

Romans 12:12

Rejoice in Hope

“Hope,” CS Lewis wrote in his international best-seller *Mere Christianity*, “is one of the Theological virtues.” Chances are, few of us have ever connected virtue with theology. The latter category is often associated with dry academic debates around old books and dead thinkers. Yet, theology shapes who we are because it addresses the most fundamental questions of our being by taking us back to the source. As such, in order for hope to be an enduring virtue¹ it must be theological. It must be defined by the *theos*. By grounding our hope in our Creator-Redeemer, we can understand and enjoy its many benefits.

Chances are, when we think of hope, we weaken its theological definition. Hope is a happy thought of a positive outcome, we assume. I hope, for example, my favorite sports team wins the game, but I recognize that they may not. But hope is more than a sunny optimism. It is not rooted merely in an idea, but a Person – Jesus Christ. By grounding our hope in him, we can walk with an assurance that is unshakable. It is for this reason that faith is often paired with hope as the two are often inseparable (Romans 4:16-18, 5:1-2; Ephesians 4:4-5).

How, then, is our hope grounded in Christ? We must first begin with the doctrine that **Christ is risen**. The resurrection of Jesus Christ stands as the unshakable foundation of our Christian faith. It is, therefore, the rock of our hope. By rising from the dead on the third day, Jesus demonstrated that death itself has been defeated, proving that sin’s ultimate consequence no longer holds final power over those who belong to him. This historical event is a theological reality which guarantees that believers, too, will one day rise from the dead to eternal life in glorified bodies. The historicity of this event is pivotal. Our future (and thus our present) is assured because Christ is still alive.

In an interview late in his life, New York pastor and author, Tim Keller, summarized it well. If Jesus is alive, then everything will be ok.

Secondly, **Christ is Lord**. He who is risen, now reigns. To proclaim Christ as Lord is to recognize his absolute authority over every power, circumstance, and enemy. It means we entrust our past, present, and future to the victorious King who possesses all power, knowledge, wisdom, and goodness. Submitting to his Lordship frees us of unnecessary anxiety and fear as we trust in his providential care over our lives and even history itself.

Christ’s Lordship also guarantees the coming triumph of his Kingdom, when every knee will bow and every wrong will be made right. Thus, the recognition that Jesus is Lord transforms hope from

¹ The other theological virtues are faith and love.

fragile optimism into steadfast assurance, enabling his people to live with courage, obedience, and joyful expectation even amid the uncertainties of the present age.

Thirdly, **Christ is Make All Things New**. Christianity is a cosmic faith. The gospel does more than save us on the day of judgment, but restores what has been broken, reconciles what has been severed, redeems what has been lost, and remakes what has been destroyed. The Christian has the audacity to proclaim that, in Christ, all the brokenness of our present world is neither permanent nor ultimate. Sin will be no more. Death will be no more. Hate will be no more. Violence will be no more. Grief will be no more. Every aspect of creation will be restored to the beauty, harmony, and glory God intended.

Because Jesus is actively at work in our lives and across the cosmos right now, we need not defer hope to the distant future but can enjoy its presence even now. We, therefore, can face suffering, injustice, and personal failure with resilient confidence, knowing that nothing is beyond the reach of Christ's power. We await, therefore, a renewed heaven and earth in which righteousness dwells. Thus, the certainty that Jesus is making all things new turns hope into a living anticipation, empowering us to labor, endure, and rejoice as participants in the unfolding new creation.

Finally, **Christ is Provident**. In other words, Jesus is Lord over history – past, present, and future. All of history will climax in the final triumph of the resurrected Lord. This gives us the assurance that, even when we don't understand current events or trends, that he remains sovereign over it all. We can rest in his providential care knowing he actively provides, guides, and sustains us through every circumstance. No trial, therefore, is random, none of our needs is overlooked, and no path is left without his purposeful direction. Our hope, then, is not in the work of man, but in the unseen hand of a mighty God who became one of us, died for us, and reigns over us.

Hope is a theological virtue. It is no surprise that as sound theology has waned in recent generations, so has our hope. In short, the old hymn summarizes the grounding of our hope best:

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

Let us, therefore, with the Apostle Paul, "rejoice in hope" (Romans 12:12).