

HOPE

Now faith is the
substance of
things hoped for, the
evidence of
things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

**Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.
The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures**

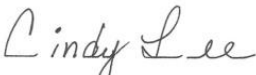
These words penned in 1779 by John Newton, as part of the hymn “Amazing Grace”, give us a very real vision of “Hope”.

In this day and age, hope is something that seems to be fleeting. Once again, in everything, I have been led to write about a topic that, while wanting to share my thoughts, has also inspired me to look at my own life.

Each of us has been at a place where hopelessness seems to take over, ravaging our minds and hearts. To dig in its heels and drag us down. Through scripture, we can be lifted from that quicksand and know that “grace will lead me home”.

My hope is that the four messages of hope contained in the little tome will help you to know that “He will your Shield and Portion be as long as life endures”.”

May you be blessed with hope eternal.



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Hope vs Hopelessness

Over the past few weeks, time and time again, I have heard the word “hopeless” used to describe many situations. People have become hopeless on many levels. It especially saddens my heart when a young person says that they feel hopeless.

In my seemingly never-ending quest for scriptural guidance, I decided to see what the bible had to say about “hopelessness”. So, I went to one of my favorite tools, biblegateway.com and did a word search in the King James Bible* for just that word, hopeless. It turned up 0 (zero) matches. Then I put the word “hope” in and searched. I got 133 results. Hmmmm...what does that tell you?

The first scripture to use the word “hope” is in the book of Ruth. Within Ruth 1:11-13 to be exact.

And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.

Let me put this into context. Naomi, her husband and 2 sons set off to Moab from Bethlehem in Judah. While there, both sons married. In this foreign country, Naomi’s husband and both of her sons died. She was left with her two daughters-in-law. As women without husbands, they would have been “hopeless”. Widows in that time were pretty much nothing without a man. Naomi thus travels back to Bethlehem with her “daughters” from another region. Naomi is telling her two daughters-in law, Ruth and Orpah, to go back to their own homes and find a new husband. In her own way, Naomi is telling them that there is no hope (hopeless) for her to have another son and if she did, what were they going to do? Wait around until they were old enough to be their husbands? No, she wanted them to go where they would have hope to find another to marry.

Ruth, however, refuses to go and stays with Naomi. As you continue reading in Ruth, the Lord has not forgotten them, and they are blessed by what happens in Bethlehem. (Read all of Ruth to see what happened!)

Naomi had felt that the Lord “*is gone out against me*”. She felt hopeless. As things play out she finds that, through Ruth, she is blessed and, in the end, has much to praise the Lord for.

This is only the first appearance of the word “hope” and, in this case, it actually equates to “hopeless”.

Now, look at your life. Have there been times when you felt hopeless and then you are blessed in a way that you never thought? In my life, it has happened often. Because even if we have given up hope, God has not.

Unfortunately, there are too many people out there who do not know the love of God. They don’t know the simple truth of salvation. It is up to us to share our stories with them. You don’t have to “get in their face” with scriptures and sermons, all you need to do is to tell them how you felt hopeless and how that was turned into hope. Then tell them that all your hope comes from God. It’s a way to “back” into a conversation that ends with God as the superhero.

List here some of the hope you found in a hopeless situation.

Hope = Happiness

Continuing with the topic of “Hope”, of the 133 times hope comes up in the King James version, Psalms has it mentioned 26 times, the most of any book of the Bible. The very last verse listed says it all....

*Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help,
whose hope is in the Lord his God: Psalm 146:5*

Before the birth of Jesus, God was only known as one entity. He is referred to here as “the God of Jacob”. “*Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help*”

Happiness seems to be a fleeting thing in our lives. We suffer through losses, crises, diseases, disasters and disappointments. We are appalled, angry, disheartened and disillusioned on a regular basis. The world around us seems to overcome our senses and emotions. In this day of global news bombarding us on every side, how do you find any happiness at all? Every little crumb of happiness is stripped away. Or, so it may feel.

True happiness does not come from the world, but from the heart. A heart “*whose hope is in the Lord his God*”.

Well, how the heck to do you that? We do one of the toughest things there is to do, trust in the Lord. (FYI: Trust is mentioned 188 times in the NKJ)

*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto
thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge
him, and he shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3:5-6*

This is, for me personally, a very difficult, if not the most difficult, thing to do. You see, I am the kind of person who wants to be in charge and know the answers to life’s dilemmas. However, when a situation presents itself, if I say to myself, “God, you are in charge and I know you know what you are doing.” the next step comes easier. The next step is to give whatever it is, to God.

Here is the problem I deal with constantly in doing that. I give it to God and then I take it back. Then I give it to God and take it back again. It's like a mental spiritual tug of war. Why? Because I am human. And, what's more, so are you.

None of the tug of war means you or I are any less as a Christian. But, through the years, the tug of war has decreased dramatically. And, with that decrease, my happiness has increased. I have seen how God has worked in my life and it is so much easier to hope and trust in Him because of it.

David, the author of the Psalms, had to continue to remind himself of that hope and the happiness it brings. Sort of like talking to himself.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. Psalm 42:5

We are not born with hope, we acquire it. Through the trials you have faced, can you see where God was working? That is the "evidence" we need to see that our hopes are not in vein.

