

## Living with Hope

There are three essential virtues in life and one of them is hope. The apostle Paul said, “...*now these three remain: faith, hope and love*” (1 Corinthians 13:13 NIV). We know that the greatest is love, but we have to recognize that living with hope is crucial for a healthy living.

- **HOPING IS NOT WISHING**

For some reason, many people have replaced the meaning of hope with the meaning of wishing. Unfortunately, many times we use wishing and hoping as synonyms and we confuse these terms when speaking about things we would like to happen or not happen. But hope, in the biblical sense, is something quite different from a wish. Wishing is not bad; it has its place, but it is too weak and too unquenchable to give us the peace and confidence that result from the hope that is ours as God’s people.

In the article “*Hoping Versus Wishing*,” Tonya Sheridan says, “There is a difference between hoping and wishing. A wish is something that you desire to come true, but it has no basis in reality. It’s passive and can lead to frustration and even depression. Hoping, on the other hand, is having a desire with real expectation.”

Personally, I have come to know that wishful thinking is not sufficient to keep us from despair when circumstances are grim. Wishing is often characterized by a sense of exasperation (we even use the expression, *I can’t wait*, when we wish for something very badly). Hoping is different; it is distinguished by endurance (waiting patiently). Biblical hope is a thing of substance and not mere wishful thinking. Wishing can never replace biblical hope. Wishing is founded in mere desires, but biblical hope is grounded in faith; it has substance and it anticipates.

For example, I may want a great result in an exam. *Hoping* for that great result is within reason when it’s based on the truth that I’ve paid attention in class, studied hard and prepared for the exam. If I haven’t done the required work, then the best I can do is “*wish*” for a good result because, let’s face it, the odds are against me. What I am trying to say is that often we see wishing being akin to magic and luck. Biblical ‘hope’ is based not on the work we do, but on the person and character of God. From a biblical perspective, hope is established on who God is and the work God is doing.

As Christians we not only wish, but we hope for a better and brighter future. We hope for that day where there will be no more pain and suffering, and all hostilities will disappear. And the reason we hope for that day is not only because we are investing time, energy and passion toward making things happen; but, we can hope for it with certainty because we know that God has promised that “*He will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain... [God himself will make] all things new.*” And [his] words are faithful and true” (Revelation 21:4-5 NIV).

We can confidently walk through “*the darkest valley*” and say in the midst of difficult circumstances, “*this too shall pass,*” not because we are strong and determined people, but because we know and have the conviction that “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*” (**Psalm 46:1 NRSV**).

- **PUTTING OUR HOPES IN GOD PROTECTS US FROM THOSE THINGS THAT DESTROY HOPE**

I really like the different themes that we focus on throughout the Advent season, but I love to talk about hope, because we are living in an era where ‘hope’ is not common. We are witnesses of the fact that hopelessness is one of the feelings affecting most people in our times. Hope seems to have a very short life when we lack health and work, when we feel cornered by people and situations that harm us, or when we feel alone and do not know which way to go. So, this is the reason why I think it is important to understand the biblical meaning of hope.

As human beings, we put our hopes in our spouses, family, friends, ministers, politicians, etc. King David knowing our inclination to establish our hope on sinking ground wrote, “*I put my hope in you*” (**Psalm 39:7 GNT**). When we put our hope in God, we are protecting ourselves from the problems that destroy hope. I want you to ponder on the lyrics of the wonderful song David wrote,

*I put all my hope in the Lord. He leaned down to me; he listened to my cry for help. He lifted me out of the pit of death, out of the mud and filth, and set my feet on solid rock. He steadied my legs. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise for our God... Psalm 40:1-3 Common English Bible.*

A beautiful song, isn't it? Well, David wrote this psalm in one of the worst moments of his life. David was facing a critical situation. The king had more enemies than hairs on his head, and David was not bold. There were people trying to kill David, but in the midst of uncertainty and despair, David made the best decision: ***He put all his hope in the Lord and thus found the proper rest for his soul and got the strength to continue in life.***

When we put our hope in God, we can do what the Apostle Paul did when he said, “*...we also glory in our sufferings.*” **Romans 5:3 RVC**

The best decision we can make is to put our hope in God, because when we put our hope in God our spirits remain fresh and optimistic despite the circumstances.

- **HOPE GOES BEYOND THE NOW AND PAST OUR PREFERRED OUTCOMES**

Now, there is a problem. Many people who claim to put their hope in Christ focus only in the short term. There are people who have hope in this life only. There are Christians who only care about what Christ can do for them while living on this earth. Such Christians only seek God's hand and are not interested at all in seeking God's face. Paul said, “*If our hope in Christ is good for this life only and no more, then we deserve more pity than anyone else in all the world*” (**1 Corinthians 15:19 GNT**).

If we just look at things with a short-term mentality, we will deprive ourselves of what it truly means to put our hope in God. We cannot put our hope in God and also have a short-term mentality. When we put our hope in God, we know that sooner or later we will experience liberation and justice.

In this life or in eternity, God will bring rest and deliverance to our souls. Biblical hope is not bound to your timetable. It expects God to work without imposing a time limit or our predetermined positive results. Biblical hope is nothing more than trusting one's ultimate outcome to God. Believing him to love us. It is waiting in God, putting our expectations in God.

Once, I came across the story of a believer who for many years suffered a long illness. While living the terminal stage of the sickness this man wrote, "All these years I wished for a miracle from God. In me, never died the desire that God would heal me. People may think that the only thing I am taking with me is my crushed aspirations, but the truth is that over the years I have learned the true meaning of hope and faith. Even when my desires of being physically healed have not been fulfilled, my faith has convinced me that there is more than one way to experience supernatural healing. I have learned that my desires only focused on the short term. God has chosen not to take away from me this mortal disease, but I hope and wait with certainty for the day when I will be free from this agony. God has not taken my disease away, but He is taking me to a place far away from suffering."

- **SCRIPTURE IS OUR SOURCE OF HOPE**

I know that for many, the waiting time produces impatience, and this goes against the hope we place in God. Experiencing discouragement and hopelessness by the delay of the promise is something human and natural. The Bible says, "*Hope deferred makes the heart sick*" (**Proverbs 13:12**). I want you to know that God does not remain idle while you wait. In most cases, God uses that waiting time to form eternal values in each of us.

Here is a practical advice that will help you maintain hope at a high level when the waiting time seems too long. Our hope comes from God's Word. Our hope must be based on the promises God has given his people. The best way to keep our hope at a healthy level is meeting with God's promises face to face every day. This means that we have to study the Bible because, "*everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.*" **Romans 15:4 NIV**

God comforts us through the study of His Word. God encourages us to wait patiently through the scriptures. The best way to deal with our frustrations is remembering what God has done for us. It is putting ourselves in physical contact with his promises. The Bible is God's book of promises.

*Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.* **Hebrews 10:23 NLT**

*May your constant love be with us, Lord, as we put our hope in you. Psalm 33:22 GNT*

Where are we putting our hope? Are we placing it in ourselves, money, work, etc. or in the person and work of Jesus Christ? These are questions that can help you find the true meaning of Christian hope. We don't put our hope in God because we want to fulfill our personal desires; rather, we hope in God because He only can redeem us completely and take us on the roads of his word and his will. May God help us to find in Him our only hope! May God help us to be the people who proclaim, "My Hope Is in You."