

CHAPTER 25

Hope

KEY IDEA

I can cope with the hardships of life because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

KEY VERSE

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf.—Hebrews 6:19-20

BEGIN BY RECITING THE KEY VERSE AND THE KEY IDEA TOGETHER AS A GROUP.

LESSON

INTRODUCTION

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY

Hope is the absolute expectation of coming good. Someone once said if you plant a tree, you're planting hope because it shows you expect to be around long enough to gather its fruit or to enjoy its shade.

That which a man passionately hopes for he strives to realize.

> If he desires fame, power or wealth he will do all he can to set in motion what is necessary for him to achieve that which his soul desires...what his soul covets.

< As man strives, there is always some hope--an ideal--that he works at to make it a reality.

The one who enthusiastically believes in Jesus Christ finds his hope in that belief.

Christians' belief in Jesus Christ is what sets them apart from the other religions of the world. In Christ alone believers find the hope they need to sustain them through this life and usher them into the next. Why is it so difficult for people to grab on to this hope?

In English, the word "hope" brings a meaning of uncertainty. For example, "I don't know if it's going to happen, but I *hope* it happens."

> When we speak of biblical hope it is not wishful thinking.

<Christian hope is when God has promised that something is going to happen and you put your trust in that promise.

<Christian hope is a confidence that something will come to pass because God has promised it will come to pass.

< 1 Peter 1:13 says, "*set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*"

Hope is not "I hope my team wins the Super Bowl" or "I hope I get a raise." Biblical hope is not a hope-so but it is a know-so. It isn't wishing for the best. It isn't waiting to see what happens and hope that it turns out well. Hope is not a feeling or an emotion. Hope is the knowledge of facts. -- PATRICKS.COM

Statements such as "I hope you have a good day," "I hope the traffic isn't heavy," "I hope I get a party for my birthday," bring no guarantee. That is not hope...that is wishful thinking, is undependable and has no power to bring anything to pass.

It would seem that, if we were honest, we all do some "wishful thinking." Is that wrong? Explain.

>Human hope pales in comparison to biblical hope. A Christian's definition of hope is far superior to that of the world.

<Instead of wishing or hoping for something to happen, a believer knows that their hope is solid, because it is grounded in the Word of God.

< It is a hope that is like faith...a faith that cannot be moved by circumstances or what the eyes see because an unseen God is seen in His faithfulness. (Hebrews 11:1)

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE

As stated above, most people understand hope as wishful thinking, and that this is not what the Bible means by hope.

>The biblical definition of *hope* is "confident expectation."

< Hope is a firm assurance regarding things that are unclear and unknown

^ Romans 8:24-25 -- ²⁴ *For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?* ²⁵ *But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

^ Hebrews 11:1, 7 -- ¹ *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. ...* ⁷ *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.*

< Hope is a fundamental component of the life of the righteous

^ Proverbs 23:18 ¹⁸ *There is surely a future hope for you and your hope will not be cut off.*

< Without hope, life loses its meaning: Lamentations 3:18 ¹⁸ *So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD."* Job 7:6 ⁶ *"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope.*

^ In death there is no hope: Isaiah 38:18 ¹⁸ *For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.* Job 17:15 ¹⁵ *where then is my hope—who can see any hope for me?*

>The righteous who trust or put their hope in God:

< Will be helped

^ Psalm 28:7 ⁷ *The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.*

< They will not be confounded, put to shame, or disappointed

^ Isaiah 49:23²³ Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. They will bow down before you with their faces to the ground; they will lick the dust at your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in me will not be disappointed."

< Those who have this trustful hope in God, have a general confidence in God's protection and help

^ Jeremiah 29:11¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

< They are free from fear and anxiety

^ Psalm 46:2-3² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,³ though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

The New Testament idea of hope is the recognition that in Christ is found the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises: Matthew 12:21²¹ *In his name the nations will put their hope."* 1 Peter 1:3³ *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,).*

> Christian hope is rooted in faith in salvation in Christ (Galatians 5:5).

