

## A Living Hope

*On the First Three Sundays of Advent—Faith, Patience, Hope.*

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We live in, what seems to be, very hopeless times.

Our economy is collapsing, parks are no longer safe, our moral culture has given itself over to madness.

Where is your hope? What is your hope, or rather, whom is your hope?

### 1. So—What is hope?

- Hope is a desired result that has not yet manifested.  
It is directional, purposeful, meaningful.
- Hope requires a person to purposefully be looking for or moving toward a specific end or goal. It is not aimless.
- Since hope is fixed/anchored necessarily within an ongoing process, the point of hope, then, is for the person to anticipate and expect to obtain that goal long looked-for.
- This expectation produces confidence. Latin root: *confidere*
  - **con-** “with,” “completely”
  - **fides** “faith,” “to trust”
- In other words, **Hope is the goal of faith yet actualized.**

**Hebrews 11:1** — “Now faith is the substance [or reality/assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence [or conviction] of things not seen.”

- **Faith is the race. Hope is the finish line.**
- Yet, between faith and hope is patience, perseverance, endurance, longsuffering, forbearance, etc.

## 2. So—Whence hope?

In the beginning, when God created the mankind, there was no hope — why?

Hope “walked in the Garden in the cool of the day” (Gen.3:8).

- Paul mentions this in **Romans 8:25**, “Hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But we hope for what we do not see...”

**But** once we set our desires on the Law — to eat or not eat — rather than on God, we fell, alienated and estranged from the light and warmth of God, enslaved to sin and death, bound to wander the world in darkness.

**Hope came out of what was lost—communion with God.**

- That is to say; hope manifests from our deepest desire to return back to Him and to restore what was lost—what was good, what was once very good.

There is no true hope in the world when you are fixated on the world.

- A worldly hope is fleeting, fading, destined for destruction. Without God, we have a sense of hope, what it feels like, but it is an empty hope, a shell that needs to be filled.
- Human nature is void, meaningless, purposeless, vain. Human condition is blinded by sin, roaming aimlessly in spiritual darkness, hardened by the cold.

**Eph 2:12** — Therefore remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

**Yet, in God’s providence, He designed you in His image to hope — human nature was disfigured and marred from the Fall, but God destined you to hope.**

**Why?**

### 3. A New Hope

When God cursed the ancient serpent, the great dragon, Satan, He did not leave us orphans without hope, but gave all mankind a destiny to look forward to —

**Genesis 3:15**

“And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her Seed;  
He shall bruise your head,  
And you shall bruise His heel.”

When God cursed Satan to destruction, it was also our hope.

Hope came into being when we fell — not hope in a Law but hope in a Person: Messiah. A person who would redeem and restore all things. This is the gospel.

- God then after told Adam/Eve and, therefore all of us, the natural consequences of their disobedience, the result of which would change the human condition forever — we are now subject to sin, death, suffering, new desires, false hopes, purposelessness, and a darkened mind by nature.
- Hope is the goal of faith yet actualized, which comes from our desire to restore what was lost—what we had.
- This is the gospel we proclaim. A hope that restores our human nature/condition.

**Since our hope, as children of the promise, is fixed on Christ, we can have confidence, anticipation, and expectation to obtain that goal long looked-for.**

**Romans 8:20-25** — For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

## 4. Growing Hope

Now, hope does not exist in isolation. It is part of a larger, on-going process.

Paul constantly refers to our faithful perseverance or patience as a race, with hope set as the goal (**1 Cor 9:24, 2 Tim 4:7, Heb 12:1**).

- You need hope to endure the pain and suffering that comes with running the race. The more you endure, the greater patience, the stronger you become, and the more visible the hope that is within you, the finish line, becomes.

**Romans 5:3-4** — Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Spiritual maturity grows into a visible hope produced by the light and warmth of God in contrast to the dark and cold world bound by sin and death.

True hope does not wither or fade — it flourishes, it grows into life eternal.

## 5. So—What is the finish line?

The resurrection of the dead through union with Christ—that is our goal, our hope—which is obtained solely through the blood of our Lord and Saviour who rose from the dead as a forerunner on our behalf, ascended into heaven in the flesh, and now sits at the right hand of the Father.

To have our hope set on anything or anyone else is no hope at all — it is the cup without the wine (substance):

**1 Corinthians 15:16-19** — For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. **If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.**

An earthly Christ, that “just be a good person” Christ, is hopeless.

Unfortunately, many of us may be clinging to this false hope — it is a security blanket that comforts us from the worries of this world. We have put our hope into our homes, finances, insurance, plans, wealth, health, and all the stuff we have in abundance, all of which is fleeting. Earthly provision is not the hope of Christ.

**Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13:22** — “As for the seed that was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful”

Do not ease yourself into a false sense of security — Jesus Christ is your only hope. If you look back at your former life, like Lot’s wife, how will you finish the race? You must face forward, march onward, take up your cross and persevere.

**Colossians 1:21-23** — And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, **if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven...**

Therefore, James says, “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you” (**James 4:8**).

## 6. A Living Hope

Take courage—if the Spirit of Christ indwells you, then the goal, the kingdom of God, is in you, and you are getting closer as the Day draws nearer.

**1 Peter 1:3-9** — Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, **he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, **obtaining the outcome of your faith**, the salvation of your souls.

This is not a *preferable* hope (i.e., “I hope there’s no pineapples on my pizza”).

This is not a *perishable* hope, that is a false hope, empty and void. Hopelessness masquerading as confidence.

This is a *perfect* hope. A hope that binds back that which was lost at Eden, now found exclusively at Calvary, the new Tree of Life, solely through the atoning work of Christ Jesus — the essence of life eternal, our once yet future hope (**Heb 6:11-19**).

Peter goes on to say:

**1 Peter 1:13** — Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, **set your hope fully** on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

## 7. Application — How then do we finish the race?

The end of faith is hope. Hope is fulfilled in two: Holiness and Wholeness.

- **Holiness** being closeness with God
- **Wholeness** being restoration of His image

Practically speaking, what does this look like?

How do we faithfully persevere to obtain our once yet future hope?

**Repent often, forgive always.**

- Repentance is faith seeking holiness.
- Forgiveness is faith seeking wholeness.

**Ephesians 4:22-24** – we are called “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

- Repentance is faith putting off the old self — repent of....
- Forgiveness is faith putting on the new self

**The new self is resurrecting from the dead right now!!**

**Christ will bring it to completion on the Day of His return.**

When you forgive those who have wronged you — who don't deserve it — you bear the marks of Christ, proving that the living hope of the gospel, that is the atoning work of the cross and the resurrection from the dead, is truly working in and through your life. **You are not dead, you are alive!**

- Paul says “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces hope...” a groaning hope yet to be revealed outwardly but assured of inwardly.

Through that, by putting what is preferable and perishable aside, others will see that eternal living hope that is within you. They will see the gospel. They will see Jesus Christ. — a living and breathing hope. People will see your nature being restored into the person you are supposed to be, conformed to His image through the communion of His Holy Spirit.

**Benediction:**

**Romans 15:13**

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

Go in peace—you are dismissed.