

A Powerful Principle: Hope in God

Do you find yourself from time to time in the 'slough of despond' like Christian in Pilgrim's Progress ([Read about Christian's encounter & rescue!](#)) or like Jeremiah who declared "My strength has perished and so has my HOPE from the LORD" (Lam 3:18-note) or like Job who declared "'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle [picture of quickness figuratively depicting the brevity of human life] and come to an end without HOPE" (Job 7:6-note)? We have all been there, haven't we? But the GOOD BOOK offers us a "GOOD HOPE BY GRACE" (2Th 2:16-note), giving us His Good Word for what to do when we feel HOPELESS or in despair. In Ps 42:4, the psalmist had lost his joy which led to the Spirit inspired, soul reviving principle recorded in Psalm 42:5-note: "Why are you in DESPAIR (cast down, depressed), O my soul? And why have you become DISTURBED (groaning, in turmoil) within me?" Then the psalmist reveals the powerful principle for reviving a downcast soul - "HOPE IN GOD, for I shall again praise Him for the **HELP** (Hebrew = **yeshua** = Savior ~ Jesus!) of His presence."

But what does the psalmist mean when he commands himself to "hope"? **Hope** is the Hebrew word **yahal/yachal** which means to wait, to rest in expectation, to remain stationary until the arrival of some PERSON or EVENT. For believers the PERSON is Jesus our HOPE (1Ti 1:1-note) and the EVENT is His Second Coming (Titus 2:13-note) which includes the consummation of our salvation and our "adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (glorification - Ro 8:23-note). And so HOPE is not hype but is a very real and ever present invitation to look ahead eagerly and with confident expectation that the best is yet to come.

Corrie Ten Boom said it this way "Look around and be distressed. Look inside and be depressed. Look at Jesus (our Hope) and be at rest." Indeed we must continually fix our eyes on Jesus (Heb 12:2-note), for outside of Him, there is no hope! We need to recall that Jesus understands what we are experiencing for He Himself said "My soul is **DEEPLY GRIEVED** (in Lxx same Greek word "perilupos" used to translate "despair" in Ps 42:5) to the point of death," (Mt 26:38-note) and thus He is able to "sympathize with our weaknesses." (Heb 4:15-note). **Spurgeon** comments that "As when on the pinnacle of the temple the Savior felt the fear of falling, so when in the garden he felt a sinking of soul, an awful despondency, and he began to be very heavy." Indeed, "since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is ever able to come to the aid of those who are being tempted." (Heb 2:18-note).

As **John Piper** says "we must fight the fight of faith (1Ti 1:18-note, note; 1Ti 6:12-note, 2Ti 4:7-note). We must PREACH to our SOULS a sermon of hope...We must set before our own soul the banquet of promises that God has made to us and feed our faith to the full (Ro 10:17-note, Mt 4:4, 1Pe 2:2-note). Then it may be said of us as it was of Stephen and Barnabas: "They were filled with faith and with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 6:5-note, Acts 11:24-note; note) (**Ed**: Recall that what "fills" us controls us! Ep 5:18-note. **See Also** ["Filled with the Spirit/Richly Indwelt by the Word"](#)).

"THE BEST CURE FOR DESPONDENCY"

"Brethren beloved by God" (1Th 1:4-note), **are you cast down and discouraged?** You may not be able to change your circumstances, but you can still (enabled by the indwelling Spirit) choose to **Hope in God**. The great preacher **C H Spurgeon** was subject to frequent bouts of dark depression and so could testify from his own experience that **"HOPE IN GOD is the BEST CURE for DESPONDENCY"**. When you have no hope in yourself, nor in your graces, nor in your experience, "hope in God." He is loving, faithful, powerful and true, so "hope in God."....If you cannot do anything else, yet HOPE. The New Zealanders call HOPE "*the swimming thought*," because when everything else is drowned, up comes HOPE at the top of the wave. You cannot drown HOPE! Snatch from the altars of the FUTURE, firebrands (pieces of burning wood) with which to kindle the altar of TODAY."