> Hope of Christians is brought into being through the presence of the promised Holy Spirit (Romans 8:24-25).

> It is the future hope of the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6),

< The promises given to Israel (Acts 26:6-7)

< The redemption of the body and of the whole creation (Romans 8:23-25)

< Eternal glory (Colossians 1:27)

< Eternal life and the inheritance of the saints (Titus 3:5-7)

< The return of Christ (Titus 2:11-14)

< Transformation into the likeness of Christ (1 John 3:2-3)

< The salvation of God (1 Timothy 4:10)

< Christ Himself (1 Timothy 1:1)

> The certainty of the future is guaranteed

< Through the indwelling of the Spirit (Romans 8:23-25)

< Christ in us (Colossians 1:27)

< The resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:26)

> Hope is produced by endurance through suffering (Romans 5:2-5)

< It is the inspiration behind endurance (1 Thessalonians 1:31; Hebrews 6:11).

> Those who hope in Christ will see Christ exalted in life and in death (Philippians 1:20).

> Trustworthy promises from God give us hope (Hebrews 6:18-19)

< We may boast in this hope (Hebrews 3:6)

< We can express boldness in our faith (2 Corinthians 3:12)

> By contrast, those who do not place their trust in God are said to be without hope (Ephesians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:13)

Along with faith and love, hope is an enduring virtue of the Christian life (1 Corinthians 13:13)

> Love springs from hope (Colossians 1:4-5).

> Hope produces joy and peace in believers through the power of the Spirit (Romans 12:12; 15:13).

> Hope in the return of Christ is the basis for believers to strive to live holy lives. (Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:3).



KEY QUESTION: HOW DO I DEAL WITH THE HARDSHIPS AND STRUGGLES OF LIFE?

As humans, we need hope. We can't live without it. It is the lifeblood to our spiritual survival, and the only thing that pulls us out of the deep trenches of the pain and hurt of life. -- UNKNOWN

If our future is not secured and satisfied by God then we are going to be plagued with anxiety.

> This results in one of two responses:

< Paralyzing fear -- becoming too afraid to experience life.

< Self-managed, greedy control. We end up thinking about **ourselves**, **our** future, **our** problems and **our** potential, keeping us from having healthy relationships with loved ones and friends.

> Hope is the birthplace of Christian self-sacrificing love.

< We allow God to take care of us and don't become preoccupied with having to work to take care of ourselves.

< If we don't have the hope that Christ is for us, then we will be engaged in self-preservation and self-enhancement.

< If we let ourselves be taken care of by God for the future then we can be free to love others.

< As we become free to love other people, Jesus becomes more manifested in our lives.

THE NEED FOR HOPE

It is impossible to cope without hope. Job had lost everything and was running out of strength. He wanted to die. His "friends" came to comfort him. His response to his unhelpful friends is the expression of a man without hope.

FROM Job 6:1-13 (CEV)

6:1 Job said: 2 It's impossible to weigh my misery and grief! 3 They outweigh the sand along the beach, and that's why I have spoken without thinking first. 4 The fearsome arrows of God All-Powerful have filled my soul with their poison. ... 8 How I wish that God would answer my prayer 9 and do away with me. 10 Then I would be comforted, knowing that in all of my pain I have never disobeyed God. 11 Why should I patiently hope when my strength is gone? 12 I am not strong as stone or bronze, 13 and I have finally reached the end of my rope.

Job felt that he must be a target of the Lord. He is filled with so much hopelessness that he requests God to let him die.

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY

When your prayers don't seem to be answered, rejoice because a "No" is just as much an answer as "Yes" is. Because God understands we're limited in our knowledge, His Son intercedes for us at His right hand. The Spirit prays through us with groaning we don't understand to bring our prayer into perfect harmony with His plan for us.