Take a few minutes today and think about the happiness you can have. Trust in the hope that God is with you and He has a plan. (He just may not have shared it with you yet!) You can be assured, when it is revealed, you will know it! "Don't worry, be happy!" Talk to yourself and remind yourself that God is in control

If you were giving yourself a talking to, what would you say?

Hope Brings Blessings

This is the third part. This time, I am addressing the blessings we can have when we “Hope in the Lord”.

Easter has just past as I write and, as Christians, we celebrated the resurrection of Christ. That resurrection is what gives us hope. And, with it the blessing of knowing that we have eternal life through Christ. Not just that we have eternal life, but that we have Christ with us every day through the Holy Spirit. Trusting Him in all things.

As hard as it can be sometimes, every day we are blessed in some way. On social media, I have seen several posts that mention being blessed in that just waking up is a blessing. Each day presents itself with an opportunity to be blessed and to be a blessing.

Trusting that God has a plan and looking for the “light” in the darkness of daily life can be daunting. Sometimes waking up doesn’t feel like a blessing. Especially when just hiding under the covers feels like the best way to deal with the day. (I’ve been there.) It takes real effort to see anything that even slightly resembles a blessing. Yet, if you look, you will find it. Even if all you do is chuckle at a silly commercial on television, that little chuckle is the light peeping through the closed drapes of your heart.

Jeremiah likens the blessing and hope of trusting in the Lord to a tree that will not “*cease from yielding fruit*”

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

We are having warm days, but this year winter felt like it was never going to be over. At least here in the Northeast. Yet, we trusted that it would be. We can’t stop the seasons changing at their own pace just as we can’t stop the flow of God’s blessings to us. We can turn away from them, but they can’t be stopped. Neither seasons or God.

Our only recourse is to embrace the seasons of the earth as well as the seasons of our hearts. As you look for the signs of spring, look also for the blessings in your life. They may seem to never come, but if you look hard enough, they are there.

When all hope seems lost, remember that God sent us a comforter, the Holy Spirit. That as we go through our daily strife (tribulation) we gain patience, experience and hope.

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.
Romans 5:3-5

As the Holy Spirit is with you during your darkest day, know that the Lord will bring you through it and that all hope is not lost. You will see the blessings your hope brings.

May you see every blessing the Lord has provided,

List here some of the blessings, no matter how small, you have seen of felt in the past few days / weeks.

The Mystery Revealed

In this last part regarding hope, I'd like to dispel the mystery that it seems to be.

Hope is something internal, it is something felt and not seen. It is the knowledge that “*all things work together for good to them that love God*...*”.

When you look at the Gospels, you know that hope is not a mystery. The mystery of eternal life and salvation were revealed through Jesus Christ. Not just that he lived, but by his death and resurrection.

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

Romans 16:25-26

But let's be real. We are humans living in a world of material things. Things that we must have to survive. Food, clothing, shelter. Our hope is that we are able to be provided with these things. Through whatever means necessary. Yet, we tend to forget that we will be provided for. We forget that God knows of our needs before we even need them.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. . Matthew 6:7-8

We are all guilty of that “forgetting”. I know I am. Worry and anxiety takes hold and I become distraught, sometime to the point of disfunction. Then I remember the passage above and my hope returns. My worry fades away as I take a deep breath and say to myself “God is in control”. Not an easy thing given my propensity to having Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

More than our daily needs though, the mystery God revealed through Christ, gives us eternal life. Knowing I will again be reunited with those who have gone on before. Knowing that one day I will open my eyes in Glory with no pain, or heartache: no tears, or illness.

Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom which is Christ in you, the hope of glory God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles;:

Colossians 1:26-27

“which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” ... You can personalize that by saying “Christ in me”. When you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, he dwells within you. And, with that indwelling, is your hope.

Hope is not a mystery. Hope is alive through Jesus. Hope can be alive in you because of Jesus. All you must do is open your heart to Him. If you have never accepted Jesus as your savior, perhaps it is time that you do. Perhaps it is time for you to look at where your hope comes from.

Read this excerpt from “*You Can Get Through It*” to see just how easy it is to have that hope.

Salvation is available for all of us. The road to salvation is already mapped out for us and it starts with the A, B, C's.

A – Admit that you are a sinner

B – Believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the savior

C – Confess that Jesus Christ is Lord

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved...For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Romans 10:9, 13

We do not receive salvation through anything we can do but only through the grace that was given to us through Christ.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, ... who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 2 Timothy 1:8a & 9

How is this salvation received? Through a conversation with God. That may sound a little odd or intimidating, it is not. No eloquent words need to be spoken, no religious doctrine must be quoted, just the bowing of your head and the opening of your heart.

Dear Father, I ADMIT that I am a sinner and a broken human being. I BELIEVE in my heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. I CONFESS with my mouth that Jesus is Lord and ask you to come into my heart and save me from eternal death. Amen.

No, I am not a biblical scholar, nor am I a wise and learned theologian. What I am is a Christian who believes that salvation is our only hope to eternal life.

May these words, that I've been guided by God to write, bring you a new hope.

My words of Hope...

**When life is beating you up, and
you don't know where to turn,
connect to the Light of Christ.**

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying,



*I am the light of the world: he that
followeth me shall not walk in
Darkness but shall have
he light of life.
John 8:12 (KJV)*

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