



*Finding Hope
When In Despair*

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Chapter 1

Hope for the Righteous

Proverbs 10:28

The hope of the righteous is gladness, but the expectation of the wicked perishes.

The wicked person dreads death. Those who do not believe in God usually fear death, and with good reason. By contrast, believers desire eternal life and God's salvation—their hopes will be rewarded. This verse offers a choice: You can have either your fears or your hopes come true. You make that choice by rejecting God and living your own way or by accepting God and following him.

Your hope will not be cut off.

Proverbs 23:18

Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.

How easy it is to envy those who get ahead, unhampered by responsibility to God's laws. For a time they do seem to prosper without paying any attention to what God wants, but they have no future. To those who follow him, God promises a hope and a wonderful future, even if they don't achieve it in this life.

The hope of righteousness.

Galatians 5:5

For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

No amount of work, discipline, or moral behavior can save us. If a person were counting on finding favor with God by being circumcised, he would also have to obey the rest of God's law completely. Trying to save ourselves by keeping all God's laws only separates us from God.

We are saved by faith, not by deeds. But love for others and for God is the response of those whom God has forgiven. God's forgiveness is complete, and Jesus said that those who are forgiven much love much (Luke 7:47). Because faith expresses itself through love, you can check your love for others as a way to monitor your faith.

Believers give an account of their hope.

1 Peter 3:15

But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

Some Christians believe that faith is a personal matter that should be kept to oneself. It is true that we shouldn't be boisterous or obnoxious in sharing our faith, but we should always be ready to give an answer, gently and respectfully, when asked about our faith, our lifestyle, or our Christian perspective. Can others see your hope in Christ? Are you prepared to tell them what Christ has done in your life?

All who hope in the Lord, take courage.

Psalm 31:24

Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the LORD.

In describing his feelings, David wrote of the helplessness and hopelessness everyone feels when hated or rejected. But adversity is easier to accept when we recognize our true relationship with the sovereign God. Although our enemies may seem to have the upper hand, they are ultimately the helpless and hopeless ones. Those who know God will be victorious in the end.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Do you remember how you felt when you were very young and your birthday approached? You were excited and anxious. You knew you would certainly receive gifts and other special treats. But some things would be a surprise. Birthdays combine assurance and anticipation, and so does faith! Faith is the confidence based on past experience that God's new and fresh surprises will surely be ours.

God has given believers eternal hope.

2 Thessalonians 2:16

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace,

Paul knew that the Thessalonians would face pressure from persecutions, false teachers, worldliness, and apathy to waver from the truth and to leave the faith. So he urged them to "stand firm" and hold on to the truth they had been taught both through his letters and in person. We also may face persecution, false teachings, worldliness, and apathy. We should hold on to the truth of Christ's teachings because our life depends on it. Never forget the reality of Christ's life and love!

Through Christ, we have eternal hope.

1 Peter 1:21

Who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Christ's sacrifice for our sins was not an afterthought, not something God decided to do when the world spun out of control. This plan was set in motion by the all-knowing, eternal God long before the world was created. What a comfort it must have been to Jewish believers to know that Christ's coming and his work of salvation were planned by God long before the world began. This assured them that the law was not being scrapped because it didn't work but that both the law *and* the coming of Christ were part of God's eternal plan

God's plan is to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'

We're all encouraged by a leader who stirs us to move ahead, someone who believes we can do the task he has given and who will be with us all the way. God is that kind of leader. He knows the future, and his plans for us are good and full of hope.

As long as God, who knows the future, provides our agenda and goes with us as we fulfill his mission, we can have boundless hope. This does not mean that we will be spared pain, suffering, or hardship, but that God will see us through to a glorious conclusion.

Chapter 2

The object of hope

1 Thessalonians 5:8

But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

As you near the end of a long race, your legs ache, your throat burns, and your whole body cries out for you to stop. This is when friends and fans are most valuable. Their encouragement helps you push through the pain to the finish line. In the same way, Christians are to encourage one another. Be sensitive to others' need for encouragement, and offer supportive words or actions.

Although we are assured of victory, we must engage in the struggle until Christ returns, because Satan is constantly battling against all who are on the Lord's side. We need supernatural power to defeat Satan, and God has provided this by giving us his Holy Spirit within us and his armor surrounding us. If you feel discouraged, remember Jesus' words to Peter: "Upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it" (Matthew 16:18).

Looking for that blessed hope.

Titus 2:13

Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.

Paul brings out two aspects of Christian living that must be stressed today. "We should live in this evil world... while we look forward with hope." Both aspects of *living and looking forward* are essential to our Christian sanity in this present evil age. The living is made bearable because we live for God—seeking to build his Kingdom with whatever gifts he has given us. And it is that very Kingdom to which we are looking forward.