>A heavy weight is a great strain for the person who must carry it. And Job's troubles were a terrible strain for him.

Job 7:1-4 (CEV)

7:1 Why is life so hard? Why do we suffer? 2 We are slaves in search of shade; we are laborers longing for our wages. 3 God has made my days drag on and my nights miserable. 4 I pray for night to end, but it stretches out while I toss and turn.

Job puts a very negative connotation on life for every human being. He wonders why there is suffering.

> He refers to a worker who waits to receive his wages for the work he has done.

< In comparison, Job thought he would receive no reward for his good deeds.

> He refers to a slave who waits for the evening to come when he can sleep, when his master isn't in control of him. Sleep is the only reward that the slave receives for his day's work.

< In comparison, Job could not sleep because of his suffering. He was plagued by insomnia as his days were a grind and his nights were restless. He felt his life was futile.

> Like the worker and the slave, Job was waiting, but he was waiting for death. It was the only reward that he expected because death would end his suffering.

Have you ever wondered why it is so important to hope in God? Many people place their hope in parents when they are young, in their peers when they are teenagers and in their careers as they mature. Most people learn too late about the futility of placing their hope in anyone but Jesus Christ.

> There is nothing sadder than to see a person whose best hopes have been dashed to pieces.

< This happens when one does not learn to place hope in God.

< Even many Christians continue to rest a relatively small percentage of their total hope in God and His will for their life.

Having hope ends the fear that is in the heart.

> Sometimes we lose sight of hope and something shows it to us again.

> A person can only sustain or maintain on their own for so long, after that they will suffer with the futility of life.

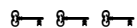
> Paul wrote, *"Character produces hope and such hope never disappoints."* (Romans 5:4-5)



PARAPHRASED FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

Our faith is very closely linked to our hope. When we choose to exercise faith, we have no idea of what is coming ahead, but we believe God knows, and we believe he has the future in his control—no matter what.

If faith begins the journey, then hope ends the journey. Hope is absolutely knowing where the road of faith will end; it is being confident of where the story concludes. Hope gives us the ability to endure the hardships and difficulties along the road of faith. We walk on in the hope of where the road leads.



What can cause our hope to go sour? Often, we hope in the wrong things.

> It's so easy to place our hope in the wrong things.

< The material things of the world—what we can see, taste, touch and feel.

Only when we look to our firm foundation for living – Jesus Christ – will we find a hope that can anchor our souls.

> It all begins with our relationship with God.

SOURCES OF FAKE HOPE

False hope causes people to plan, build and risk for something that is not likely to happen. The Bible identifies several things humans unfortunately place their hope in only to be disappointed in the end.

FALSE HOPE . . . IN RICHES.

Because of his fearless confidence in God, David is able to hurl condemnation at his enemy who trusts in wealth.

Psalm 52:1-9 ¹ Why do you boast of evil, you mighty hero? Why do you boast all day long, you who are a disgrace in the eyes of God? ² You who practice deceit, your tongue plots destruction; it is like a sharpened razor. ³ You love evil rather than good, falsehood rather than speaking the truth. ⁴ You love every harmful word, you deceitful tongue!

⁵ Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin: He will snatch you up and pluck you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living. ⁶ The righteous will see and fear; they will laugh at you, saying, ⁷ "Here now is the man who did not make God his stronghold but trusted in his great wealth and grew strong by destroying others!"

⁸ But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever. ⁹ For what you have done I will always praise you in the presence of your faithful people. And I will hope in your name, for your name is good.

The setting for this psalm centers on David's being betrayed by a man named Doeg. The story is found in 1 Samuel 21 & 22.

> Doeg was one of many men around King Saul who catered to the King's whims and inflated his ego in order to gain power and wealth.

David is confident that Doeg will come to destruction for his evil ways and putting all his hope into power and wealth.

> In contrast, those who put their hope in the Lord will continue to flourish and stay under the protection of His care.



