

HOPE

Choosing Faith Instead of Fear



Bill Crowder



introduction

Hope

Choosing Faith Instead of Fear

Even the most dedicated follower of Christ is likely to experience moments or seasons of hopelessness. No less a figure than the apostle Paul wrote about being burdened to the point of despairing even of life itself (2 CORINTHIANS 1:8). Yet Paul explained that this happened for a good purpose—so that he would learn to rely on God rather than on himself (v. 9).

The idea of finding hope in despair may sound

self-contradictory. But as Our Daily Bread Ministries Bible teacher **Bill Crowder** points out in the following pages, there is a kind of hopelessness that can actually turn into a real hope for new days, new ways, and a joy that lasts forever.

Mart DeHaan

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one

Hope for Desperate Times

Fear pounded in the hearts of the Israelites. Ahead of them lay the seemingly uncrossable waters of the Red Sea. Behind them the chariots of the armies of the Pharaoh thundered toward them. Their panicked complaint to Moses came in the form of an accusation: "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?" (EXODUS 14:11).

This was desperation, pure and simple. Free for a brief but glorious moment, the Israelites faced the dread of

returning to slavery in Egypt or death by drowning in the Red Sea.

We too live in desperate times. While we may not be literally caught between the unthinkable option of a powerful army or suicidal calamity, life still throws daunting challenges our way that make us feel like we're trapped. Men and women who have served effectively at their jobs for years find themselves out of work and out of options. Young people face a future absent of the opportunities known by their parents and grandparents—their education seemingly wasted as they fill the next coffee order. In many parts of the world, danger abounds—extremists' terror activities on one hand and poverty on the other. Natural disasters inflict inexpressible loss on communities and entire regions.

For such desperate times, hope is the only remedy. But not the flimsy, empty wishes and happy thoughts we often spout when we don't know what to say but want to say something. We need genuine, meaningful, powerful hope. Hope that holds real promise and substance.

No one is immune from these struggles. We all face the same threats: loss of livelihood, life-threatening illnesses, natural disasters, struggles to make relationships work. But how we respond to these desperate times says a great deal. How should followers of Jesus react? What do our reactions say about the significance of our faith to those who observe us? Do they see in us a reason to hope?

The “Hope Vacuum”

During a recent economic downturn, I noticed how communities around the world were affected by dire



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evaluations of an impending global financial crisis. I listened as analysts forecasted troubled times. I felt the emotional weight of problems no one seemed able to solve.

Yet when I was among followers of Christ, I saw that our fears, frustrations, and political polarization mirrored the outlook of the society around us. It was as if our conversations and moods had been scripted by broadcast and Internet financial reports. Our comments and attitudes carried the same fearful, angry

tone as those who do not share our faith. Any evidence of hope seemed conspicuously absent.

This apparent vacuum of hope is not limited to issues of economic instability. Our hopes and dreams can be dangerously eroded by personal loss and anxiety. A watching world might think our faith has been overwhelmed by doubts about the future.

What does such a loss of confidence say about our faith and the hope it brings? Is it possible that our core beliefs in God have been pushed aside by a kind of "Christian atheism"?

If we have placed our faith in Christ, why do we sometimes feel as though our problems have left us without hope? We claim a relationship with a God of

hope, yet we tend to view life from a hopeless perspective.

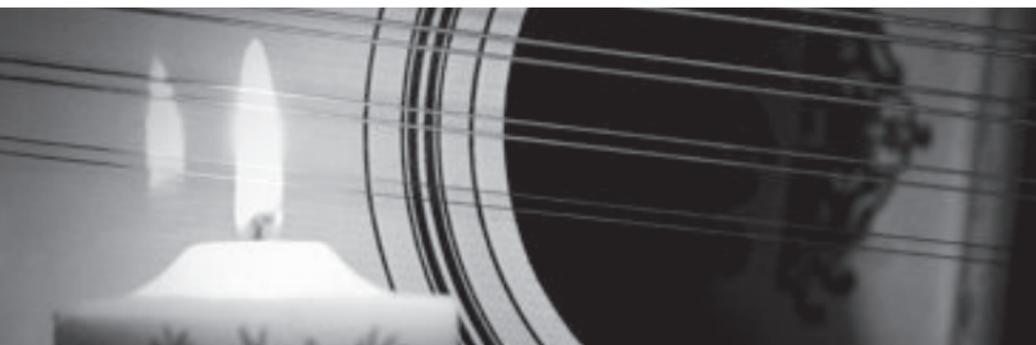
Opposing Views

Friedrich Nietzsche.[➤] said, "Hope is the worst of evils, for it prolongs the torments of man."