As we live and look forward, we anticipate three great benefits of Christ's return:

- (1) Christ's personal presence—we look forward to being with him.
- (2) Redemption from our sinful nature—we long for the end of the battle with sin and our perfection in Christ.
- (3) Restoration of creation—we anticipate the complete rule of grace when the image of God will be fully realized in people and when the created order will be restored.

Paul was on trial for his hope.

Acts 23:6

But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"

Paul's sudden insight that the council was a mixture of Sadducees and Pharisees is an example of the insight that Jesus promises to believers (Mark 13:9-11). God will help us when we are under fire for our faith. Like Paul, we should always be ready to present our testimony. The Holy Spirit will give us the courage to speak boldly.

A hope for the resurrection.

Acts 24:15

Having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

Paul was also able to present the Good News through his defense. Paul's accusers were unable to present specific evidence to support their general accusations. For example, Paul was accused of starting trouble among the Jews in the province of Asia (24:18, 19), but the Jews in the province of Asia (western Turkey) were not present to confirm this. This is another example of Paul using every opportunity to witness for Christ

The hope of eternal life.

Titus 1:2

In the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,

Apparently lying was commonplace in Crete (1:12). Paul made it clear at the start that God does not lie. The foundation of our faith is trust in God's character. Because God *is* truth, he is the *source* of all truth, and he cannot lie. Believing in him leads to living a God-honoring lifestyle (1:1). The eternal life that God has promised will be ours because he keeps his promises. Build your faith on the foundation of a trustworthy God who never lies.

We are heirs of eternal life.

Titus 3:7

So that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Paul summarizes what Christ does for us when he saves us. We move from a life full of sin to one where we are led by God's Holy Spirit. *All* our sins, not merely some, are washed away. Washing refers to the water of baptism, which is a sign of salvation. In becoming a Christian, the believer acknowledges Christ as Lord and recognizes Christ's saving work. We gain eternal life with all its treasures. We have a new life through the Holy Spirit, and he continually renews our hearts. None of this occurs because we earned or deserved it; it is all God's gift.

We exult in hope the glory of God.

Romans 5:2

Through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Paul states that, as believers, we now have entered into a place of undeserved privilege. Not only has God declared us not guilty; he has drawn us close to himself. Instead of being enemies, we have become his friends—in fact, his own children (John 15:15; Galatians 4:5).

Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 1:27

To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The false teachers in the Colossian church believed that spiritual perfection was a secret and hidden plan that only a few privileged people could discover. Their secret plan was meant to be exclusive. Paul said that he was proclaiming the entire message of God, not just a part of the plan. He also called God's plan a "message... kept secret for centuries and generations past," not in the sense that only a few would understand, but because it was hidden until Christ came.

Through Christ it was made open to all. God's secret plan is "Christ lives in you"—God planned to have his Son, Jesus Christ, live in the hearts of all who believe in him—even Gentiles like the Colossians. Do you know Christ? He is not hidden if you will come to him.

Chapter 3

There is hope in God.

Psalm 131:3

O Israel, hope in the LORD From this time forth and forever.

Pride results from overvaluing ourselves above others. It leads to restlessness because it makes us dissatisfied with what we have and concerned about what everyone else is doing. It keeps us always hungering for more attention and adoration.

By contrast, humility puts others first and allows us to be content with God's leading in our lives. Such contentment gives us security so that we no longer have to prove ourselves to others. Let humility and trust affect your perspective and give you the strength and freedom to serve God and others.

Fix your hope on things eternal.

1 Timothy 6:17

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

Ephesus was a wealthy city, and the Ephesian church probably had many wealthy members. Paul advised Timothy to deal with any potential problems by teaching that having riches carries great responsibility. If you have been blessed with wealth, then thank the Lord. Don't be proud and don't trust in your money. Use your money to do good. Be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share. No matter how much money you have, your life should demonstrate that God controls the wealth that he has placed under your care.

All who have hope should take courage.

Psalm 31:24

Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the LORD.

Knowing that God loves and cares for us enables us to keep steady in our faith regardless of our circumstances. It keeps us from sinning foolishly by taking matters into our own hands or resenting God's timetable.

Hope in the Lord brings loving kindness.

Psalm 130:7

O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is lovingkindness, And with Him is abundant redemption.

Keeping a record of sins (or holding a grudge) is like building a wall between you and another person, and it is nearly impossible to talk openly while the wall is there.