Paul tells Timothy to instruct the believers in Ephesus about the false hope of trusting in riches.

1 Timothy 6:17 ¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY

Unlike the game of musical chairs--wherein there's only one chair too few--if the music in the financial world stopped today and every government, corporation, financial institution and private individual called in their debts, only three out of the ten would get a chair. In other words, the entire world economy is built on faith that the music's not going to stop. But when it does--and it will--the world will be shocked to realize how many chairs are missing. Thus, the reason the Bible calls riches uncertain is because they are.

... Americans persist in thinking they must own something in order to enjoy it. Not so. A walk on the beach, a picnic by a stream, and a bike ride through the park are all free. Thus, God has given us freely the best things to enjoy.

If wealth makes a person arrogant then he does not understand either himself or his wealth.

> We are not owners, we are stewards.

< If we have wealth, it is by the goodness of God and not because of any special merits of our own.

< The possessing of material wealth ought to humble a person and cause him to glorify God, not himself.

FALSE HOPE . . . IN PEOPLE.

The psalmists tell us that we will be disappointed if we place our hope in people rather than God.

Psalm 118:8-9 ⁸ *It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in humans. ⁹ It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.*

Why is it better to trust in God than humans?

- > It's better because humanity is weak, God is almighty and the source of our strength.
- > It's better because humanity is selfish and God is benevolent, gracious and giving.
- > It's better because humanity is often treacherous and deceitful, God is faithful and true.
- > It's better because in some situations of life (e.g. death) man cannot help, only God can assist through these types of crises.

Psalm 146:3-4 ³ *Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save. ⁴ When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.*

Putting our trust in people includes leaders of our government.

- > Even though God has placed leaders in their position (Romans 13:1) and we are to submit to their authority, we are not to put our trust in them, rather our trust needs to be in Jesus.

Jeremiah 17:5-6 ⁵ *This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the LORD. ⁶ That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.*

When we put your trust in man we become like a dry bush in the desert, unable to grow and prosper.

- > This can even include relying on ourselves, rather than God.
 - < Do you have a tendency to look within to gather up inner strength? If you do, you'll eventually realize you don't have the ability to see yourself through all the trials that lie ahead.
- > If you look to other people, you'll be disappointed as well, because they won't be able to live up to your expectations.

FALSE HOPE . . . IN IDOLS.

An idol is any object, activity, or person we place above God. The prophet Habakkuk declares how foolish it is to place our hope in man-made inventions.

Habakkuk 2:18-19 ¹⁸ *"Of what value is an idol carved by a craftsman? Or an image that teaches lies? For the one who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak. ¹⁹ Woe to him who says to wood, 'Come to life!' Or to lifeless stone, 'Wake up!' Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it."*

Not only is idolatry disobedience of God's Word, it is also foolish and useless.

- > There is no eternal value to the gods that are established by humanity.

FALSE HOPE . . . IN HUMAN GOVERNMENT.

It is easy and often more tangible for people to place their trust and hope in nations. Isaiah warns the people of Judah to avoid such a mistake, even with the mighty nation of Egypt.

Isaiah 31:1, 3 ^{31:1} *Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD....* ³ *But the Egyptians are mere mortals and not God; their horses are flesh and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, those who help will stumble, those who are helped will fall; all will perish together.*

The Children of Israel were putting their faith in great leaders of the world and their “horse power” (horses and chariots) instead of in God.

> God had warned the Jewish kings not to go to Egypt for horses and chariots (Deut. 17:14-16), but Solomon had ignored this warning (1 Kings 10:28-29).

> Today, like the people in Isaiah’s time, we become reluctant to seek the Lord. Yet our strength comes from our dependence upon God alone.

< If we lose our dependence on the Lord, even though we might be armed to the hilt, we’ll discover there is no way out of a conflict.

America has a long history and reputation for being the country to go to for help. Its citizens have placed great faith in this democratic governing. Do you feel that people—around the world, and in America—are placing their hope in the American government as their main avenue of hope?



