

HOPE FOR THE NEW YEAR

Devotional | January 1, 2023

GRACE
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Discuss: How would you describe your hope in Christ to a non-Christian?

Key Text: *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”*
(Hebrews 10:23)

Victor Frankl was a brilliant psychiatrist and observer of human nature. Frankl was a Jewish survivor of the German concentration camps. As a prisoner living for many months constantly on the edge between life and death, he witnessed time and again the essential human need for meaning and hope. He noted that survival in the camps wasn't as dependent on physical strength as it was on the possession of a deeply felt reason to live. He observed that prisoners usually died if they lost hope and had no purpose for carrying on.

Corrie ten Boom also lived through the unspeakably brutal life of a Nazi concentration camp – a place where hope was lost for most people. She survived to tell her story of unfaltering faith and resolute hope in God. She saw the face of evil up close and personal, eye-witnessing some of the most inhumane acts a human can do to another human. And when she came out of it all, she said this: “If you look at the world, you'll be distressed; if you look within, you'll be depressed; but if you look at Jesus Christ, you'll be at rest.”

The biblical concept of hope is much more than blind optimism or wishful thinking. Biblical hope is the confident expectation that God will fulfill His promises and take what is painful and mysterious and turn it ultimately into eternal good. To be a hopeful Christian is to acknowledge the reality of trouble today, but also to recognize that God is in control, to know that He is at work, and to be assured that He has good purposes in all that He sends or allows. Our key text for today's lesson (Hebrews 10:23) reminds us that when our hope clings onto Jesus, we can have the confidence and strength we need to make it through whatever comes our way. Everyone needs this kind of hope – especially as we face a new year with all the blessings, challenges, and mysteries it is sure to bring. The Bible points us to three sources of hope, all three of which are available right now.

1. We find hope in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13 says, *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”* Paul is praying that as we trust in God, our faith will bring joy and peace so we can abound with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. What a wonderful prayer to pray for one another!

There is no hope without God in our lives through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 2:12 says, *“You were at that time separated from Christ...having no hope and without God in the world.”* But hope that is rooted in God provides the Holy Spirit-empowered inspiration and motivation to live the Christian life even in the face of difficulty and suffering.

Discuss: What key words and phrases about hope stand out to you in these verses: Job 13:15; Psalm 42:5; 2 Corinthians 1:10?

2. We find hope in the power of God's Word.

Romans 15:4 says, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Paul says here one of the reasons God gave us the Bible is to bring encouragement and hope to our lives. God's Word nourishes our hope and provides strength for us to endure whatever we may face in life. Scripture does this by helping us look at circumstances from God's perspective which reassures us of His love and care and causes us to lift our eyes to a higher hope than anything the world can offer. Simply put, the more you read the Bible the stronger your faith, hope, and patience will grow. Other books may inform you, but only the Bible can transform you.

Discuss: According to these verses, in what ways does the Bible benefit us: Psalm 19:7-8, 11; John 8:32; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12?

3. We find hope in the promise of Christ's return.

1 John 3:2-3 says, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." We are currently living between the two comings of Christ: His first coming which occurred at His birth in Bethlehem, and His second coming which will occur soon. As Christians, we are to look back at the manger, the cross, and the empty tomb, and we are to look forward to Jesus' return, our own personal resurrection, our home in heaven, and our joyful reunion with our saved loved ones.

For now, our bodies are a spiritual battleground – sin and our struggle against it take a toll on us. But Jesus' return means having a body like that of our risen Lord. We will no longer be subject to disease or death. Jesus' return will also signal the final defeat of Satan. The war that has been raging since the Garden of Eden will finally come to an end. Satan and all his followers will finally be judged and sent to their eternal punishment. Jesus' return will ultimately usher in a new heavens and a new earth (Revelation 21-22). No wonder the return of Jesus is called "a blessed hope" (Titus 2:13)! Knowing that Christ may return at any moment gives us hope for now and forever!

Discuss: One of the ways God describes how wonderful heaven will be is to list things that will not be present there. According to these verses, what will be missing from heaven: Revelation 21:4, 22-23, 25; 22:3?

Discuss: What words and phrases in these verses are used to describe our hope: Romans 8:24; Colossians 1:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 Peter 1:3; Hebrews 6:19;

For Further Study:

Free online commentary on the Bible at www.enduringword.com

"What does the Bible Say about Hope?" article at www.gotquestions.org

Questions and answers about heaven, hell, and eternity at www.gotquestions.org