

## HAVING HOPE IN HARD TIMES

What a week. Protesting is everywhere, here locally in our town, and even during church service as seen in Minnesota. What if you were in that congregation? How would you have felt? How would you have handled the situation?

I'm not sure how I would have reacted. I probably would get defensive if one of the people got up in my face and started mouthing off.... It probably wouldn't end well, and most definitely, my action would not be very Christian like. I just don't know how I would react.

Ever wonder what makes these people do these things? In my opinion, it is from a sinful, evil heart. Think back to the beginning, in Genesis where Adam and Eve first introduced sin into humanity by choosing their way over, what they wanted rather than God's way and what God wanted for us. Now sin impacts all creation, introducing suffering and conflict that damages everything in our personal lives.

But remember this, when your days are clouded with struggles and we are lost in the darkness, God is with us in the pain, and he has a victorious plan for us. This gives us hope. Hope that will get us through the hard times.

God has always had victory over evil. **Genesis 3:14-15** states: "So, the Lord God spoke to the serpent. He said, "Because you have done this, you are set apart from all livestock and all wild animals. I am putting a curse on you. You will crawl on your belly. You will eat dust all the days of your life. I will make you and the woman hate each other. Your children and her children will be enemies. Her son will crush your head. And you will bite his heel."

Our pain also has a purpose as stated in **Romans 5:3-5**: And that's not all. We are full of joy even when we suffer. We know that our suffering gives us the strength to go on. The strength to go on produces character. Character produces hope. And hope will never bring us shame. That's because God's love has been poured into our hearts. This happened through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Difficult times can leave us feeling exposed and unprotected. However, God offers us security. **Proverbs 18:10** states: "The name of the LORD is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe"

In thinking that there is no hope, know that all our sorrows and hardships matter to God. **Psalms 56:8-9** states: "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book. My enemies will retreat when I call out to you for help. This I know: God is on my side!"

Also know that in hard times when there is little hope, the Holy Spirit prays on our behalf. **Romans 8:26-27** reveals "And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts

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knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers<sup>a</sup> in harmony with God's own will."

One of the great things about our gathering here is our community of people. We have each other in times of needing hope and comfort. **2 Corinthians 1:3-4** makes this point very clear: "All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us".

Finally, know that our suffering during hard times and our lack of hope will end in joy. As noted in **Revelation 21:3-4**: "I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

God's loving hands have been around His children from the beginning of time, and His plan of victory and redemption through His Son, Jesus Christ, has never wavered. Our path may lead through suffering for a while, but God is with us every step of the way, tenderly caring for us, giving us refuge, growing our strength, hearing our hearts, drawing us into community and leading us toward complete wholeness. Until our permanent healing comes, we can continue to find the steady light of hope through His Word.

So, I hope that these scripture verses help build your hope, there is hope for us all, especially in these hard times.