Hopeful people have an eager expectation of God’s continuous directing, protecting and fruitfulness.

> Spiritual hope helps us transfer our trust away from fallible people and things, and toward the unfailing promises of God.

> Hope is based on God’s reliable attributes.

> Hope grows as we meditate on God’s promises.

< Our hope is guaranteed by God’s promised love that is manifested through the promises of scripture. (2 Peter 1:3-4 ³ *We have everything we need to live a life that pleases God. It was all given to us by God’s own power, when we learned that he had invited us to share in his wonderful goodness.* ⁴ *God made great and marvelous promises, so that his nature would become part of us. Then we could escape our evil desires and the corrupt influences of this world.*)

To the Christian, hope is the knowledge that we are being changed for the better as we trust in God’s promises (Romans 8:28).

> It is the conviction that no matter the circumstances, God’s plans for our lives are for our good to give us a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11).



KEY IDEA: I CAN COPE WITH THE HARDSHIPS OF LIFE BECAUSE OF THE HOPE I HAVE IN JESUS CHRIST.

THE SOURCE OF TRUE HOPE

True hope is found only in God.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION OF HOPE

Even Christians 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 discouragement and a sense of despair.

When we look at the life of Abraham we see that he was able to remain hopeful for more than 20 years. How was he able to do this?

> 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).

We can do the same. Below are four practical steps we can take every day to build a sure foundation of hope that will carry us through the storms of life:

1. Submit 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 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.
 - < This kind of hope, that which we had to exercise faith with, (sometimes with suffering), does not disappoint (Romans 5:1-5).

Hope is only as good as the power and character of the one who offers it. The psalmist expresses with deep passion his trust in God for his source of hope when present times are tough. (See Psalm 42:1-11)
"Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. (verse 5)

The psalmist has determined to put his hope in God, expecting things are going to work out for his good and God's glory. The psalmist hopes in God. He talks to God. And he praises God.

> It is so important that we learn to be people who praise God—even in times when we aren't certain how things will work out, we can praise Him in advance.

> When we determine to Hope in the Lord, the world around us takes note. It is a means of drawing people to God.

True hope is found in God's promises. All the authors of the New Testament wrote on the topic of hope. It is clearly one of the unique and powerful benefits of following God. The writer of Hebrews drew on the character of God to confirm God's promises.

Hebrews 6:13-20 (CEV) ¹³ No one is greater than God. So he made a promise in his own name when he said to Abraham, ¹⁴“I, the Lord, will bless you with many descendants!” ¹⁵ Then after Abraham had been very patient, he was given what God had promised. ¹⁶ When anyone wants to settle an argument, they make a vow by using the name of someone or something greater than themselves. ¹⁷ So when God wanted to prove for certain that his promise to his people could not be broken, he made a vow. ¹⁸ God cannot tell lies! And so his promises and vows are two things that can never be changed.

We have run to God for safety. Now his promises should greatly encourage us to take hold of the hope that is right in front of us. ¹⁹ This hope is like a firm and steady anchor for our souls. In fact, hope reaches behind the curtain^[a] and into the most holy place. ²⁰ Jesus has gone there ahead of us, and he is our high priest forever, just like Melchizedek.

The early church lived in anticipation of the return of Jesus. But when so much time had passed and Jesus had not come back many grew weary, wondering if they could trust the promise of His coming.
> Throughout Scripture there is inevitably a gap of time between the giving of a promise and the fulfilling of the promise.

NOTE: Maybe this is the case in your life. Have you been waiting for a promise to be fulfilled? Just remember that, during the period of waiting-- that gap between the giving of the promise and the fulfillment-- is when God does His best work.

RE: vs. 13} When vows were made people would swear their intention to fulfill the vow on something that was greater than themselves. Since there is nothing greater than God, He put himself as the backing of his promises.

