses is wrong, how much more so any other human leader!
5. This is a special temptation for us, for we live in a culture that practices the cult of personality.
6. There is a MASSIVE temptation today to put our hope in political leaders, thinking that they will save us, but this is always a vain hope!
7. For others, their faith has been shattered when their hope was set in a church leader who then fell or failed - but our hope is to be in Jesus, not His servants!

V. Applying the Word

A. Am I relying on a false source of hope?

1. The list of false sources of hope our world offers
2. The world disciplines us to rely on these sources
3. Is the Spirit revealing one of these as a temptation for me? Or perhaps something else?
4. In His mercy, God will reveal these to us by removing them via life situations.

5. Hear the Spirit and cut loose the cord to this false anchor and look to Christ as your hope!

B. The Table of Hope

1. Here, our hope in Christ is renewed each week
2. We are reminded that hope is in Christ alone!
3. We remember His past faithfulness, His present work, and His future return, which stirs up faith!
4. Catechism Question and Response
5. Come to the Table of Hope!

Christ Our Hope

1 Timothy 1:1; Romans 15:13

July 13, 2025

Communion

Romans 15:13

Teaching keywords: Hope; catechism; endurance; encouragement

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