

Hope for Hopeless Situations

Healing Streams, Savannah, GA. All scriptures are from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

**May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.**

Romans 15:13

I know what it is like to live without hope.

For ten terrible years before becoming a Christian the only thing that kept me going was that I feared death more than I hated living. I didn't hate life itself—what I hated was my life, because I had lost all hope for either my present or my future. Then I asked Jesus into my life and hope just seemed to explode within me. Over all my earthly horizons a vast cloud was lifted and I could see that a glorious destiny lay before me in heaven—and on earth a fresh chance to begin again.

You would think that such an experience would have taught me all I needed to know about hope. But it didn't. I had yet to learn the secret of how to hold on to the hope I had been given (Hebrews 10:23). As a new Christian I treasured faith. I worked hard at knowing and believing God's Word. Yet I had very little understanding about the place and power of hope.

The necessity of hope

Hope is precious and priceless. It is divinely powerful. If our heart is full of hope, the future indeed looks bright before us and we see the present as a pathway into God's good plans for our lives (Jeremiah 29:11). On the other hand, if we lack or lose hope, nothing in the present can console us. All seems lost and thoughts of the future fill us with dread.

You can live over a month without food and a week without water, but just try to live one day without hope. Losing even a little hope can immediately cause our spirits to sink. Losing a lot can cause our souls to fall into despair and depression. There is a saying that where there is life there is hope. Yet it is also true to say that where there is hope, there is life and where there is no hope, there is no life.

Hope is one thing everyone on earth can have and have in abundance. It is one thing we can all richly enjoy. No one on earth can keep us from being filled with hope; nothing on earth can steal this priceless gift from us. Our God loves us so much He always keeps hope well within our reach (Hebrews 6:18). Yet it can quickly slip out of our grasp.

The problem with hope

In practical terms the problem with hope is that it is so easily and painfully dashed. Old Job spoke with vehemence about the misery of shattered hope and his torment was magnified because he imagined that God was somehow set against him: He breaks me down on every side, And I am gone; My hope He has uprooted like a tree (Job 19:10). But God is never against us—only against our sins. If He were ever against us, we could have no hope.

The heart break comes because His ways are just not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts—yet we keep setting our hopes on what we think God will do. Then, when things don't go as we imagined, our hope crumbles into dust. If this happens often enough we lose heart, become discouraged and join the unhappy throng who try to guard their hearts by not getting their hopes up too high.



www.healingstreamsusa.org
www.forerunners4him.org



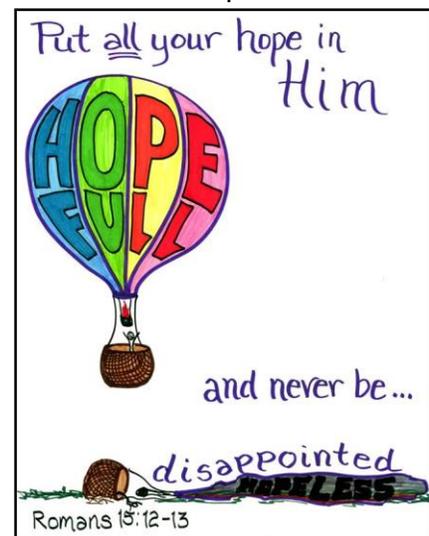
Beloved, we are meant to live in better things than resignation and discouragement! If we want to live with a high flying hope that can't be shot down, we will simply have to learn how to take better care of it. We cannot go on placing something as precious and powerful as hope in the wrong things.

The place for hope

The time of discovery came for me during the fall of 1985 while my wife and I were serving as missionaries to the Episcopal Church in Honduras. It was a year in which we felt like we were going way out on a limb for the Lord—and the limb was about to break. I came to the place where I had no idea how to pray. Many things that had to do with our family and my hoped for future as a priest were put in great jeopardy. I could see no way out of the difficulties. What was worse, I had no idea what to hope for.

I realized two things with tremendous clarity. First, I could not live without hope. I could exist, but I would be rendered useless as a witness, if I couldn't find a way to keep Christian hope alive in my heart. Otherwise, what did I have to share (1 Peter 3:15)? Secondly, the Lord wasn't making me any specific promises about how things were going to turn out. And I had no desire to place my hopes on something that wasn't in God's plan, something that wasn't meant to be.

In my desperation I turned to His Word. I read Romans 10:11 with fresh eyes: whoever believes in him will not be disappointed (NAS) and the light of heaven broke through. I realized that the Lord was directing me to put all my hope in Jesus alone. It was as if God was saying to me, Son, if you try to hope in this or that outcome, you are taking a great chance you will be disappointed down the road. But if you hope only in what Jesus will do with these situations—if you hope only that He will have His way to His satisfaction—you will always be satisfied with the outcome and your hope will never be disappointed.



The purpose of hope

The hope God gives is a tremendous, powerful and indestructible anchor for our souls (Hebrews 6:19), but only if we learn the purpose for which it was intended. It was not primarily given to us so that we could set our desires on certain things and raise our hearts by hoping for them to come to pass. Hope was given so that we could anchor our every concern firmly in God and protect our hearts--even if we never see our desires come to pass in this life.

The joy that hope releases is what happens automatically within us whenever our hearts are beholding the unchanging reality of who our God is to us and who we are in Him. This has nothing to do with seeing our desires come to pass for hope that is seen is not hope (Romans 8:24). It has everything to do with seeing Him who is the source of our hope and the end of all our desires. Since this Reality never changes our hopes can be safely anchored there, sheltered in the midst of every storm.

Simply put, if I see no hope for myself, it is only because I am not looking to Jesus and seeing Him as He really is. If delays, detours or difficulties disappoint my hope it was because I was



not hoping for His will to take place, only my own. Each fresh wounding of hope is meant as a loving reminder by God to rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13).

The power of hope

What I want to do next is give you something like spiritual dynamite so that you can clear out huge hidden pockets of unbelief that may imprison your hope in a world of lies. But you have to be willing to use it yourself. I have. And I know it is dynamite. However, to you it may just look like a couple of funny red tubes with strings at one end. Give it a go anyway. Just put the light of your faith to it with real conviction and see what it can do.

The first stick of dynamite is what I call looking through to heaven. Sometimes the quickest way to have my vision restored for life on earth is to get my eyes off of the apparently hopeless situation that surrounds me. I close my eyes to the present and look into that matchless future that the Father promises to all who believe in His Son. I keep looking until I see that Jesus will wipe away every tear as He shows me how even my bitterest defeats and worst sufferings were redeemed by Him. Once I see that I will have great joy over my life in the future (because of His work), I am ready to come back into the present with renewed hope and joy! O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption (Psalms 130:7).

The other thing that really works has been to make strenuous use of Romans 8:28. I am so thankful that God inspired Paul to declare that we can know that all things work together for good to those who love God. How do we know this? By faith in God's Word. If we will just do the hard work of believing (John 6:29), we will discover this incredible word is true. And is it ever dynamite! This one promise alone guarantees our hope—absolutely everything, no matter how bad or bleak it may seem, no matter whether it is in our daily life or our inner life—everything is being made to work for good! Make all of your discouraging thoughts bow before this one and you will never regret it. Cling to it with determined faith and ***may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope*** (Romans 15:13).



www.healingstreamsusa.org
www.forerunners4him.org