Erik Erikson, a 20th-century Danish-American psychologist, had a very different view. He said, "Hope is both the earliest and the most indispensable virtue inherent in the state of being alive. If life is to be sustained, hope must remain, even where confidence is wounded, trust impaired."

So which is it? Is hope a great evil that promotes torment? Or is it as necessary to life as the air we breathe?

➤ Among **Friedrich Nietzsche's** (1844–1900) many contributions to philosophy, he proposed the idea of life-affirmation, which believed in the reality life to the exclusion of the next (the after-life). In contrast, the Bible teaches, "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 CORINTHIANS 4:18). Nietzsche abandoned his faith while studying theology at the University of Bonn.



two

The Meaning of Hope

On **Christmas morning** of 1964, I wanted to find only one gift under the tree—a guitar. That year the Beatles had taken the USA by storm as the vanguard of music's British invasion. Like scores of other young American boys, I wanted to be the next great guitarist. Early that Christmas morning, I ran down the steps to the living room, my eyes searching for something in the shape of a guitar. But there was none. Instead, I found a dictionary.

It is hard to put into words the disappointment I felt. My hopes of future musical greatness had been crushed under the weight of hundreds of pages of definitions.

But my parents proved wise. As I reflect on the disappointment of that Christmas, I realize I have little use for a guitar, but I am constantly dealing with words and their meanings.

Today, few words more desperately need a clear definition than the word *hope*. And not only do we need to understand what real hope *is*, we also need to understand what the hope Christ gives us is *not*.

What Hope Is Not

Far too often, hope is relegated to the level of wishful thinking, a positive approach, or mere optimism. We hear hope used in ways like these: "I sure hope the economy will turn around soon." "Here's hoping that Brazil will win the World Cup." "My doctor hopes that they will get all the cancer."

These statements show the concerns of someone's heart. While this kind of hope isn't wrong, it isn't the hope the Bible offers.

Hope that is reduced to the level of wishes and dreams can be like soap bubbles that look beautiful to the eye but disappear at the slightest touch. As King Solomon said: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick" (PROVERBS 13:12).

↪ *The rest of Solomon's proverb offers hope: "But desire fulfilled is a tree of life." He also said, "Desire realized is sweet to the soul"* (PROVERBS 13:19).

Perhaps this is why Nietzsche reacted so strongly against the concept of hope. Dreams tantalize us and appeal to our heart's desire. But if there is nothing

concrete about them, they guarantee our disappointment and heartache.

Hope must have genuine substance. It must have a firm foundation.

So what is real hope?

What Hope Is

Even dictionary definitions show that hope should be more substantial than mere wishful thinking. One dictionary defines it as “a desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment.”

Hope can be an expectation and anticipation that rests in what we believe. This means that for the child of God, hope can be as strong as what we have learned about God’s goodness and faithfulness. Just as important, it can show the presence of the Spirit of God in our lives.

This is the hope Paul holds out in his letter to the Romans. One of the Bible’s most comprehensive statements on hope is Paul’s crowning comment on the subject in Romans 15: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (v.13).

↪ While **Romans** is Paul’s most theological letter, it is also eminently practical. Paul wrote it for the Christians in Rome because he had been unable to visit them due to pressing ministry needs elsewhere.

This marvelous prayer reveals two significant reasons why hope is such a priority. First, God is “the God of hope.” Our joyful expectation isn’t without foundation. Hope’s foundation is not a theory or a philosophy; it is a

person. Paul wants us to embrace hope as a reality rooted in God Himself, not as something we have to work up in our own strength.

Second, Paul wants us to “abound in hope.” As God’s children, we have been given His Spirit and the powerful hope that comes from Him.

Hope should be a vital characteristic of the follower of Jesus because God is the foundation of hope and because He has given us His Spirit. Genuine hope is one of the greatest distinguishing characteristics between believers and those who do not know Christ. Writing to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul reminded them what life was like before they received their salvation. “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” (EPHESIANS 2:12).