- > We have two proofs that His promise will come to pass
 - < His Word, stating that He cannot lie. (Numbers 23:19)
 - < His oath that He takes for our sake.

Since God’s character is rock solid, trustworthy and true, we anchor our hope in his promises to us. Paul wrote a letter to the church at Colossae while he was under house arrest in Rome. God had been unfolding his grand promise of redemption since the fall of Adam and Eve. The true and full content of this promise was a mystery to the people of the Old Testament era. Now, God has fulfilled his promise and revealed it to us — the source of our hope has come. (See Colossians 1:24-29; pg. 394 in BELIEVE.)

Col. 1:27 – *God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

What God has promised to all believers in Jesus enables us to endure the hardships of life. Peter opened his first letter proclaiming this truth. The ultimate promise of God is our future resurrection. The hope of this promise trumps all momentary trials. (See 1 Peter 1:1-25)

1 Pet. 1:3-7, 13, 21 – *Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is so good, and by raising Jesus from death, he has given us new life and a hope that lives on. ⁴ God has something stored up for you in heaven, where it will never decay or be ruined or disappear. ... Put all your hope in how kind God will be to you when Jesus Christ appears.*

⁵ You have faith in God, whose power will protect you until the last day. Then he will save you, just as he has always planned to do. ⁶ On that day you will be glad, even if you have to go through many hard trials for a while. ⁷ Your faith will be like gold that has been tested in a fire. And these trials will prove that your faith is worth much more than gold that can be destroyed. ... ²¹ And

when [Jesus] did come, it was to lead you to have faith in God, who raised him from death and honored him in a glorious way. That's why you have put your faith and hope in God.

Peter encouraged the people by reminding them that they had a living hope based upon the resurrection of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

> Unlike living hope, human hope tends to get weaker and dimmer, and finally dies altogether the farther one goes down the road of life.

> With spiritual hope in the Lord, the opposite is true. The farther down the road we go with Jesus, the more we realize our hope doesn't lie on this earth, but in heaven.

< Our hope is in heaven, and heaven's getting closer every day.

When any metal (e.g. gold in vs. 7) is purified/refined it is heated hot enough to melt the precious metal, so that the impurities may be cleared out.

> This is our Christian refinement. God sends us through the "fire" of purification so that we are able to minister as we should.

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY:

The Lord says, "I've got big plans for you, huge plans. I've got plans not for this life only, but for eternity. Therefore, I may need to turn up the heat a bit to work out the impurities. But My hand is on the thermostat. I know exactly what I'm doing. Although at the present moment, it might not be easy, you'll thank Me...because what I'm after is to see the reflection of My face in your life."

The Christians in Thessalonica had misunderstood Paul and thought that all believers would live until Christ returns. That caused them distress when some in the church died. Paul wrote his first letter to them to clear up this matter. The promise to all believers, past and present, of being with the Lord forever is the foundation of our hope. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, pg. 396 in BELIEVE.)

1 Thes. 4:16-18 ¹⁶ With a loud command and with the shout of the chief angel and a blast of God's trumpet, the Lord will return from heaven. Then those who had faith in Christ before they died will be raised to life. ¹⁷ Next, all of us who are still alive will be taken up into the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the sky. From that time on we will all be with the Lord forever.

¹⁸Encourage each other with these words.

John echoed the writings of Paul and Peter regarding the hope we have through the promised resurrection. He challenged his readers to live pure lives in anticipation of this guaranteed event. (See 1 John 3:1-3, pgs. 396-397 in Believe.)



FROM THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS by Randy Frazee:

As Christians, we must place our hope on the promise of what God has told us will come and the promise that Jesus is on the other side of this life. And the grand bonus is that we will be reunited with all those who have gone before us to heaven:

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." 1 Corinthians 15:51-54

Place your hope in what you will experience one day in God's new kingdom — eternal life in the very presence of God. This gives us the ability to endure the bumps and bruises along the road of life.

