

# Studies in Practical Christian Living

A Biblical Perspective of Hope

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### Background

The study of the last things is termed 'eschatology'. This word stems from the Greek word 'eschatos' which literally means 'last'. As Christians we live between the 'already' and the 'not yet', between the resurrection of Christ and the future general resurrection at the coming of Christ. So we live in hope of the future which is itself kindled and made certain by that past history itself.

In this fallen, broken world in which we live in so many people 'hope' that things will get better. Many people sincerely believe that things cannot get any worse and then they do. As Christians an understanding of the reality of hope is crucial, for our hope is in the Living God and is rooted in Jesus Christ himself. It is the Lord who gives a real reason for confidence in hope. (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

In this study on hope we want to begin to explore what the Bible tells us about hope and perhaps how we may apply what we learn in our lives.

### The Message

Hope is a gift from God to his people, our response in embracing it is affirmation of His character and sovereign power whether or not we know the details of what He will do. Our hope is to be constant whether we are in crisis or in blessing. It is to be a sign to the world that we are in relationship with the one who controls the world's destiny.

Biblical hope is made up of three elements:

- Expectation [yearning] for the future. (Proverbs 23: 18; Romans 8: 23)
- Trust, confidence and faith (Isaiah 12: 2; Hebrews 11: 1)
- The patience of waiting (Psalm 130: 5,7; Romans 8: 25)

It is in Jesus that the hopes of the people of God are brought into focus (Matthew 12:21):

- Christ is our hope (1 Timothy 1:1).
- Through the resurrection of Jesus, we have been born into a life that has hope pulsing through it (1 Peter 1:3,21). As we embrace 'the hope', we embrace our salvation, and we begin to find our salvation embracing us.
- Our hope becomes a means of grace. (Romans 8:24).
- Christ in us is our hope. (Colossians 1:27). One thing that perhaps captures aspects of this hope is the Eucharist - in taking Communion.

Hope not only gives direction forward, but changes the one who hopes. Hope demands endurance, this endurance produces character, which in itself gives birth to greater hope. (Romans 5: 1-5). Hope is an anchor (Hebrews 6: 19) embedded in the heart of every believer who is connected securely to God. The stronger the buffeting the deeper the anchor becomes embedded in our hearts.

God reveals enough about the future to give us hope, but not so much that we do not have to live and walk by faith day after day "*Faith is being sure of what we HOPE for and certain of what we do not see.*" (Hebrews 11:1) It has been said that "our hopes are a measure of our greatness." I like that. "Our hopes are a measure of

our greatness.” And we are called to be a people of hope. When we lose hope we are diminished. In a world of change and challenge we need narratives of hope. We need to invite the light of Christ to come shine in the darkness.

I want to make it clear here that hope is not the same as optimism. The two are easily and often confused. Granted, both optimism and hope involve positive expectations with regard to the future. But, they are radically different stances towards reality. Those who are optimistic draw conclusions about the future on the basis of the experience of the past and present. Hope, unlike optimism, is independent of people’s circumstances. Hope is NOT based on the possibilities of a situation and on correct extrapolation about the future. Hope is grounded in the faithfulness of God and therefore on the effectiveness of God’s promise.

The full truth of God's ultimate purposes is beyond human understanding. (1 Corinthians 2: 9).

## Questions

Before answering any of the questions meditate for a few minutes on the passage individually. What is God trying to tell you through the passage?

If you are in a group, you may wish to split into 2 or 3 smaller groups and each spend 15 - 20 minutes on one or two of the passages.

### Passage 1:

Read Jeremiah 17: 7-8

1. Using this passage write down the reasons that God gives us for being hopeful.
2. Can we relate this passage to the world we live in today, and our lives?
3. How can we use what we learn in this passage to bring God's hope to others?
4. How do you think God's people should live in the end times?

### Passage 2:

Read Romans 8: 22-25

1. What can we learn from this passage that describes what hope is?
2. What do we need to have for hope to come to fruition?
3. As Christians what are we hoping for?
4. How can we practice hope more effectively and encourage other Christians to hope as well?

### Passage 3:

Read Hebrews 6: 19, 20

1. Why is the idea of entering the inner shrine so important when looking at hope?
2. Jews had a hope in Jesus because He was descended from the line of David. What is it about Melchizedek's connection with Jesus that offers that same hope to the gentiles? [Refer to Genesis 14:18ff, and Psalm 110]
3. Does this knowledge affect our Christian lives and our relationship with God and others?
4. What reason would you give for the hope that is within you (1 Peter 3:15)?