



Food for Thought: My Hope was in You!

Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in you
~Psalm 39:7 NKJV

For the past couple of months, I have been fixated on writing about putting your faith in God and turning over your life to Him. I never fully understand why God puts a particular topic on my heart to write about, I just try to remain faithful to His wishes and write on what I think He wants me to. I know that someplace there is somebody who needs to hear that message. Problem is, I never know who or where that individual is. Recently, I figured out why I was writing on those topics. He didn't intend those lessons for somebody else, He intended those lesson for me – because although it didn't know it at the time, I was going to need them!

Let me back up a bit. I just finished a rough couple of weeks that culminated in my having a couple of heart procedures and a pair of stents placed in my arteries. This wasn't my first time dealing with my heart illness nor was it the first time I have faced death. I have always considered myself to be one of the fortunate ones who listens to their body and tries to do what God is telling me to do even in the midst of serious trouble like then. It is only by His grace that I have survived my heart attacks and multiple heart procedures. I also know that by all rights, I probably shouldn't have survived this episode either. I guess that that old adage – 'Be patient, *God isn't finished with you yet*', holds true. Apparently, He has things left for me to do.

But this time, it was different. I didn't have any of the regular warning signs or symptoms. This one snuck up on me disguised as acid reflux with some pressure on my chest and shortness of breath. The real problems didn't start until the next day when my cardiac enzymes went through the roof. I didn't know how bad it was until I was in the operating room and I heard the doctor say that my circumflex artery was about 90% blocked. The plumbing was stopped up. She ballooned open the arteries and placed a stent to keep it open. But it didn't last, the artery closed almost immediately and the worst began to happen – I started having that heart attack that I feared would come along with some other major problems that culminated in another procedure the next day.

As massive and as devastating as this event was, I really didn't have any of the anxiety or fear that I have had during other procedures. Which was strange. Because of the COVID outbreak, the hospital didn't allow any visitors, and except for the nurses and doctors, I was completely alone. As my wife will tell you, I don't do alone very well. During my first heart attack, even though my wife was there, I felt very alone until I found God in the process of being healed. This time, even without the physical support of my wife and friends, I had God and the support of my Church family in the background and what a difference it made.

This time, I had hope and the peace of God holding me up. And that wasn't just a wonderful thing, it was a life-giving thing! This time, I was surrounded by people who filled me with hope, joy, and the peace of believing that was charged with the power of the Holy Spirit, so my faith remained strong. They spoke the Word over me, encouraged me, prayed for me, prayed over me, and made sure that I knew in no under no certain terms, that God knew my name because He heard my name often.

This time, I knew without a shadow of a doubt that God would never abandon me, and that gave me peace. John 14, where Jesus is comforting his disciples and tells them *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid"* kept running through my head.

Never once did I worry, my hope was in Christ, and I was looking forward to the things that He has promised. I knew, with every fiber of my body that those promises would be fulfilled. I think that is what change my outlook on all of this. I believed that the impossible could occur even if the facts say otherwise. I went in expecting to have a by-pass and ended up with just a couple of stents. Even with all the problems that developed during this event, God was there to reassure me so that I only sustained a small amount of damage to my heart. I heard His voice comforting me, and that filled me with hope that things were going to work out.

Hope is a wonderful thing – and for me, it was a life-giving thing. Hope is why kids look for gifts under the Christmas tree even when times are hard and finances tight. Hope makes people reach out for the joys of life. And hope held me in its hand through this whole process.

I am sure that all of us know what it is like to lose hope. Most of us have lost hope at some point. Maybe it was our favorite sports team that got so far behind in points that there was not hope in them winning. Or maybe it was a little more serious. Maybe there was time when you were without a job with financial issues looming on the horizon. Or, just maybe it was a health issue like mine, and you thought there was no hope either for you or your loved one.

During those times, most of us just want to take the advice of Job's wife, who told Job to "Curse God and die". (Job 2:9 NIV) But we should never give up hope, because as Christians, our life is essentially a life that is full of hope. We are the children of God. As the Psalmist said, "Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in you." (Psalm 39:7 NKJV)

When you place your hope in God, your outlook on life changes and that makes you want to experience life to its fullest. It supports us through the tough times and calms our anxieties. I don't know if this episode is over yet – I have the feeling it isn't – but my hope in Him is stronger than ever. It was a strong and trustworthy anchor for my soul while I went through this event, and I know it will hold me whatever comes next. The Bible tells us that 'We have is hope to connect us with God himself behind the sacred curtains of Heaven.' (Hebrews 6:19)

So, ask God to fill you His hope. Believe in the promises that you read in the Bible and rejoice in the fact that He will always fulfill them. Then you will become another living example of what the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 71:14. "*..you will hope continually and praise Him more and more*" because you too will know that His promises are true and that His grace is real.

Just some Food for Thought