THE EFFECT OF HOPE

God and his promises are the reason for our hope. When we embrace this hope, it has a dramatic effect on our daily lives. Hope gives us the ability to get through our days, to persevere.

Isaiah prophesied about the coming captivity of the people of Judah by the Babylonians. Isaiah was able to encourage the people with confidence because he based his hope in God and his promise to bring the people home. The exiles could live full, happy lives because they knew God would keep his promise. (See Isaiah 40:1-31, pg. 398-401 in BELIEVE.)

Isaiah 40:27-31 -- ²⁷ You people of Israel, say, "God pays no attention to us! He doesn't care if we are treated unjustly." But how can you say that? ²⁸ Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The LORD is the eternal God, Creator of the earth. He never gets weary or tired; his wisdom cannot be measured. ²⁹ The LORD gives strength to those who are weary. ³⁰ Even young people get tired, then stumble and fall. ³¹ But those who trust the LORD will find new strength. They will be strong like eagles soaring upward on wings; they will walk and run without getting tired.

The people Isaiah was addressing didn't so much dispute God's greatness as they questioned His care.

Has that ever happened to you? Have you ever questioned God's care?

We may sometimes tend to think of God in human-like terms. But in the verses above we read that God doesn't have limited time, energy, or understanding.

HOPE ACTIVATES FAITH, FAITH DEEPENS HOPE

Hope is a portion or part of faith. Faith and hope are overlapping realities.

> Hope is faith in the future tense, so most of faith is hope.

> Romans 10:17 states, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God".

< This implies that hope, like faith, is also strengthened by the word of God.

^ Hope comes from knowing and relying on the promises of God through Scripture.

^ Hope is looking to Christ who purchased our salvation, allowing us to have this hope.

> Romans 8:32 – ³² God did not keep back his own Son, but he gave him for us. If God did this, won't he freely give us everything else?"

< The last part of this verse is hope in production, grounded in the rock-solid statement that God didn't even spare his own son for us.

< So the essence of what we look to in the Bible to build our hope is what Christ has done for me in my sinful condition.

^ It enables me to know that I will not come in to judgment and condemnation and that all things are working together for my good (Romans 8:28).

^ Christ died for me, rose again for me, and therefore all the promises of God are "yes" in him.

Look away from the circumstances that confront us, look to Christ, look to the promises, and hold fast to them. Hope comes from the promises of God rooted in the work of Christ.

Hope is available to all followers of God, but not everyone takes hold of it. It can be hard for us to trust in a God we cannot see and hold fast to fantastic promises yet to come. To activate the power of hope in our lives, we need to have faith in God and his promises. The writer of Hebrews preached this message to his readers. He then listed people from the past that placed their faith in God and experienced amazing results in their lives. God offers this same opportunity to us today. In fact, God has "something better" planned for those who know Jesus. (See Hebrews 11:1-12:3)

Hebrews 11 is known as the great faith chapter. It gives a listing of people who put their faith in God and how God was true to them because of their faith.

> It begins with a definition of faith and how it relates to hope: (vs. 1 -- *Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see.*)

> We see names listed of OT personalities who were accounted for their faith: (vs. 2 -- *It was their faith that made our ancestors pleasing to God.*)

< Abel, who unlike his brother Cain, presented his offering as a sacrifice of faith.

< Enoch did not die because it pleased God to walk with him.

< Noah became a visible example of God's salvation in a condemned world. His faith saved himself and his entire family.

< Abraham's faith caused him to leave his homeland to seek the promises of God.

< Sarah's faith allowed her to conceive and give birth to a son in her old age.

< Isaac's faith brought blessing to Jacob and Esau.

< Jacob's faith allowed him to trust God to deliver his people.

< Moses' faith enabled him to lead his people out of Egypt and eventually into Canaan.

< The Hebrew Children's faith allowed them to cross the Red Sea and go into the Promised Land.