Note in Ps 42:5 how our choice to HOPE precedes and invigorates our desire to PRAISE. When we preach to our soul the truth of His "saving help," this promise of His presence for perpetuity lifts our soul so that we are enabled to respond with praise to Jesus. As Spurgeon affirmed "I am not always going to be low. I have hung the harp upon the willows, but I have not broken its strings. I shall take it down again. "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." If He does but look upon us. If He does but have pity upon us, let us be content with that, and abide His time." And so when we find ourselves in the "slough of despond," feeling downcast and without hope, remember that our Faithful God always provides the way of escape (1Cor 10:13-note), which in this case is to preach to your soul "Hope in God." "As old Master Trapp says, "David tries to talk David out of the dumps; and he does well." Here were two Davids....David that was down and David that was up, and David draws David up. So you, too, if you are a little low tonight, should let your better, godlier self talk to yourself." (Spurgeon)

Remember that the psalmist's command to HOPE does not mean, cross your fingers & hope it comes to pass. It does not mean, God might work for you. Instead, to HOPE means to be confident that God will surely cause all things to work together for your good and His glory (Ro 8:28-note)! Be strong in God and His promises! Preach to your soul this sermon about the full assurance of hope (Heb 6:11-note), an absolute assurance of a future good from God. If this were just a pious optimism that "everything will turn out all right," it would be an utterly worthless sentiment. What makes the command to HOPE IN GOD valid is that it is based on the promise

of the “non-lying” God (Titus 1:2-note, Nu 23:19-note) that His people “shall behold His face in righteousness.... (and) be satisfied with (His) likeness when (we) awake.” (Ps 17:15-note, cf Rev 22:4-note). Even Job (below) testified “after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see Him for myself. Yes, I will see Him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!” (Job 19:26-27NLT)

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH'S EXPERIENCE WITH DESPAIR

In **Lamentations**, **Jeremiah** looked around at Jerusalem and the Temple in utter ruins and not surprisingly found his “soul bowed down within” (Lam 3:20-note; note). And although Jeremiah does not directly quote Ps 42, it is clear that he practiced the powerful principle portrayed in that psalm, the principle of “**Hope in God**”, writing “This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope.” (Lam 3:21-note; note; note; note) Then Jeremiah explains what he recalled to his mind, testifying that “The LORD’S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness.” (Lam 3:22-23-note) He goes on to “quote” his own soul affirming that “The LORD is my portion. Therefore I have **HOPE IN HIM** (“Hope in God”). The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him. It is good that he **WAITS** silently for the salvation of the LORD.” (Lam 3:24-26-note; note; note; note; note; note; [An Entire Book-note-pt 1](#); [note-pt 2](#); [note-Table of Contents](#)).

Spurgeon’s devotional from **Morning and Evening** gives us godly wisdom on how to apply Lamentations...

ROLE OF RECALL IN RESTORATION OF HOPE

Lamentations 3:21 Devotional - Memory is frequently the bond slave of despondency. Despairing minds call to remembrance every dark foreboding in the past, and dilate upon (describe in detail) every gloomy feature in the present; thus memory, clothed in sackcloth, presents to the mind a cup of mingled gall and wormwood. There is, however, no necessity for this.

Wisdom can readily transform memory into an angel of comfort. That same recollection which in its left hand brings so many gloomy omens, may be trained to bear in its right a wealth of hopeful signs. She need not wear a crown of iron, she may encircle her brow with a fillet of gold, all spangled with stars.

Thus it was in Jeremiah’s experience: in the previous verse (Lam 3:20-note; note) memory had brought him to deep humiliation of soul: “**My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me;**” and now this same memory restored him to life and comfort. “**This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.**” Like a two-edged sword, his memory first killed his pride with one edge, and then slew his despair with the other.

As a general principle, if we would exercise our memories more wisely, we might, in our very darkest distress, strike a match which would instantaneously kindle the lamp of comfort.

There is no need for God to create a new thing upon the earth in order to restore believers to joy; if they would prayerfully rake the ashes of the past, they would find light for the present; and if they would turn to the book of truth and the throne of grace, their candle would soon shine as aforetime. Be it ours to remember the lovingkindness of the Lord, and to rehearse his deeds of grace. Let us open the volume of recollection which is so richly illuminated with memorials of mercy, and we shall soon be happy.

Thus memory may be, as Coleridge calls it, “the bosom-spring of joy,” and when the Divine Comforter bends it to His service, it may be chief among earthly comforters.