The last phrase is crucial. They had “no hope” because they were “without God in the world.” Those who put their faith in God are the glad possessors of hope. That makes all the difference in how we live. Our challenge is to live in awareness of that hope.

One scholar says that for those who don’t know Jesus, hope is a verb. But for the Christian, hope is also a noun. This is an important distinction. Hope is not simply something we *do*, with teeth gritted and fingers crossed. Hope—joyful expectation—is something we *have*. We possess hope because we know the God who is the source of and the reason for our hope.

True hope is not the equivalent of whistling through graveyards “hoping” everything will turn out. True

hope is dynamic and powerful because it considers the circumstances of life realistically—and then confidently rests in the promises and character of God.

What Real Hope Looks Like

Why is there so much confusion about the true nature of hope? One reason is because hope, like faith and love, looks different in different situations.

In 1 Corinthians 13:13, the apostle Paul wrote, “But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.” These three great pillars of joyful living are all critical, but all three adapt appropriately to changing conditions.

In times of abundance, faith can express trust in God by smiling with grateful humility. In times of loss, it will grieve—but not like people without hope (1 THESSALONIANS 4:13). As it works, faith can express itself through great effort and urgency. At rest, it can relax in the presence of the One who says, “Cease striving and know that I am God” (PSALM 46:10).

Love too is adaptable. To seek the good of others, sometimes it must be gentle and patient. At other times, it must be firm—even tough.

Likewise hope can also flex to fit to various situations. Because it relies on the goodness and faithfulness of God, it has many faces to respond fully to the different experiences of life.

Paul noted that hope is courageous: “Having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech” (2 CORINTHIANS 3:12). He also said that hope is patient: “We give thanks to God always for all of you . . . constantly bearing in mind

your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father" (1 THESSALONIANS 1:2–3).

Hope is expectant: We are "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (TITUS 2:13–14).

The writer of Hebrews viewed hope as a source of stability: "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil" (HEBREWS 6:19). John the disciple added that true hope actually has a purifying effect. "Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 JOHN 3:3).

↗ **The "veil"** refers to the curtain that separated the sanctuary of the temple in Jerusalem from the Holy Place (sometimes called the Holy of Holies). Only the High Priest could enter the Holy Place, and then only on the annual observance of the Day of Atonement. Jesus (the only sinless High Priest) is our "hope" who can freely enter within the veil.

Hope is remarkably versatile. With hope followers of Christ can confidently engage the world. Genuine hope will strengthen us for the wide variety of challenges we face because we see those challenges through the lens of God's character.

So how do we cultivate such a resilient and adaptable hope? And where does it come from?



three

The Source of Hope

The psalmist recognized that God is the source of our hope. He declared, "And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You" (PSALM 39:7).

To understand how the Lord brings that hope into our lives, let's again read what Paul wrote to the Romans. "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (ROMANS 15:4). But how does that give us hope?

"Perseverance"

When Paul wrote about the relationship between perseverance and hope, he was referring to the kind of

patience motivated by seeking the good of others (ROMANS 15:1–3). Christ Himself endured pain on behalf of others to demonstrate the heart and goodness of God (vv. 3, 5–7).

History shows the worthiness of such perseverance. In the late 1700s, a small but growing movement to abolish slavery from the British Empire needed a voice in the British Parliament. The abolitionists pursued a young Member of Parliament named William Wilberforce. His Christian faith proved to be fertile ground for seeking freedom for all.

But the path to abolish slavery did not come easily. The abolitionists faced daunting odds. Repeatedly, Wilberforce introduced bills to abolish the slave trade, only to have those bills resoundingly defeated.

Over time, Wilberforce and his growing team of abolitionists continued to wear down the opposition. It cost him a large part of his fortune and had a debilitating impact on his health. But he persevered.

Finally, on March 25, 1807, the king gave royal assent to the Slave Trade Act—after 20 years of perseverance on the part of William Wilberforce and his colleagues.

Wilberforce and his friends show how perseverance can help us reach a worthy goal. The apostle Paul saw one such goal of perseverance to be hope.

But Paul also saw another relationship between hope and perseverance. In the same letter he wrote:

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven

character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (5:3–5).