< Honorable mention was given to Gideon, Barak, Samson & Jephtah as examples of faith even with their sins being evident in the OT scriptures.

< The prophets: Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc. whose faith was strong and spoke for God despite the ridicule of their people, many times offering hope.

> The focus remains more on the faith of these OT people than on their deeds alone. Miraculous deeds were done through God, and their lives were spared. However, Hebrews 11 ends with these words: *"Many of these people were tortured, but they refused to be released. They were sure that they would get a better reward when the dead are raised to life. ³⁶ Others were made fun of and beaten with whips, and some were chained in jail. ³⁷ Still others were stoned to death or sawed in two or killed with swords. Some had nothing but sheep skins or goat skins to wear. They were poor, mistreated, and tortured. ³⁸ The world did not deserve these good people, who had to wander in deserts and on mountains and had to live in caves and holes in the ground.*

³⁹ All of them pleased God because of their faith! But still they died without being given what had been promised. ⁴⁰ This was because God had something better in store for us. And he did not want them to reach the goal of their faith without us." (verses 35-40)

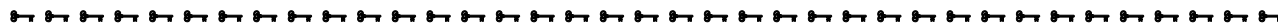
The writer of Hebrews made it clear that faith is very practical despite what unbelievers say.

> Faith enables us to understand what God does. It allows us to see what others cannot see.

< As a result, faith enables us to do what others cannot do.

FROM JON COURSON'S APPLICATION COMMENTARY

It's an amazing thing, this world of faith in which we live. But the irony is that, although we have faith in the boys at Ford and in the maker of the pew: when it comes to God, we get a little iffy and a little shaky. This ought not be. Even though we don't know how it works or when it will come to pass, we're to be those who, like the elders in our text, have faith that God's will shall be worked out ultimately - and that it will be good.



KEY APPLICATION: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS MAKE IN THE WAY I LIVE?

PARAPHRASED FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

Hope in Christ gives us a different place to look.

On a day-to-day basis, we have little choice but to stay focused on the physical world we live in. We have bills that need to be paid, problems that are waiting to be solved, and people who demand our attention. Hope of a future where God already resides and is in control ... encourages us to keep looking forward and fix our eyes on him, not on the world. For the Christian, the best really is yet to come. ...

Hope in Christ gives us a different way to think.

Our minds can be our greatest enemy or our strongest ally. How we think is what we will do and what we will become. Focusing on hope for today, our future, and into eternity creates a positive, optimistic, "glass half full" mind-set. In our mean-spirited, downward-spiraling culture, the person with an attitude of hope and uplifting thoughts will not only be a healthier person but also draw others to Christ by their very being.

The apostle Paul describes this different way to think: "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Colossians 3:2

Hope in Christ gives us a different life to live.

... we all desperately want to enjoy life! We want to feel contentment and live in the hope of a good day and a brighter tomorrow. New life in Christ is not only a different way to live, but it's also the best way to live. Lifestyle choices and future direction fueled by the reality of divine expectation form a life based on nothing but hope.

Since the rise of Christianity and up to the current day, martyrs — those who die because of their faith in Christ — have been a strong segment of the population of believers. Why would someone choose to die rather than renounce Christ? Why would anyone suffer torture at the hands of evil dictators because of a belief held in the heart they will not rescind? Why would people suffer from a lack of food, water, and medical care solely because they are Christians? What drives them to place their faith above anything else in life? The answer? Hope. ... For millions of Christians, the hope of Christ has driven them to survive mind-boggling odds and die peacefully under unspeakable circumstances. The longing to see their Savior on the other side fueled their hearts to endure to the end.

When you come to your final day here on earth, do you want to face it in terror, or do you want to confront it in hope? The great news is that you can face death with hope, but the even better news is that you don't have to wait until then. You can experience this hope right now. So jump on the plane of faith, in the sure knowledge of what and who awaits you on the other end. And in this life, you can echo the words of the psalmist:

We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you. Psalm 33:20-22