

TALK 1 - Hope – the antidote to despair – brief outline

What is hope?

‘And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.’ (1Co 13:13)

Hope is the virtue by which we desire the Kingdom of God and eternal life, trust in Christ's promises to us, and come to rely on God and not ourselves.

Where we place our hope

Hope involves having confidence that God loves me, acknowledging that all good comes from him, that he will ultimately lead me to eternal life and that no created thing can bring me everlasting peace, joy and salvation. Psalm 33 sums this up:

‘Truly the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and shield. Our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you.’ (Ps 33:18-22)

What is Despair?

Kierkegaard says that all of us are in despair. But here he does not use the word despair to mean depression to the point of suicide. He uses it to mean any way in which we fall short of complete hope in God. So despair can be said to be a lack of trust in God's mercy, love, help and power.

Here are some of the ways in which we can exhibit that kind of despair.

Despair and Pride

Control-freakishness

Despair and clinical depression

Boasting

Obsession with appearance and longevity

‘Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.’ (Pro 31:30)

Escapism

Existential loneliness

Not living in the present

Despair in God's forgiveness

Despair from crushing misfortune

Kierkegaard speaks of hope in disaster:

‘So God helps him... perhaps by allowing him to avoid the horror, perhaps through the horror itself – and here, unexpectedly, miraculously, divinely, help does come.’

How to nurture hope

Mental prayer

Spiritual reading

Reading Scripture

Practice of the presence of God

Sharing with other Christians