Taken together with Romans 15:4, this establishes an important truth. We persevere by hope to realize a worthy goal. Yet at the same time, our perseverance produces hope. As such, hope is both the means of our perseverance and a byproduct of it as we rest in God. We can never fully understand or develop hope without trials, because trials bring about the need for perseverance. In seasons of struggle, perseverance allows us to experience the love of God in new ways. And the hope that it produces will be deeper and greater than anything we could have gained through ease and comfort. In perseverance we can experience:



We can never fully understand or develop hope without trials, because trials bring about the need for perseverance.

Hope and the Grace of God. In the things we are not able to do, God is more than enough. To our inadequacy, God responds with lavish grace. Paul discovered this grace to be greater than any season of suffering. Three times he had asked God for deliverance from a certain trial. He records God's response for us in 2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected

in weakness." To which Paul responded, "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

Hope and the Protection of God. The uncertainties of life can fill our hearts with terror. But when we persevere by faith, we will discover that God is our protection even in the darkest times. Our safety in Christ gives us hope through His power, for followers of Christ are those "who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 PETER 1:5).

The power of God is such a ready source of hope that it caused the psalmist to worship:

But as for me, I shall sing of Your strength;
Yes, I shall joyfully sing of Your lovingkindness in
the morning,
For You have been my stronghold
And a refuge in the day of my distress (PSALM 59:16).

We do not have to approach life with a heart of dread or despair. We can engage life with confident expectation.

Hope and the Provision of God. According to the writer of Hebrews, because Jesus understands our weaknesses and temptations, we are to "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (4:16).

Grace. Protection. Provision. Together they are sources of hope that we don't fully comprehend until we experience them amid conditions that threaten to



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destroy us. Yet looking back we can say with the apostle Paul, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-9).

The reality that Paul expressed is an honest reminder that followers of Christ are not immune from heartaches, turmoil,

challenges, and struggles. We will experience the "many dangers, toils, and snares," but not like those who have no God and no hope. Because of the object of our faith, followers of Christ are people of genuine hope.

Finding Hope in the Stories of the Bible

God's ability to work on our behalf has been repeatedly tested in the lives of men and women just like us. They learned that God could be trusted in the toughest times. The New Testament writer James encourages us to learn from their experiences. "As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord" (JAMES 5:10).

As a youthful shepherd, David showed up at the battlefield[■] when the giant Goliath challenged the armies and God of Israel. First Samuel 17 tells us how David volunteered to face the Philistine champion because God had previously enabled him to protect his father's flock against the attack of a lion and a bear (vv. 34–37). Because

of his experience with God's faithful protection in past confrontations, David had a confident expectation.

♪ Many of David's psalms center on **hope**. In Psalm 39, for instance, David spoke candidly of his frustrations with evil people who opposed him. He kept quiet in the face of their allegations. The pivot point of the psalm comes when he turned to the Lord to find his real hope (v. 7).

In Daniel 3, three young Hebrew captives in Babylon were commanded to dishonor God by bowing before a giant idol. Armed with the remembrance of God's deliverance of them when their convictions were challenged in Daniel 1 and their lives were threatened in Daniel 2, they stood fast. Their past experiences with God prepared them to trust in Him in this challenge as well.

We hear and read these stories so often that they lose their impact. But these were not superheroes with special enabling. They were ordinary people facing the challenges of life.

They faced those challenges with hope because their past experiences with God told them that He was worthy of their trust and confidence. Dread and apprehension turned to confidence and expectation because God had proven Himself faithful.

The Scriptures give us hope because the God described in the Bible is not only their God, He is ours! And He has not changed. He is still "able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (EPHESIANS 3:20).



four

Hope for a Desperate World

One of the characteristics that should distinguish followers of Christ from those who don't know Him is that we should be people of hope. This reality, is at the core of our mission to share Christ with others. We do not merely offer an alternative religion, worldview, or philosophy. We offer hope to a world desperately longing for it.

This is often forgotten. Our mission is not only to share the message of God's forgiveness and the offer of a

relationship with Him, it's also to share the hope that this relationship with God generates.

Perhaps no portion of Scripture better captures this than the words of Peter: "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" (1 PETER 3:15).

▲ In its simplest terms, **sanctify** is understood as "to make holy"; "to consecrate or dedicate." It is something that is set apart for spiritual or religious use.

I've heard this verse taught dozens of times. I've read many commentaries explaining Peter's message. I've even spoken on this text myself. In the majority of these treatments of 1 Peter 3:15, including my own, the emphasis has been misplaced.

