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S. Joseph Kidder

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GROWING IN HOPE

by Joseph Kidder, Ph.D.

*Professor of Christian Ministry and Discipleship
at SDA Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, MI*

A few years ago when I did the research for my book, *The Big Four*, people told me over and over that what they are looking for in life, in the church, and the Bible is hope. One man said to me, “My boss makes my life miserable all week long. I want to read the Bible and go to church to hear words of hope.” A woman confided in me that her husband emotionally beat on her all week long. “I want to hear words of hope.”

We often talk about hope in a type of wishful sense: “I hope you have a nice day.” “I hope I get the job.” “I hope she says yes.” “I hope I don’t get sick.” There are many things we hope for in this life, some more probable to happen than others. However, the biblical concept of hope goes far beyond these earthly hopes. It is not mere wishful thinking, but something we have confidence will happen. Paul in Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hope, therefore, is the object upon which we direct our focus and energies.

The evidence or assurance of our faith in God is hope. We don’t have to see Him to believe that He exists. It is the conviction that no matter the circumstances, God’s plans for our lives are for good, to give us a better future (Jeremiah 29:11). Without hope, we can never fully trust in God with all our hearts. Hope is grasping for what we can’t see, but we believe because of the assurance in our hearts from God.

HOPE DESCRIBED

The Bible is full of examples of men and women who hoped in God’s promises. The patriarch Abraham is held up for believers as a model of hope. When he was 75, God promised to bless him and give him many descendants, as numerous as the stars in the sky. Abraham heard these words and believed God (Genesis 15:6). But despite his belief, Hebrews 6:15 explains that Abraham had to wait 25 years to see the fulfillment of his hope. Yet all the while, Abraham trusted in God, the Author of his hope, until he saw the promise come to pass. Abraham’s hope wasn’t in his own ability to father a child. It was rooted in a trustworthy, unchangeable God, and in His eternal promises.

The writer of Hebrews explains that God wants us to take encouragement from His character and hope in Him, (Hebrews 6:16-18). In fact, the Scriptures describe this hope “as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast” (Hebrews 6:19).



HOPE DERAILED

What can cause our hope to be lost? Often, we hope in the wrong things. It’s so easy to place our hope in this material world – what we can see, taste, touch, and feel. These things are controllable to us. But God says His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). In fact, the things of this world do not provide a firm foundation for our lives (Colossians 2:8).

But Jesus does. In Him we will find a hope that anchors our souls. If your hope is not in Jesus, it is misplaced. If you are feeling hopeless right now, consider where your primary hope is grounded. Come to Jesus and find a hope unlike any other. Jesus offers His hope freely to all who willingly come to Him, acknowledge their sin, and trust in His cleansing blood for eternal life.

WHERE IS YOUR HOPE?

Hope can be lost and found. It can be as tiny as an atom and still pack a powerful punch in the eye of despair. Hope is the gentle tug within the heart of every Christian to comfort us when we are tossed to and fro by trials. Hope is a powerful stimulant for the brokenhearted and dejected, especially when we’ve lost loved ones in death.

God has planted hope in the heart of every believer so that we can build a strong relationship of love and trust with Him. Where is your hope? Let it grow and be nourished in the word of God every day.

WHAT HOPE CAN DO FOR YOU

If you truly have your hope anchored in Jesus, there will be many wonderful changes and benefits to your life.

Hope brings security. *“You will be secure, because there is hope,” Job 11:18a.* House alarms, security guards, and metal detectors offer some hope for protection against wicked people. But the hope we have in Christ means that you’re completely secure in God’s hand in this world and the next. When the storms of life are raging, your anchor is the hope that God is in control.

Hope brings praise to God. *“As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more,” Psalm 71:14* In the darkest hours and the deepest pain, Christians can still have hope. Believers in Jesus Christ can praise Him even when everything around them looks bleak. Our hope in God reveals that He is in control, and He uses everything for our good.

Hope brings eternal value. *“There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off,” Proverbs 23:18.* No matter what is going on around us—there is a future hope in Christ. He’s not only working in us at this very moment, but He’s also working out our destiny in His kingdom. Even in our physical death, we have hope of eternal peace, joy, and comfort.

Hope brings strength. *“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint,” Isaiah 40:31.* The demands of this life can beat us down spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Yet remembering the hope we have in Christ to overcome evil with good, to bless and not curse, and to draw on His word gives us renewed energy to face the world.

Hope brings goodness. *“The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him,” Lamentations 3:25.* The favor of God rests on those who put their hope in Him. Goodness from the Lord is evident in our speech and actions because of the hope we have in our hearts.

Hope brings joy. *“Be joyful in hope,” Romans 12:12.* Our outward circumstances may be exceptionally painful and difficult to deal with, but because of hope we still have joy. The hope in Christ stirs up our joy so that we can praise the Lord even in the midst of hardship.

Hope brings love. *“And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us,” Romans 5:5.* Hope reveals the love of God that is within every believer. We are moved by the Spirit of God to show love to others in the hope that they will come to know Christ.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION OF HOPE

Even if you know Jesus as your Savior, you can still lose hope. We learn from Proverbs that “hope deferred makes the heart sick,” (Proverbs 13:12). When our hopes are delayed, we can be overcome by a deep sense of despair.

So, how did Abraham do it? How did he remain hopeful for more than two decades? Look at Abraham’s relationship with God: he was a friend of God, (2 Chronicles 20:7); he was also God’s servant, (Genesis 26:24); and he was totally obedient, (Genesis 22).

You can do the same. Here are four practical steps you can take every day to build a sure foundation of hope that will carry you through the storms of life:

1) SUBMIT YOURSELF TO GOD.

God is the source of our hope. Come to Him in humility and He will restore you (1 Peter 5:6-7).

2) STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH.

Allow God’s previously fulfilled promises to renew your hope. God has given us written record of countless ways He has provided hope for believers in centuries past. Look to these marvelous accounts for renewal (1 Chronicles 16:11-21).

3) TRUST GOD’S TIMING.

Sometimes God answers our prayers and fulfills our hopes quickly. At other times, for His own divine reasons, He allows us to wait. Remember, it was through faith and patience that Abraham’s hope was fulfilled.

4) THANK GOD TODAY.

Though it’s difficult to rejoice as we wait for hopes to be fulfilled, rejoicing enables God to perfect us in ways we are unable to see at the time. Paul reminds us that hope, purified in the crucible of waiting, “does not disappoint” (Romans 5:1-5).

Right now, turn to the Author of all hope and rest in Him. “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.