Lamentations 3:24 Devotional - It is not “**The Lord is partly my portion,**” nor “**The Lord is in my portion**”; but He Himself makes up the sum total of my soul’s inheritance. Within the circumference of that circle lies all that we possess or desire. The Lord is my portion. Not His grace merely, nor His love, nor His covenant, but Jehovah Himself! He has chosen us for His portion, and (by His great grace) we have chosen Him for ours. It is true that the Lord must first choose our inheritance for us, or else we shall never choose it for ourselves; but if we are really called according to the purpose (2Ti 1:9-note) of electing love, we can sing-

**Lov’d of my God for Him again
With love intense I burn;
Chosen of Him ere time began,
I choose Him in return.**

The Lord is our all-sufficient portion. God fills Himself; and if God is all-sufficient in Himself, He must be all-sufficient for us. It is not easy to satisfy man’s desires. When he dreams that he is satisfied, anon he wakes to the perception that there is something yet beyond, and straightway the horse-leech in his heart cries, “**Give, give.**” But all that we can wish for is to be found in our divine portion, so that we ask, “**Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.**” Well may

we "**delight ourselves in the Lord**" Who makes us to drink of the river of His pleasures. Our faith stretches her wings and mounts like an eagle into the heaven of divine love as to her proper dwelling-place. "**The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage.**" Let us **rejoice in the Lord always** (Php 4:4-note); let us show to the world that we are a happy and a blessed people, and thus induce them to exclaim, "**We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.**"

BLAMELESS JOB'S EXPERIENCE WITH DESPAIR

Job was suffering unimaginable despair and yet like the psalmist, by the grace of God, Job was enabled to PREACH HOPE to his downcast soul declaring "Though He slay me, yet I will HOPE (same Hebrew verb as in Ps 42:5) in Him" (Job 13:15-note). Job made a decision of his will, not based on the way he felt, but on his confidence in God to "preach to his soul" that he would wait expectantly for a future event, the hope of the resurrection. Affirming his confident HOPE IN GOD Job asked "If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will WAIT until (not "if") my **CHANGE** comes." (Job 14:14-note, cf Job 19:25, 26-note;note) Beloved we like Job should be expectantly awaiting our **GREAT HOPE**, that glorious day, when "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet...we shall be **CHANGED**" and will "put on the imperishable & immortality,"(1Cor 15:52-53-note;note) & when forever "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1Cor 15:54-note). Now, that's a sermon to preach to ourselves!

As **Spurgeon** so poetically put it, preaching hope to our soul is "like the singing of Paul and Silas, (for it) looses chains and shakes prison walls. He who can use such heroic language in his gloomy hours will surely conquer. In the garden of hope grow the laurels for future victories, the roses of coming joy, the lilies of approaching peace."

John Piper adds that "the best sermon you preach to yourself this week may be only three words long: HOPE IN GOD!"

May God grant us Spirit enabled desire and power to preach hope to our souls in our times of dark despair and "may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, Who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and GOOD HOPE BY GRACE, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word." Amen (2Th 2:16-17-note)

Below is a link to the great hymn BLESSED ASSURANCE by Fanny Crosby who was physically blind (certainly a reason to be downcast), but by God's grace she was enabled to spiritually see into the future and to describe our BLESSED HOPE (Titus 2:13-note) with the beautiful words "WATCHING AND WAITING, looking above, filled with His goodness, lost in His love". As God's grace enables us, may we like the psalmist, like Jeremiah, like Job and like Fanny Crosby choose daily to set our mind on the things above and not on the things that are on the earth (Col 3:2-note), so that we might "AGAIN PRAISE HIM" (Ps 42:5-note), as the Spirit of Christ (Ro 8:9-note) puts a song in our soul enabling us to joyfully sing...

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.
([Play "Blessed Assurance" by Third Day](#))

MARINATE YOUR MIND WITH THE TRUTH OF BIBLICAL HOPE

The Blessed Hope: Part 1

The Blessed Hope: Definition

The Blessed Hope: Source of

The Blessed Hope: Part 2

The Blessed Hope: Stabilizing Effect

The Blessed Hope: Sanctifying Effect

Other Resources on the Blessed Hope

Biblical Joy & Hope

Psalm 42:5 Commentary