The verse is usually taught this way: "As believers, we need to learn how to share our faith. We need to take training classes and workshops.

We must learn strategic passages of Scripture that can succinctly explain the message of the cross. We must do all of these things, because Peter commands us to be always ready to give an answer."

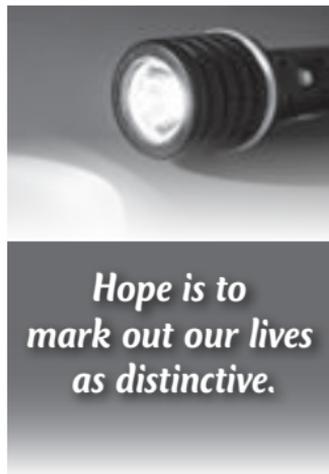
And that is not wrong. We are called by Christ to take the message of the gospel to the farthest corners of the world. We are to share the message of His



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love and forgiveness. But this view of 1 Peter 3:15 is incomplete.

Peter is teaching us that there's a catalyst in an evangelistic opportunity—a trigger. There's something that sets the encounter in motion. And what is it? There's no better trigger to launch an opportunity for sharing our faith than the presence of hope in our lives.



*Hope is to
mark out our lives
as distinctive.*

Taken as a whole, we find a progression that leads to effective outreach—and it requires more than the acquisition of Bible knowledge. What Peter says is that:

- We are to live as a people of hope;
- Hope is to mark out our lives as distinctive;
- People living without hope and enduring a hopeless world will see the difference that hope makes in our lives;
- They will ask us where our hope comes from;
- Then, we can be ready to make our defense.

They will see hope in us and want it too. They will ask for the reason behind our hope. And we will be ready to give them an answer. Unless our lives are characterized by a true, living, confident hope, the distinctive is not seen—and no one ever asks.

We can learn all the verses and techniques. We can be

trained in outreach strategy and theory. We can have a passion for the hearts and lives of people searching for truth. But without the evidence of hope in a hopeless world, we won't show desperate people that we have something different from the despair they already know.

In Christ, we have real hope, not a naive attitude that fails to see the realities of life. At first, the people around us may think it strange—this inexplicable hope that marks our lives as different. But in a world starving for hope, men and women will be drawn to it and to the Christ whose resurrection makes hope possible. Hope and the resurrection are inextricably linked.



five

The Foundation of Hope

The **Power of Christ's Resurrection.** The significance of Christ's resurrection is found in the first letter written by Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 PETER 1:3).

Here, we learn that the indispensable reality from which our hope springs is the truth that Jesus Christ has conquered death on our behalf.

The Bible says this about our ultimate enemy:

- Death is the necessary consequence of our wrongdoings. "The wages of sin is death" (ROMANS 6:23).

- The heartaches of life are like “the valley of the shadow of death” (PSALM 23:4).
- The pains of death are a primary cause for our fears. “My heart is in anguish within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me” (PSALM 55:4).
- Death is the inevitable appointment. “It is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment” (HEBREWS 9:27).

Death is our true, great enemy—one that we cannot defeat on our own. Therefore, Christ came to address the problem of death on our behalf and to give us hope.

This hope of victory over death that Christ brought was so profound that Matthew stirred his first-century readers to remember the ancient prophecy of Isaiah:

“THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED” (MATTHEW 4:16).

From darkness to light. From death to life. Christ, in His death-conquering mission, took the fear and terrors of death and replaced them with hope.

Consider the impact of what Christ’s death and resurrection accomplished. Paul wrote of this extensively in 1 Corinthians 15 by explaining the depth and comprehensiveness of Christ’s resurrection victory. He wrote:

The last enemy that will be abolished is death. . . . But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: “DEATH IS

SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 CORINTHIANS 15:26, 54–57).

Believers in Christ can live and die with hope because our greatest enemy has been conquered. Christ has taken the sting out of death by removing the fear of what happens after we die. Now, we can approach death with real hope—not wishful, cosmetic “hope.”

The Perspective of Personal Resurrection. The hope of the resurrection dramatically alters our perspective in two critical ways.