God doesn't keep a record of our sins; when he forgives, he forgives completely, tearing down any wall between us and him. Therefore, we fear (revere) God, yet we can talk to him about anything. When you pray, realize that God is holding nothing against you. His lines of communication are completely open.

Chapter 4

Rejoice in hope.

Romans 12:12

Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,

We can honor others in one of two ways. One involves ulterior motives. We honor our bosses so they will reward us, our employees so they will work harder, the wealthy so they will contribute to our cause, the powerful so they will use their power for us and not against us. God's way involves love.

As Christians, we honor people because they have been created in God's image, because they are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and because they have a unique contribution to make to Christ's church. Does God's way of honoring others sound too difficult for your competitive nature? Why not try to outdo one another in showing honor? Put others first!

Hold fast your confession of hope.

Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

We have significant privileges associated with our new life in Christ:

- (1) We have personal access to God through Christ and can draw near to him without an elaborate system (10:22);
- (2) We may grow in faith, overcome doubts and questions, and deepen our relationship with God (10:23);
- (3) We may enjoy motivation from one another (10:24); (4) we may worship together (10:25).

Wait on God's word through hope.

Psalm 119:74

May those who fear you see me and be glad, because I wait for your word.

God's Word makes us wise—wiser than our enemies and wiser than any teachers who ignore it. True wisdom goes beyond amassing knowledge; it is *applying* knowledge in a life-changing way. Intelligent or experienced people are not necessarily wise. Wisdom comes from allowing God's teachings to guide us.

I will wait for God's ordinances.

Psalm 119:43

And do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for I wait for your ordinances.

The writer talks about keeping the laws and yet being free. Contrary to what we often expect, obeying God's laws does not inhibit or restrain us. Instead, it frees us to be what God designed us to be. By seeking God's salvation and forgiveness, we have freedom from sin and the resulting oppressive guilt. By living God's way, we have freedom to fulfill God's plan for our lives.

In God's word do I hope.

Psalm 130:5

I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope.

Let humility and trust affect your perspective and give you the strength and freedom to serve God and others.

Chapter 5

Hope of the Wicked is gold.

Job 31:24

"If I have put my confidence in gold, and called fine gold my trust,

Job affirmed that depending on wealth for happiness is idolatry and denies the God of heaven. We excuse our society's obsession with money and possessions as a necessary evil or "the way it works" in the modern world.

But every society in every age has valued the power and prestige that money brings. True believers must purge themselves of the deep-seated desire for more power, prestige, and possessions. They must also not withhold their resources from neighbors near and far who have desperate physical needs.

Those who hope in Egypt shall not escape.

Isaiah 20:5-6

"Then they will be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast. "So the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, 'Behold, such is our hope, where we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria; and we, how shall we escape?'"

God asked Isaiah to do something that seemed shameful and illogical. At times, God may ask us to take steps we don't understand. We must obey God in complete faith, for he will never ask us to do something wrong.

The hope of the godliness shall perish.

Job 8:13

"So are the paths of all who forget God; and the hope of the godless will perish.

Only God can give lasting security. What have you trusted for your security? How lasting is it? If you have a secure foundation with God, feelings of insecurity will not undermine you.

The hope of the godliness shall breathe their last.

Job 11:20

"But the eyes of the wicked will fail, and there will be no escape for them; and their hope is to breathe their last."

We are often tempted by the thought "No one will ever know!" Perhaps we can hide some sin from others, but we can do *nothing* without God knowing about it. Because our very thoughts are known to God, of course he will notice our sins. Job understood this as well as Zophar did, but it didn't apply to his current dilemma.

The hope of the righteous is gladness.

Proverbs 10:28

The hope of the righteous is gladness, but the expectation of the wicked perishes.

This verse offers a choice: You can have either your fears or your hopes come true. You make that choice by rejecting God and living your own way or by accepting God and following him.

The hope of the godliness is cut off.

Job 27:8

"For what is the hope of the godless when he is cut off, When God requires his life?"

In the midst of all the accusations, Job was able to declare that his conscience was clear. Only God's forgiveness and the determination to live right before God can bring a clear conscience.

How important Job's record became as he was being accused. Like Job, we can't claim sinless lives, but we *can* claim forgiven lives. When we confess our sins to God, he forgives us. Then we can live with clear consciences (1 John 1:9).

Those without hope are stranger to God's covenants.

Ephesians 2:12

Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Before Christ's coming, Gentiles and Jews kept apart from one another. Jews considered Gentiles beyond God's saving power and therefore without hope. Gentiles resented Jewish claims. Christ revealed the total sinfulness of both Jews and Gentiles, and then he offered his salvation to both. Only Christ breaks down the walls of prejudice, reconciles all believers to God, and unifies us in one body

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House
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