First, the hope of the resurrection impacts how we view life and death. This is particularly true when we face the grief of losing a loved one to death. The apostle is not so cold or foolish to assume that the child of God need not grieve. Loss is loss! We ache when our relationships are torn from us by that ever-present enemy, death. But in the midst of the pain and loss, Paul reminds us that as followers of Christ we have an advantage. He wrote, “We do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope” (1 THESSALONIANS 4:13).

In the first century, as Christian doctrine took shape, the believers at Thessalonica had questions. And a critical one was this: What happens to our loved ones who die?

Paul's answer in verses 14–18 is that we can be comforted in the promise of a future reunion that will never end. Our

relationships may be interrupted by death here on earth, but this is not the final chapter. We still feel the pain of loss, but it doesn't need to consume us. We sorrow, but not "as do the rest who have no hope."

Christ's victory over death secures a hope that not only gives us confidence as we face death, it also gives us the joyful expectation of reunion in Christ as we struggle with the loss of loved ones. His resurrection gives us hope as we experience the grief and sorrow of the "valley of the shadow of death."

Second, the hope of the resurrection gives vitality to the Christian experience. Our life on earth is not just about what happens while we're here. It's also our preparation for eternity. Paul wrote, "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 CORINTHIANS 15:19).

I have heard it said that following Christ is the greatest life there is—even if there were no heaven. Obviously, Paul disagreed! According to him, if that were true, Christians are people deserving of pity. Why? Because there's nothing to look forward to. We've been duped.

But this isn't all there is. Far from it! If we are to live effectively for Christ in this life, it will be because we have hope in the promise of eternal life. Therefore, this hope that is grounded in Christ's resurrection will shape the way we approach life on earth because it gives us a future perspective.

On a practical level, this means that the resurrection gives us wonderful assurance. Christ who conquered the greatest of our enemies is able to help us face all of life's struggles and challenges.



six

The Hope that Endures

Pearl Buck¹ wrote: "To eat bread without hope is still slowly to starve to death."

But no one needs to starve. When people come to Christ, they receive forgiveness, life, and a relationship with God.

¹ **Pearl S. Buck** (1892–1973) was an American novelist and humanitarian who wrote *The Good Earth* and *A House Divided*. She won both a Pulitzer Prize and a Nobel Prize for literature. Having been raised in China by Presbyterian missionaries, she did much to break down societal racial barriers.

Paul put it this way: "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" (COLOSSIANS 1:27).

It is the hope of glory because we are His and He is ours. In the safety of that relationship, He expresses His hope in us—a hope rooted in the reality of eternal life—so that we can face life in a way that honors Him and helps us.

Consider why He came:

When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (TITUS 3:4–7).

It is God's kindness and love that sent Christ to rescue us from our sin and from ourselves, so that we might have "the hope of eternal life" (v. 7).

That promise can be yours by turning to Christ, confessing your sins and wrongdoings, and accepting the forgiveness He purchased for you—and the hope that comes with it. This is the promise to those . . . "who through



*If you already
know Christ,
how real is His
hope to you?*

Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1 PETER 1:21).

If you already know Christ, how real is His hope to you?

Hope is the wonderful, grace-filled, life-altering reality that enables us to see life through a different window. Hope changes our perspective so dramatically that our entire approach to living will be impacted. Of this, Paul wrote, "For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it" (ROMANS 8:24–25).

There will be times when hope seems elusive, but we can always trust the God of hope. He is there and His mercy toward us endures forever.

Hope Realized, Fear Banished

As the children of Israel cowered in fear at the shores of the Red Sea, Moses told them, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD" (EXODUS 14:13). The rest, of course, is history. God sent a "strong east wind" that sliced a dry pathway through the sea. Israel escaped, and the Egyptian army drowned as they pursued them.



*We can persevere
in the confident
expectation that
we are not alone
or forgotten.
He will never
abandon us.*

Exodus 15 shares the triumphant song of praise to God[▲] for His miraculous deliverance of His people in the face of a seemingly insurmountable problem.

▲ *Moses' song of praise in Exodus 15:1-18 not only recounts God's deliverance but looks forward in **hopeful anticipation** to the conquest of the promised land (vv. 14-17). Hope realized in the present and the past gave even deeper meaning to hope for the future.*

In the face of life's most difficult circumstances and greatest tragedies, we can trust the Lord. We can persevere in the confident expectation that we are not alone or forgotten. He will never abandon us.

Christ is risen! The God of hope is the One we call our heavenly Father! ☀



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